

Jan 1993

MASSIF CENTRAL



The Massif Central of central southern France is a very beautiful and large area of upland, comparatively neglected by the British. It lies to the west of Lyon and north of the Pyrenees; the 'Magic Central'.

The author used to find it an excellent 'complete change' from a tour of the Alps: the spectacular mountain scenery of the latter is replaced by a much softer type with rounded grassy hills, deep wooded valleys, and many quiet high level roads, often traversing the country at around the height of Snowdon or Ben Nevis. Mont Lozère, heather clad in parts (one doesn't see much heather in the Alps) is not unlike the Cairngorms, for example, but much more wooded.

The best time to go there is from about mid-May to mid July or in the autumn; avoid the main holiday period if possible as the area is very popular with the French. Snow on the high routes may be a problem earlier in the year. Weather is similar to what we experience in Britain at those times of the year.

No assessment of rough route difficulty is given as no recent details are available. Most are probably easy with the exception of the traverses of the Puy de Sancy and Puy Mary. An early 1950's report indicated that the ridge route on Monts du Forez was overgrown; this is no longer the case.

Maps: Michelin sheets 73, 76, & 80 cover the area, as do the large area sheets 239 & 240; the latter would be difficult to handle in a strong wind. The IGN 1:100,000 series is highly recommended: sheets 49, 50, 58 & 59 cover the area and are ~~are~~ stocked by Smiths and other shops in larger towns, also by the C.T.C. shop. They show the main tracks and long distance paths (G.R.s).

On the sketch maps, North is uppermost unless a north point is included. Heights are given in metres, mostly taken from the 1:50,000 maps. These have contours at 20m. vertical interval, and show more tracks, but are not as up to date as the 1:100,000 series.

This guide was written in 1993 by E D Clements

Any comments, amendments or useful additional notes will be welcomed by the RSF librarians, Jill & Chris Bolton (rsf@jillbolton.co.uk)

SOME HIGH ROAD ROUTES

Code	Rd. No.	Ht.(m)	Code	Rd No.	Ht (m)
Cy Ceyssat	D68	1078	CL Le Gros du Loup (Pal)	u	1281
Gy Guéry	D983	1268	Fio Fioulebise	D110	1249
Mor Croix Morand	D996	1401	MR (Mont Recours)	D333	1293
Rob Croix St. Robert	D36	1447	Pd'A Portus d'Auzenc	D123	1369
PM (Puy Montchal)	D978	1206	MS (Montagne de Saurel)	D48 a	1400
Ves (Vestizoux, nr. Parrot)	D721	1317	I'H (l'Hospitalet)	D587	1304
Aul Aulac	D63	1220	TS Trois Soeurs	D34	1452
PP Pas de Peyrol	D680	1588	CM Cheval Mort	D3	1454
Ent Entremont	D680	1210	PF Plot de la Fage	D1	1437
Leg Légal	D35	1231	Pen (Pendou)	D239 a	1425
Per Pertus	D217	1309	Bau Croix de Bauzon	D19	1308
Cere Cère	D67	1222	Mey Meyrand	D24	1370
PB Prat de Bouc	D39	1396	Pra Pratazanier	D301	1221
Loge Loge	D101	1253	Gar (Gardille)	D71	1363
beal Béal	DA0/D6	1390	Tri Tribes	D901	1131
Sup Supeyres	D106	1365	Mon Montmirat	N106	1042
HM Croix de l'Homme Mort	D496	1163	Fin Finiels	D20	1541
Fer (Ferreol)	D67 a	1205	PD Pré de la Dame	D362 a	1470
Pra Pradeaux	D996	1194	CB Croix de Berthel	D998	1088
Dan Dansadoux	D111	a1090	Sap (Supet)	D20 a	1100
Oei Oeillon (Mt Pilat)	D63	1213	Perj Perjuret	D996	1028
GB Grand Bois (République)	N82	1161	Fau Faubel	D986	1285
Cha Charousse	D184	1238	- (Mont Aigoual)	D118	1565
Raf Raffy	D18	a1265	Min Minier	D48	1264
Pec Croix de Peccata	u, ?rs.	1564	Lus Lusette	D329 a	1345
Bou Croix de Boutières	D631	1508	RM (Ron de Matas)	D900 a	1260
GJ (Gerbier de Jonc)	D378	a1450	Bon Bonnetcombe	D52	1340

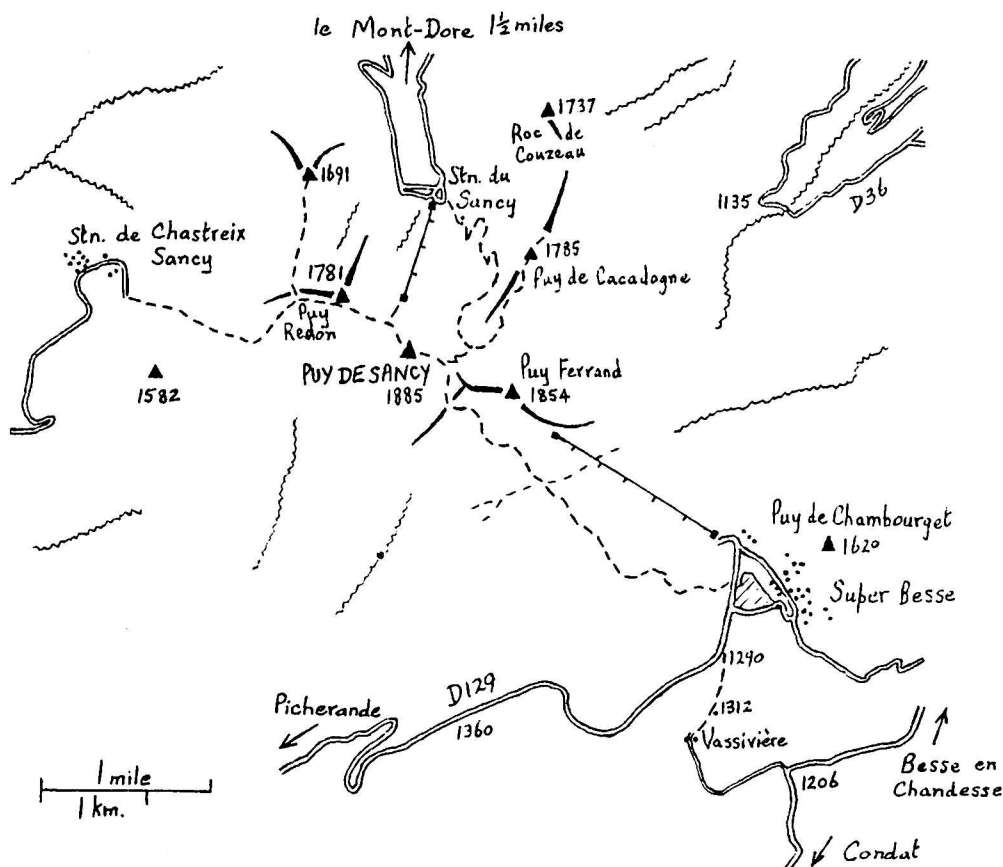
(Bracketed names are not strictly cols.)

ROUGH ROUTES

	Page		Page
Puy de Sancy	3	Mont Lozère (RF des Crêtes)	6
Monts du Forez	3	Mont Lozère (RF Negre)	6
Plomb du Cantal	4	Mont Aigoual area:-	7
Puy Mary	4	Col de la Serreyrède - Meyrueis	7
Mont Mézenc area	5	Col de l'Homme Mort etc.	8
Ardèche ridge track etc.	5	Monts d'Aubrac area	8
Mont Lozère (route forestière)	6	(Cols Serreyrède & Homme Mort are SW. of Mt Aigoual)	

PUY DE SANCY 1885m. Super Besse to le Mont-Dore
M73 fold 13 or M239 fold 18 IGN49 VAD M (D over Puy de Sancy)

The path starts from near the NW. corner of the lake at Super Besse, fairly easy going to the Col du Couhay 1685m., between Puy de Paillaret and Puy de la Perdrix, the top end of the telepherique. The path continues along the SW. slopes of the latter, and Puy Ferrand, to the col between Ferrand and Sancy, then descends N. to le Mont-Dore. If tackling the traverse of Puy de Sancy, one faces a stiff 300' climb up a boulder and scree strewn path, followed by an initial awkward short descent followed by a series of steps before one can ride down to the restaurant at the head of the telepherique above le Mont-Dore, and a choice of paths down. Allow 4 or 5 hours for the crossing; at least an hour more if crossing the Puy de Sancy. Details E.D. Clements 1955 (and see R.S.J. Vol 4 No.2, July 1958), revised; D149 and the ski resort of Super Besse did not then exist.

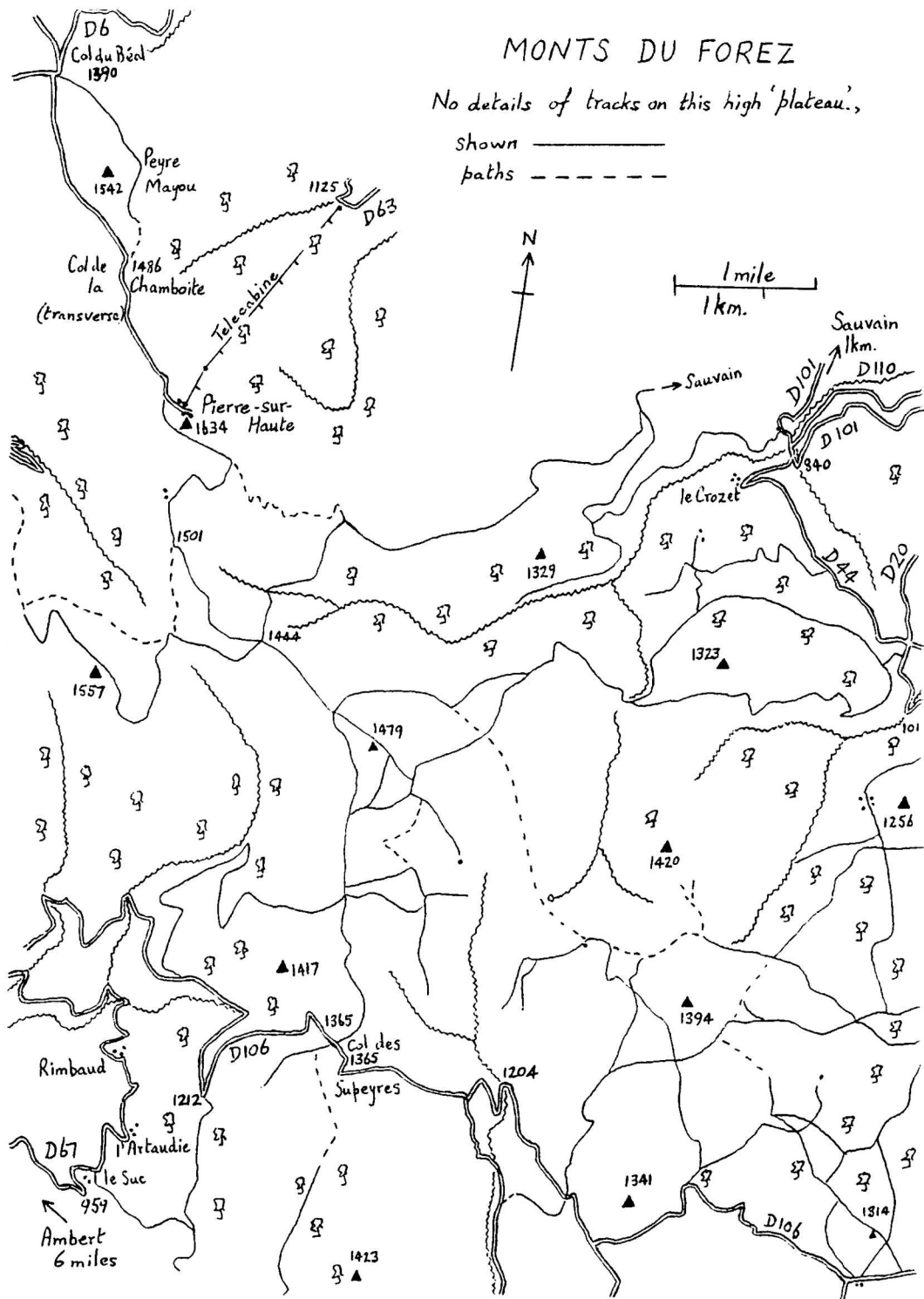


MONTS DU FOREZ

No details of tracks on this high 'plateau',

shown —————

paths - - - - -



PLOMB DU CANTAL 1855m. Prat de Bouc to Super Lioran, Vic sur Cère,
M76 folds 3 & 12 or 13, or M239 folds 30 & 42 IGN 24 35 or 49 VAD M etc.

There is an easy path (GR4). somewhat stony and narrow in places, but over grassy slopes from Prat de Bouc to the Col de la Tombe du Père, 1586m., and on up the broad SE ridge of the hill. (From the col, a path descends SW. to the Vacherie de Grandval, to pick up a 3-mile long access track from D39.). From Plomb du Cantal the path north towards Puy de Rocher keeps a little east of the ridge, easy wheeling but unrideable (1957). At the col before Puy de Rocher, the path down then turned NW, a little rocky in places needing the odd short easy scramble. However recent IGN maps show a good zig-zag track all the way from Prat de Bouc to the col near Puy de Rocher and down its western slopes to the tree line, eventually following below the téléphérique, down to Super Lioran. Allow about 4 hours. See R.S.J. Vol. 10 No.2 p.21.

No details of the ridge paths south from the Plomb du Cantal. According to IGN. these start as one, keeping just west of the ridge, contouring below Puy de la Cède to Col de Chèvre, 1618m. where another ridge path bears SSE. to Vigouroux. The main path continues SSW. over Puy Gros and divides again after a mile or so; the right hand branch goes SW. to D54 at the col de Curebourse, 997m. above Vic sur Cère, while the left branch goes to Failherols, also on D54. All 3 paths become cart roads for the last few miles.

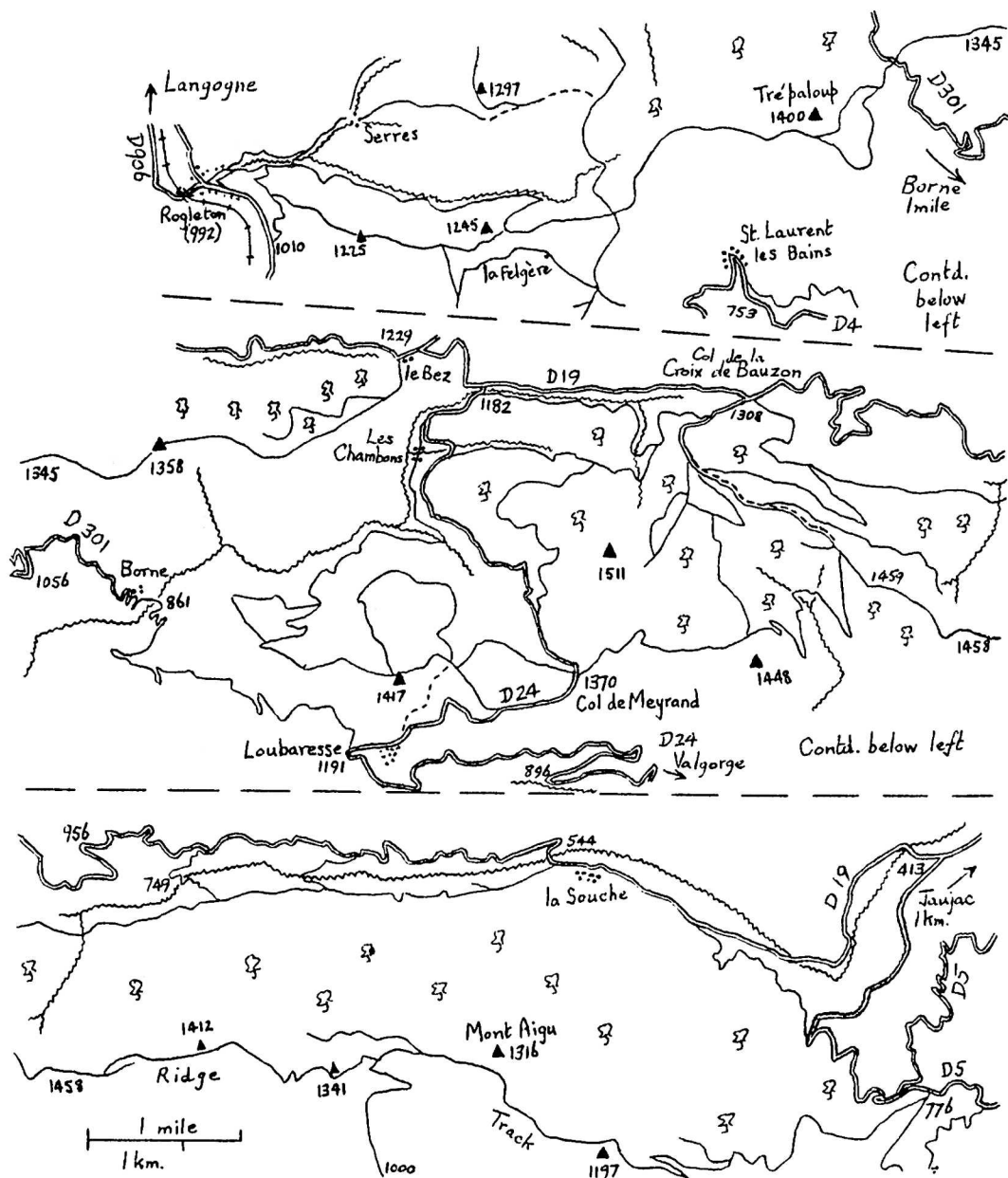
PUY MARY 1785m. Le Lioran to Pas de Peyrol
M76 fold 3 or M239 fold 30 IGN 24 35 or 49 VAD M, some S

A very rewarding route. One can take either GR4 or GR400 to the Col de Rombière. The former used to start behind the chalet hotel on the Col de Font de Cère (if the hotel still exists) on the old derelict zig-zag road over the tunnel—a loop to D67, uncoloured on IGN 49. This path climbs steeply through the woods, easing near the col (GR400 may be easier to the col now, no details) then heads north, contouring the western slopes of Puy Bataillouse to the Col de Cabre, 1528m., easy wheeling on a fairly level path. From this latter col, keep on round the southern slopes of Puy de Peyre Arse, 1806m.; there are two paths, one climbs part way up the south ridge, the other, GR4, contours lower down.

A few more ups and downs on the south west ridge of Puy de Peyre Arse bring one to an awkward gash in the ridge, the Brèche de Rolland. This involves a scramble needing the use of hands, and a delicate carry of the bike, as does also another awkward rock outcrop on the SE. ridge of Puy Mary. If this latter proves feasible (no details) a good path leads down from the top of Puy Mary to the Pas de Peyrol; if not, one can by-pass the rock step by taking a boulder strewn path contouring the eastern slopes of Puy Mary. Allow 4 or 5 hours. See R.S.J. Vol. 17 No.2 p.39 or Vol. 10 No.2 p.21.

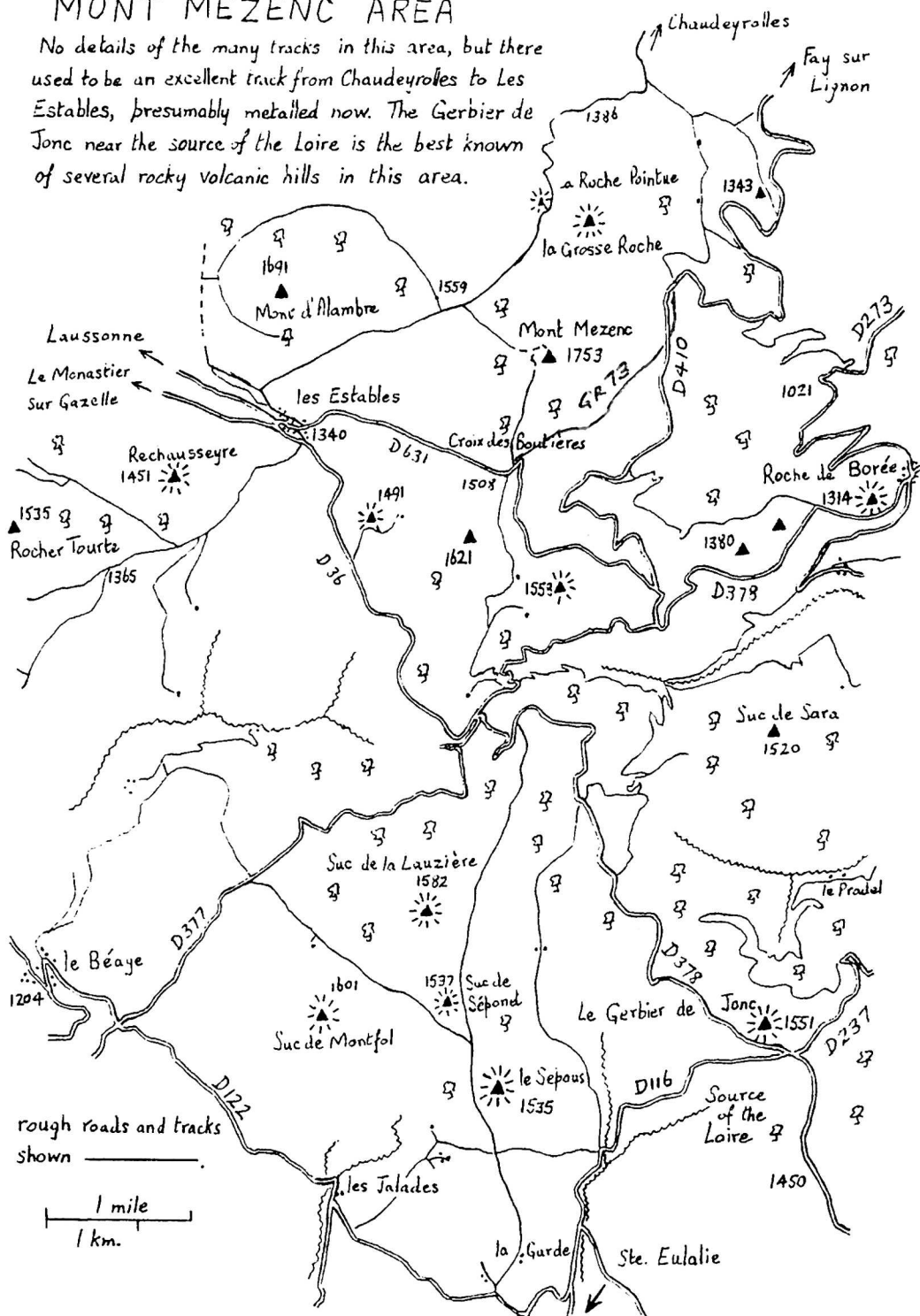
ARDECHE: A RIDGE TRACK

No details of any tracks in this beautiful area of rolling hills and deep wooded valleys; rough roads and cart tracks shown thus ———.



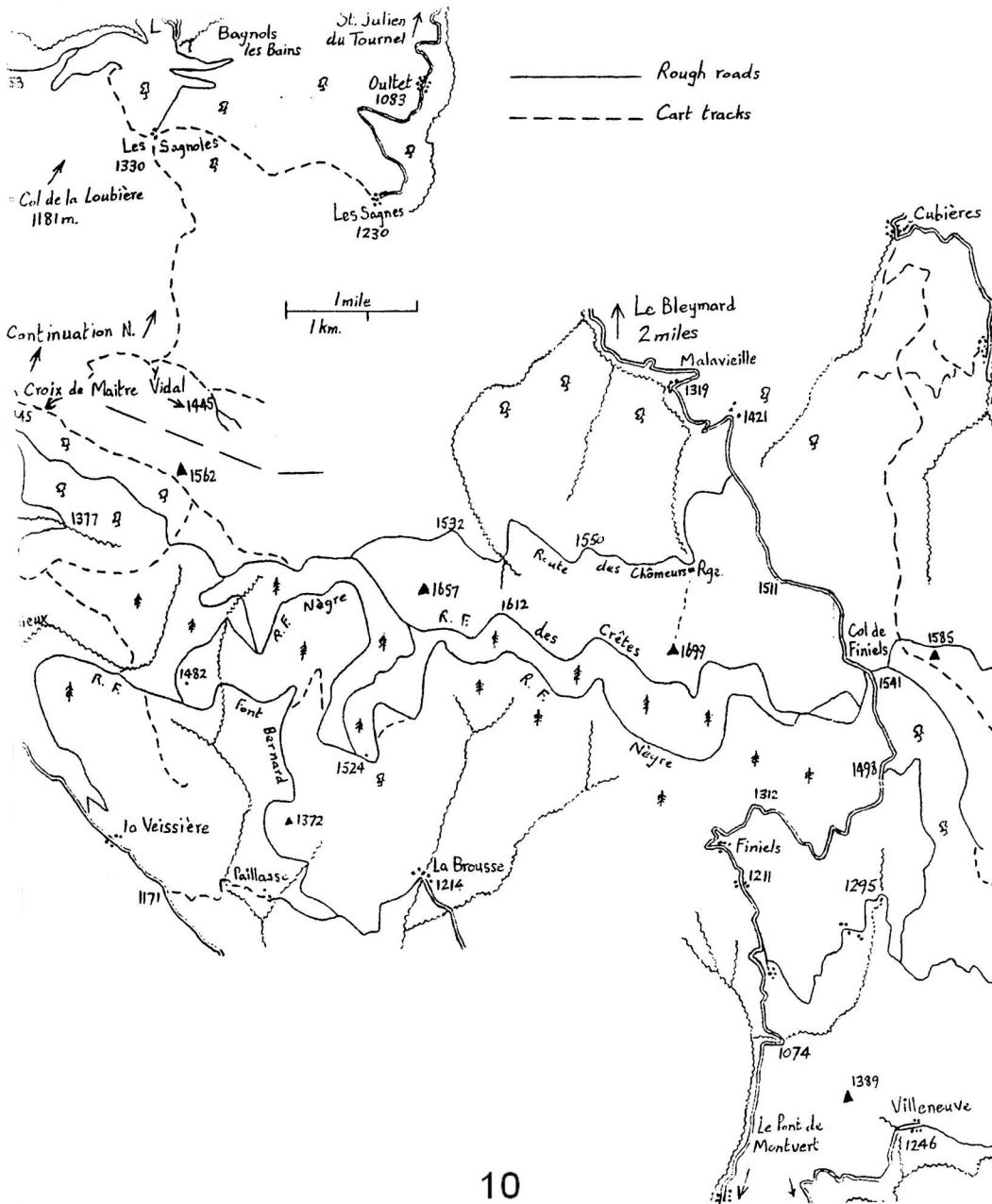
MONT MEZENC AREA

No details of the many tracks in this area, but there used to be an excellent track from Chaudeyrolles to Les Estables, presumably metalled now. The Gerbier de Jonc near the source of the Loire is the best known of several rocky volcanic hills in this area.



M80 fold 6 or M240 fold 7 IGN 27 39 (438) or 59 VAD E

No details of the many rough roads and tracks in this area. The R.F. des Crêtes runs mainly along the northern edge of the forestry, whilst R.F. Nègre runs through it. Little forestry on the other named routes (?).



MONT LOZERE (E. end) Villefort or Génolhac to Col de Finiels or le Pont de Montvert
M80 fold 7 or M240 fold 7 IGN 27 39 (438) or 59 VAD E

Café ? at Mas de la Barque (there was in 1957). A very scenic rideable rough road continues west to l'Hôpital, contouring the southern slopes of Mont Lozère, where fork left for le Pont de Montvert or right for Col de Finiels. Fairly recently a CTC party took the R.F. du Mt. Lozère, which contours the north side of the hills; this is no doubt an equally fine route, which can be continued through the forest west of the col.



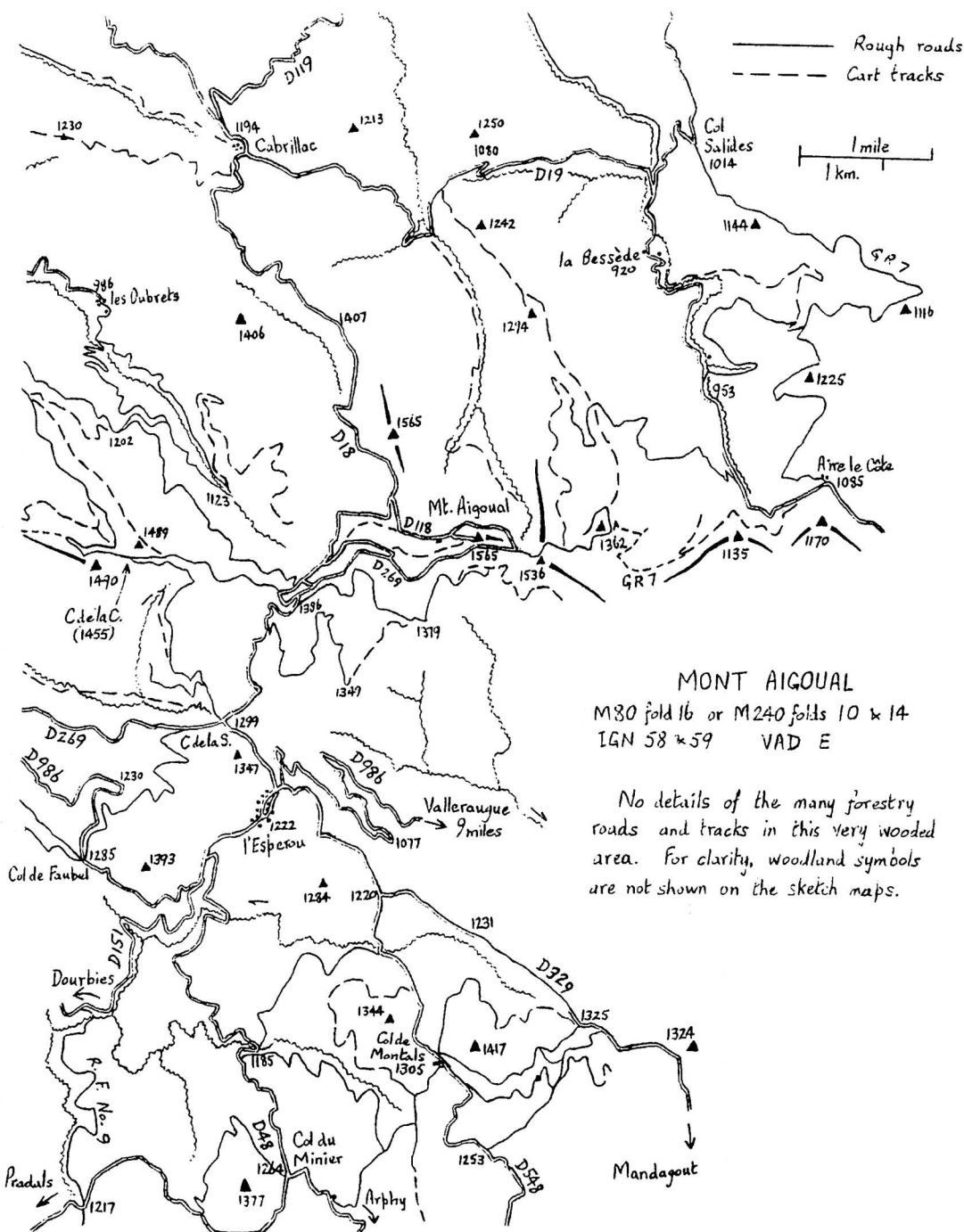
MONT AIGOUAL (N.W. PART)
Col de la Serreyrède (C. de la S.) to Col de la Caumette (C. de la C.) and Meyrueis.
M80 folds 15 x 16 or M240 fold 10 IGN 58 VAD E

See page 13 →

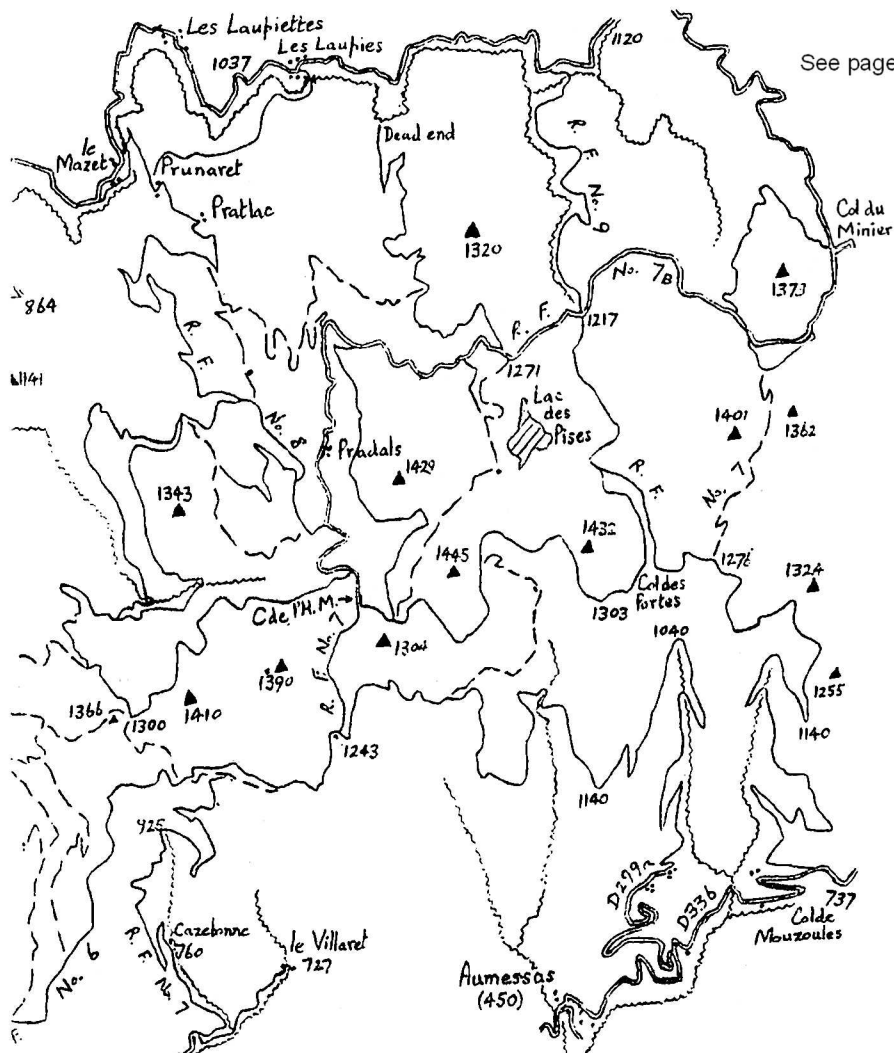


↓ See page 14

← See page 12



← See page 12



MONT AIGOUAL (S.W. PART)

Col du Minier (C. du M.) to Col de l'Homme Mort (C. de l'H. M.) to Col de la Barrière (West of Alzon) etc.

M80 folds 15x16 IGN 58x65 VAD E

R.F. Nos 7 & 6 form a very fine route through the forests, particularly R.F.6, which follows a long descending ridge. (Chater' Willis, 1966). Plenty of other rough roads ——— or cart tracks ——— are possible in the area, much of which is wooded.

