

Vol.1. No.3.

August, 1953

Editorial

The ascent of Nanga Parbat followed that of Everest by only five weeks, and as a consequence was overshadowed by the earlier event, at least in the British Press. Herr Buhl, the first man to set foot on the summit, is to be congratulated on having conquered at last a mountain which has cost far too many lives - three in 1895, nine in 1934, sixteen in 1937 and two in 1951 - thirty in all, a fearful price to pay.

The siege of Nanga Parbat has lasted fifty-eight years, that of Everest thirty-two. Repeated failure (and disaster too) had wrapped about these peaks an aura of impregnability, intensifying the mystery common to all virgin summits and elevating them to an almost legendary status. Now that they are shown to be not inviolable, real, no longer mysterious, they have lost much of their poetry. A good many mountaineers will, in their hearts, regret this change - romance usually stirs the imagination more than reality - but their congratulations will be none the less sincere.

Of the greatest giants remaining unclimbed, K2, Kangchenjunga and Dhaulagiri come easiest to mind, and perhaps the first of these will yield to the Americans this year. In spite of the attendant loss to the adventurous imagination, some of us look forward to the time when all the highest summits will have been reached, and men will go to the Himalaya to climb only for pleasure, the best reason for climbing.

Or am I committing heresy?.

SAGA SONG OF THE MOUNTAIN NYMPHS

On a grey March morning four years ago the Mountain Nymphs first drew together, but were mute. There were no sagas to sing, no voice to sing with, no one to listen. Now we have sagas in plenty, now people will listen, now we have taken unto ourselves a voice.

A voice that can sing mightily in the gritstone country, and the whisper of which can reach even unto Cornish cliffs and lonely Sutherland hills: a voice that can bring pangs of nostalgia to our exiles: that can speak in the committee rooms of kindred clubs: that can roar exultantly with all the fierce joy of a growing and virile club.

The Mountain Nymphs, now more numerous, have chosen one of those first few to be their spiritual leader in this fifth year of activity. One who is aware of the honour, and will strive by word and example to influence for good the character of the club, and thus project the same ideals and philosophy into the mountaineering world.

One who has struggled in those four years to preserve the original ideals - the gay audacity: the friendly welcome to novices: the high standard of all round ability: the philosophy of loving to climb hills, to see hills, to be among hills, and not to regard hills merely as a display case for prowess - in fact, those many things which bind together to become the fibre of the club's character, and the common spirit of its members.

This year there are new problems to solve if we would preserve that character, and still continue to grow. That our numbers will increase is inevitable, yet we must keep intact the friendly spirit which has become in so short a time our tradition. Our voice, the newsletter, is one step towards this end: there will be others, prominent amongst them I hope, a club hut and the first journal.

There are, too, fresh fields for achievement. We must constantly adjust our ideas to changing circumstances. The proudest summit of the world has yielded after a prolonged siege, unpleasantly like a military operation, and there must be those who share my hope that with its ascent there will die the nationalistic rivalry its constant challenge aroused. Kangchenjunga remains virgin, and will so remain, a mountaineer's mountain, a very queen of peaks, for many years yet, symbol of the vast untrodden realms which still await the adventurous of all nations.

This is an era of high adventure and the greatest stories of mountaineering have yet to be written. We are fortunate in having young men of promise in the club, and my vision of our ultimate strength may be realised when some of them set foot not only in the arctic, but in the Andes - and even the Himalaya. Those fortunate few will write pages in the annals of our sport: we must not neglect them - I would quote Lauge Koch's words about Gino Watkins and his companions, "Take care of them.... years are passing rapidly.... employ them while they are young in spite of economic questions and other difficulties."

Perhaps, too, and old fox shall teach you the lore of the trail. If any of you, with fifty pounds in pocket and three months to spare, come to me, I can yet show you peaks that have known no foot on their summit, Whilst, under our noses, as late, indeed, as last year a new gritstone edge yielding many routes was unearthed in the Sheffield area. The future awaits you: grasp it firmly with both hands. I am but the inspiration - it is you who are the real power, and in your prowess and daring rests the future of the club - and the Mountain Nymphs shall sing your saga songs.

One last word. There are sweet joys, to taste which requires only a pair of boots and an untroubled spirit: a friend whose heart is true: a billy and a bivvy by a spring: and a hill nearby. Give me these and perhaps a fair day, and the cry of the curlew in my ears, and they will produce a state of contentment not to be unenvied by the most veteran mountaineers.

I well know, as Frank Smythe knew, that "height counts for little,.... it is the hill that matters. The low hills teach us that height, be it a mere two or three hundred feet, is something precious, something that quickens life to a nobler rhythm. No earth raised on earth can accomplish so subtle a transformation, can bring such joy. There is something greater. It is the spirit of the hills."

G.S.

RECENT AND FORTHCOMING MEETS:

Sixteen Stones Walk, June 27th/28th.

Saturday, June 27th: After sleeping out beside Polterguist Barn, the party crossed Kinder and Featherbed Moss in warm sunshine. We rested at each Stone, even napping on top of Bleaklow. From Barrow Stones, a direct line to Horse Stone took us to the head of Derwent Valley, where we bathed our feet and quaffed tea. Wind and cloud drove us from Crowstones to Bullstones cabins, which we shared with a K.M.C. member.

Sunday, June 28th: Cabins surrounded by mist: map and compass the order of the day. From Bull Stones we moved by compass round the head of Abbey Brook (interesting map work) to Back Tor, taken direct by a moderate gully (V.D. in rucksacks), which we named "Parslow Fern Gully", after the first man up. The clouds cleared and we bashed along the Edges to Ashopton Viaduct where, incredibly, we lost Lawrence Burns and Mark Hayhurst. The remainder "lit out" for Kinder via Crookstone Knoll and Madwoman's Stone, the 16th and last. In sunshine and shadow we ran down off Ringing Roger into Edale, convinced that the 16 Stones is Derbyshire's finest round. What a pity only six people shared this magnificent meet.

H.P.

Coniston, July 10th/12th.

By July 4th, only seven bookings had been received, so the Meet was cancelled. But, in spite of the warning given in the circular, a further six bookings arrived the following week, the latest of them on Thursday, the day before the Meet should have started! If all these bookings had come in by the deadline given, we could have run a fourteen seater.

We really can't expect Clarks to hold a coach later than one week before a proposed meet, particularly at this time of the year when there's a big demand elsewhere. So next time, roll 'em in!

D.C.C.

Roaches, August 15th/16th.

The Roaches need no introduction, and we have had many good times there in the past, both on the rocks and at the "Three Horse Shoes". For newcomers, there is a bus service from Leek, and a barn and camp sites will be available. Let's have a record turn-out.

D.C.C.

Langdale, August 29th/30th.

An excellent centre for both walking and climbing, and there's always the Dungeon Ghyll Hotel. We've only had one meet in the Lakes, so this will be an opportunity to try something fresh. Roger Turner is the leader.

D.C.C

NEW ROUTE

Tryfan (Milestone Buttress Area).

Columbyne. 625 ft. V.D. 80 feet of rope.

To the right of Ivy Chimney at the top of the Milestone Buttress are Little Gully, a wet black buttress, and then a shallow watercourse. The route

starts 200 ft. up the water-course, where it begins to widen, about 25 ft. above a rocky pitch and about level with the top of the black buttress. On the right rises a nose whose left face has three parallel cracks.

1. 30 ft. Climb the right-hand crack and swing right to a stance and belays.
2. 30 ft. Step back left and up a steep little face to a crevasse. Spike delay to the right.
3. 60 ft. Up the slabs above the belay to a ledge and steep wall split by a vertical crack (V.S., not yet led)
4. 25 ft. Up the overhanging corner 4 ft. left of the crack to a crevasse.
5. 20 ft. Up the wall of the crevasse and across right to the start of an arete.
6. 60 ft. Up the arete to a vicious crack, then round to the right and climb the other side of the crack to the top of the pinnacle. Up the arete. Belay among grooves.
7. 80 ft. Out of grooves to right, and up a delightful slab to a large heather terrace.
8. 60 ft. Walk across heather to the steep left corner of a belt of slabs. Climb a thin conspicuously hard crack, or mantleshelf the left corner. Ascend a chimney leading back to the slabs.
9. 40 ft. Direct up the slabs to a heather terrace below the left corner of the Great Tower.
10. 50 ft. Up the corner of the Tower by jamming a conspicuous steep crack to a turf stance near some dead trees. Thread belay.
11. 15 ft. Up a heathery wall trending right to a wet incut corner, and grassy ledge. A thread belay can be manoeuvred by inserting a pebble into any of the cracks in the right wall. A belay is absolutely essential for the subsequent exposed traverse.
12. 80 ft. The Great Traverse.

The crux. Requires a steady leader and last man. Move right from the grassy corner and traverse the exposed face for 80 ft., making two awkward descending moves and rounding two awkward corners. The last move is perhaps the most trying part of the climb for the leader. The situations are superb, with apparently no hitches for running belays. Belay at the base of a short gully.

13. 15 ft. Ascend diagonally right from the gully. Rock stance and belay at base of pinnacle.
14. 70 ft. Climb the pinnacle crack and arete to the final cairn.

First ascent: E. Byne, C. Ashbury, C. Bates, D. Willson.
F. Phillips. April 7th, 1953.

O R E A D S I N S H O R T S

Oread Venture 2 reports the ascent of two virgin peaks, the Lyngstraltind (4,750 ft.) and the Store Gjemmentind (4,810 ft.). The party has also climbed three new routes, the North Face of the Rodbjergtind, the East Ridge of the Festningen, and the Hemmeligtind by the West Face and South Ridge.

Bob Pettigrew and Trevor Panther will shortly join the expedition.

The Cullums have returned from a wet week in Arran. Goat Fell was the only ascent. The Wrights are still there with two friends. Three eels in a nearby burn devoured waste food, and rats devoured pieces of tent and two nylon pan-scrubbers.

Ray Brown and Jim Winfield, with two ladies, spent a pleasant week walking and climbing (or so Ray says!) in the Lake District in June.

Geoff Gibson is at present in Switzerland - hence the late appearance of this Newsletter.

The holiday season must have produced a fine crop of episodes suitable for this column. Let's have them in the next issue!

The Object: Geoffrey RIDDLE Gibson. ("Jimmy" to his pals!

Although it seems a long time ago, it was only as recently as Easter 1951 that Geoff had the misfortune to slump (how else?) into Dave Penlington in the Royal at Capel and became inveigled into sharing our hospitality at Tyn-y-Shanty. (I remember it quite clearly - we were out of food at the time). Only recently, I say, and yet, such is his popularity that he is already in his second year of office as the Club's Secretary.

No-one will deny that there's a sort of well dressed dignity about the man - even his rucksack seems to sit rakishly on his shoulders. Only a few of us who have been intimate with him know that this was caused by severe frost-bite in the big toes, some years ago in Scotland. (At least, that's what "Gibbo" says!

He is often to be seen attired in evening dress (not even hired!) dispensing largesse and even larger lines to wide-eyed little girls, at the Technical College dances. But, girls, there is absolutely no truth in the rumour that he is really a Baron..... it's just that some of us still owe him a few paltry coppers from our Austrian holiday last year.....

He has no title, but he has a great sense of humour and a boundless enthusiasm for everything connected with serious mountaineering. His determination and stamina find no happier outlet than when, on the early morning glacier trudge, there is the prospect of a long day of ice, snow, rock and sun before him.

But he can extract quite as much enjoyment from climbing on British rock, or from a "bash" across rough country in bad weather: and somehow, he always manages to imbue others with this enthusiasm which, I know, comes from his interpretation of the sport as a way of life rather than merely as a source of pleasure.

Geoff has always seemed the same to me - placid, good-humoured, a good mountaineer, and a good friend.