

OREAD MOUNTAINEERING CLUB

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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June 1954.

CYRIL MACHIN HURT IN FALL.

We regret to announce that on May 9th, Cyril Machin fell from Castle Naze whilst abseiling. It is believed that the rope slipped over the belay. He sustained injuries to his back and is at present in Manchester Royal Infirmary. He is remarkably cheerful and his condition is improving. Any member wishing to visit him will be welcome to stay at the Cullums flat.

The Club unites in wishing Cyril as rapid a recovery as possible.

Editorial

It is unfortunate that this front page should carry such sad news, because this issue marks the Newsletter's first birthday.

I should like to offer my sincere thanks to all who have sent contributions, from brief news snippets to full-length articles. If reading the Newsletter has given you any pleasure, these are the people who deserve the credit. May I ask you to keep up the good work through Volume II, to regard writing for the Newsletter as a regular Club activity? And may I also have your support in meeting the challenge presented by the production of our first Journal? The Oread Journal must have a character of its own, and not be merely a bumper issue of the Newsletter; it must be bright and entertaining; it must reflect the character of the Oread. A suitable length for articles and stories is 1,000 - 2,000 words, but don't be put off if your effort falls outside those limits. Start writing now.

The President would like to see the Journal translated from fancy to fact before he sails for South Georgia in the Autumn. Make it your job to see he is not disappointed.

D. C. C.

EASTER IN SCOTLAND

GLENCOE: Pete Cole, Clive, Ron Dearden, Bob Parflow and myself camped in Glencoe near the Meeting of the Three Rivers. The weather was excellent, and every day we slipped down to shirtsleeves. Not a great deal of snow, except on the high ridges where large cornices were in evidence and the snow was hard enough to step-kick.

The five of us did the Aonach Eagach Ridge on our first day and voted it well worth while and at least four of the party are prepared to back it against the Horseshoe as point of interest.

Saturday we spent wandering along the ridges of Bidean starting with Stob Coire nan Lochan, by NC Gully, yielding some 300-ft of step kicking in tolerably good snow. This gully is straight-forward but the rock scenery is interesting the walls being high and steep. Then we traversed the main summit of Bidean, and Beinn Fhada, dropping down into the Lost Valley where we all vowed we would camp the day.

On the Sunday we split up, Pete, Bob and I being in-
tend on the Crack climb on Stob Coire nan Beith, plus any continuation that would lead to the summit, whilst Ron and Clive spent the day walking, as Clive's sprained ankle was giving trouble. We can recommend the Crack route, the rock is reasonably sound and continuous and a traverse from the top of the climb leads to moderate rocks stretching to the summit. In a manner befitting members of the Old School we popped two bottles on the top and never has beer tasted so good. Ron and Clive were there to meet us (they provided the beer) and after a bask in the sun we went our separate ways back to camp.

We had a wonderful time in Glencoe and were grateful to the Barnsley boys for taking us up. G.R.G.

THE SOUTH GEORGIA PARTY: After a series of exasperating delays we reached Kingshouse at 1.30 p.m. on Easter Saturday. It was too late to climb when we'd pitched the tents - a day lost. There was a goodly gathering of about a dozen Creads at Kingshouse that night.

On Sunday we had a pleasant day - up the Lost Valley and the round of Stob Coire nan Lochan, Bidean and Beinn Fhada in perfect weather; less snow than usual at Easter, but enough to look pleasant and provide a 1,000-ft . . . glissade from Beinn Fhada. We set off for Fort William at 8,30 p.m. There we learnt of the fatality on Nevis. The popular press reports describe how the R.A.F. team recovered Mrs. Emery's body. Actually it was first the Rock and Ice boys and later six Oreads, three Polaris and another who saved the R.A.F.'s face. This sad task occupied most of Monday.

On Tuesday Chunky and I surprised ourselves by doing Observatory Ridge in 2½ hours. The rock was warm and dry and the snow beautifully hard. Reaching camp at 7.0 p.m we found that Geoff Thempson and his brother had arrived during the day. On Wednesday we carried a camp to the Observatory, Geoff as Sherpa carrying most of our canned food. The night was cold but the next day was superb. We did the N.E. Buttress in the morning and Tower Ridge in the afternoon! The same day the Glen Nevis camp was attacked by cows which broke two tent poles and completely wrecked R.G.P.'s Tinker. But marauding cows are a hazard we shall not face in S.G. P.R.F.

A NOVICE ON NEVIS: The N.U.M.C. Easter Meet consisted of five members, one O.U.M.C. member and a lone Oread. We assembled equipment and provisions for a week and divided loads in inverse ratio of weight to height; I was the smallest. There was little snow until we reached the hut, tired and hungry and thankful for a brew.

Sunday March 27th was for three of us our first experience of snow and we tackled No.3 Gully. We returned via the gully, discovering en route the joys of glissading. In-drying our clothes on the stove chimney a pair of trousers and an item which we could only suppose was a chastity belt were partially destroyed. In the next two days we attempted Gullies No.4 and 5., and climbed Carn Dearg and thence along the Arete to the summit of Nevis. From immediately below the cornice of No. 5 I made an exploratory upward stab with my axe which dislodged much snow and swept my second off his belay. Luckily he managed to anchor before the line tightened.

Thursday April 1st, left the most lasting impression with me. I woke first and spoke in glowing terms of a rose-pink Tower Ridge against a lovely blue sky, but the party reasoned that it was All Fools' Day. However by 7 a.m. we were on Carn Dearg and hence on to Aonach Beag. The sun beat down out of a blue sky and the situation was spoilt only by the delay caused by the photographers.

Early on Saturday we pulled out regretfully in heavy rain, an extremely pleasant week. T.S.

RECENT AND FORTHCOMING MEETS.

Stanage. May 1st/2nd.

Leader.....Clive Webb.

Saturday evening in the plantation presented an amazing phantasmagoria (a fantastic series of illusive images or of real forms...Translator's note); for since the late hours of Friday night some thirty members and their friends had trekked from all points of the compass to make their annual pilgrimage to the largest of the gritstone edges. Tents of all sizes, shapes and colours lay huddled together in a fine example of nomadic jerry building.

The early arrivals, ably led by "GASTON GIBBO" and "PEG-IT PARSLOW" ranged along the Edge, mopping up many fine climbs between the rain-showers.

Colin Morris with a very fine lead, made the fabulous "Goliath's Groove" look easy.

A short sharp snow shower precluded the arrival of the Nottingham flying squad on the Sunday. When the elements finally relented, a massed assault on the cliffs was made, giving a fine finish to the good work begun on the Saturday.

Oliver Jones was rumoured to be bringing half a dozen beautiful girls along with him. Alas, unlike Oliver, the girls failed to materialise, and thus my excuse for delaying my departure was removed. This was a happy week-end in the true Oread spirit, which the unfortunate

Marsden-Rowsley May 15th/16th. Some nineteen Oreads and seven Loughborough College M.C. men (two of dual nationality) making a total of twenty four travellers, emerged from Marsden station at 11.30 p.m. unmolested by the ticket collectors. Course was immediately set for the Butterly reservoir, and ultimately two parties reached the top of Wessendenhead, and the Isle of Skye Inn, respectively. At the latter site several members debauched themselves until the small hours without consideration for comrades who were literally without a dinghy in a rough sea. The Hon. Editor was obliged, ere the dawn, to wring out his sleeping bag. The leader does not subscribe to the view that excessive social activities en route are indispensable.

On Saturday, the first party left the bivouac at 6 a.m. and traversed all the summits to arrive at the Yorkshire Bridge Inn by 5.40 p.m. Ken Wright's party came next; Charlie Cullum administered to the needs of the ladies in the third party, in which fine work he was eventually assisted by fabulous Falkner, with the party in transit from Colne. Various people were posted as "missing", noticeably the Hon. Sec., Clive Webb. But all had visited the Yorkshire Bridge Inn by midnight on Saturday. Meanwhile the leader had departed alone at 6.25 p.m. Saturday, and reached Rowsley at 11.15 p.m.

The majority concluded the walk in leisurely fashion on Sunday. A special word of congratulation is due to the two ladies, Mary Cullum and Jean Challands, also Glenn Gundry, a non-member who accompanied the Colne party.

A word about the Colne party. They got within nine miles of Marsden on Friday night, losing Clive on the way. On Saturday Glenn Gundry left the others behind by running a good deal of the way. However, they re-united at Yorkshire Bridge, and all four finished the seventy-mile course. A fine achievement, and a fine week-end all round.

R.G.P.

Five Inns Walk, June 19th/20th. Which inns, no-one seems to know yet, but Gibbo (meet leader) is a man of taste in these matters, Drinking clothes will be worn.

Gardom's Edge, July 2nd/3rd. Joint meet with Coves and Clogs. If the climbs on Gardom's are too fierce there's always Birchen's or the Robin Hood. Knobby Clarke is leader.

OREADS IN SHORTS.

Messrs. Fisher, Harby and Burgess were in Glencoe at Easter. The only news so far concerns Bill Murray, who remarked on the good rock of the Rannoch Wall. Fisher replied "Good rock - it's nothing but a ---- gash heap!" Murray's retort courteous was to wash the Oreads' breakfast pots next day; as Johnny said, "We've left Bill to wash and tidy up".....Phil Falkner has got a year's leave to join the S.G. expedition.....Bleaklow's famous white hares were in evidence during the Marsder-Rowsley saga.....Memorable quote by Glenn Gundry (non-member) after doing Colne-Rowsley: "I'm not a proper walker - I just did this to see what it was like"..... If your pals haven't sent their three bobs, don't lend them this Newsletter - make the blighters pay!

BOOKS AND MOUNTAINEERS.

The purpose of this column is to provide notes of new books, periodicals received and extracts from books old and new that may be of interest to us all. The column will also provide an information service for Oread members and any queries sent to the Librarian will be either forwarded to someone who has the necessary information requested, or, the answer will be found from the Oread Library. **IMPORTANT:** Please send a stamped addressed envelope when communicating with the Librarian on matters relating to the Library. Questions should relate to existence of new routes, availability of accomodation etc., The idea is to provide some means for the newcomers - to climbing, to be able to draw upon the experience and

knowledge of the more experienced member of the Oread. Finally, please address all requests for books etc., to... Mr. J. Johnson, County Library, Nottingham Road, RIPLEY, Derbyshire. Tel. Ripley 321.

C O R R E S P O N D E N C E

Dear Sir,

Accuse an Oread of bad rope management and he or she will be highly indignant, but the fact remains that a dangerous practice has arisen, mainly due to the current fashion of wearing a spliced abseil sling and karabiner. Those slings which are intended to serve as an aid in roping down (and to promote a neat waist line) are being used far too often as a form of belay and in almost all cases are unsatisfactory for the latter purpose. The limits of adjustment of a standard spliced loop are far too narrow to cope with all belay situations and I have seen on many occasions such a loop used where it appeared to be convenient, where in fact a far superior belay existed out of range of the loop. At least one fatal accident (where the second was killed and not the leader) has been attributed to the use of a sling as a means of belaying, and on our Stannage meet of May 1st/2nd I saw a situation which would almost certainly have resulted in injury to the second, had the leader or the third man come off. And in this particular case had the person referred to used the climbing rope instead of a sling, a belay could have been devised that would have held a coach and four.

It is my opinion that where an abseil sling can be used, the climbing rope would in almost all cases be more effective. This is not intended to preclude the use of a knotted loop suitably adjusted or the use of nylon cord in certain circumstances.

So harking back to the reference to the Stannage meet - if the cap fits wear it!

Yours sincerely,

G. R. Gibson.

P.S. I have cited an actual instance in this letter in an attempt to give reality to what might otherwise seem a mere technicality, and no personal feelings whatsoever are involved; only a strong conviction that many of us are

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PROFILE.....THE OREAD.

"But who are ye in rags and rotten shoes,
You 'dirty-bearded, blocking up the way?"

"We are the pilgrims, master; we will go
Always a little further; it may be
Beyond that last blue mountain barred with snow."

In 1949 that answer might well have been forthcoming and, in the event, would surely have been proclaimed with the arrogance of youth. Likely enough it would have been made in a blatantly overconfident fashion, aggressively, in a way calculated to hide any inward misgivings as to the ultimate truth. But it is important to note that at least it would have been made; that within the small nucleus of founder-members an essential element was to be found, for otherwise this would never have been written.

By many standards a curiously composed group, brought together by fortuitous circumstances and a newspaper advertisement, it nevertheless fought its own battles, mainly internecine, and within a year had established a character which, although self-avowedly unorthodox, delivered itself into strictest conformity by this very assertion. To be sympathetic to the ideas and customs of the long established, large and prosperous clubs was as good a way as any of achieving social ostracism from the 1949 committee of the Oread - and in that year, eighty per cent of the Oread constituted the committee. It was inevitable reaction against certain pre-war attitudes, which had endowed many of the larger, and therefore more responsible, clubs with some of the aspects of the "closed shop". But there were mellowing influences.

In some way or other Cyril Machin was acquired, and he, by his singular example, unwittingly did more to indicate a general direction than was apparent at the time - but then of course, Cyril was the most unorthodox of them all. His name and strange accomplishments were legendary, and no man in the short history of the Oread has been regarded with quite the same affection as that which was accorded to C.B.M. in the early days. One

always tends to think of those 1949 meets in terms of Cyril Machin and his unusual adventures.

New blood became a dire necessity toward the latter part of '49. It came in a slow trickle, and fortunately for the Oread it was of the highest quality: Oliver Jones, Gerry Britton, John Adderley, and most important of all - Eric Byne.

This was the era of the Baslow Area Guide, when the Club did not miss a week-end's climbing on the Edges over a period of four months. There can be little doubt that in giving the Oread a job to do, by issuing his demands and imposing his personality at such a critical point in time, Eric Byne, together with George Sutton, ensured that this Oread would be no transitory "seven days wonder" - for now there was a spirit, already they were "a little further".

From 1950 to the present day three periods of differing thought and influence can be discerned, all of which have moulded the Club's present character. There is what might be termed the Woodbine Cottage era, from '50 to the early months of '52, followed by the Gibson-Moore coup d'etat, with its subsequent "Administrative Reform and Consolidation" policies - and lastly, from early '53 to the present, there has appeared a new culture which will almost undoubtedly be known as the Beeston Period.

Lyngen '51 will always be associated with the first of these, and although much has been said of this venture by now, almost too much perhaps, it is a simple and sober statement of fact that "Lyngen" is still the greatest, bravest and most inspiring achievement of the Oread. Accomplished by a University group, with time, influence and precedent to assist, it would have been notable in its results; but planned and carried into execution by men, and one in particular, who had everything to lose and nothing but an ideal to gain, it was a thing of rare significance, and it is doubly significant that the man in question should thus produce a living example of what he foreshadowed in his foreword to the Club log, and fitting that he should be the first President to have risen, as it were, "from the -ranks".

The sudden flowering that produced the Gibson-Moore combination will be remembered for the acrimony that resulted from its impact upon an otherwise quiet and orderly A.G.M. But when the heat of that debate has passed beyond recall it will still be remembered for the promise it gave of new strength and integrity of vision. And in these ideas that came from this new source, from Gibson and Moore, from Penlington and Wright, was there not a refreshing hint of puritanism combined with perhaps, a touch of fanaticism? The older, more docile leading strings were to be dropped, mental and physical fibres were to be tensioned, and all base metal was to be tempered. In the circumstances, reference to "refinement by fire", or the "immortal Phoenix" would not have been out of place.

Into new and almost untried hands the influence passed, and the result was a bracing up, an increase in efficiency of authoritative administration. There were new members, and a quickening of life, for there had been a draught of air, perhaps a little uncomfortable at first, which in practice proved to have many of the virtues of its original promise.

Up to the present day, four men can be said to have influenced fundamentally the growth and contemporary character of the Oread. Of these, Sutton, Machin and Byne have been previously mentioned. Without any shadow of doubt Gibson is the fourth. With quiet genius he has woven those threads which in the last eighteen months have lent a new and richer texture to the Oread activities. But they are subtle threads, not easy to trace, although they are like the radials of a spiders web - attenuated and infinitely strong.

The Beeston Period is contemporary history, too close for analysis and too blatantly alive and vigorous to require critical review. Prolific with efficiency and new enterprise, birth place of a second northern venture, it is the proper residuary legatee of the Woodbine Cottage ghosts. As the home of one, Falkner, patron of all the singular and ancient arts, it already has the air of being guaranteed a place in future legend.

And what of the remainder? What of the ordinary member - this creature who calls himself an Oread? what are they like, these people who, by their degree of collective loyalty and spirit, can carry the Oread yet "a little further", or destroy all that which has been achieved?

University lecturer, metal worker, student and clerk, surveyor and typist, geologist and housewife, engineer and "out of work" - all of them, and a score of other denominations, are Oreads - and many of them, still young to the ways of mountains, are like G.K. Chesterton's "Secret People" and have not spoken yet.

"It may be we are meant to mark with our riot and
our rest
God's scorn for all committee men. It may be beer
is best.
But we are the men of the Oread; and we have not
spoken yet.
Smile at us and pass us. But do not quite forget."

Today's future will be their present, and it is well that they know what has gone before.

And what of the character of these men and women? If one seeks for classical reference to the Oreades one will find them thus described "...fond of music and dancing (sic. no reference to beer), long-lived but not immortal (praise be!), usually gentle, occasionally formidable."

Having placed on record, within brackets, comments suitable to the twentieth century, one searches further for enlightenment and inspiration. Consider the men. Of some one may say with Hamlet:

"See what grace was seated on this brow;
Hyperion's curls; the front of Jove himself;
An eye like Mars, to threaten and command;
A station like the herald Mercury;
A combination and a form indeed,
Where every god did seem to set his seal,
To give the world assurance of a man;"

(Did someone whisper, "Padley"?)

Of others more simply: "...like a mildew'd ear,"
for they are of many kinds.

But the women, mark you, are all beautiful creatures who have made their solemn vows to the goddess Aphrodite; and Artemis, the virgin huntress, has given them her instructions, and sent them joyously on her errand:

"The Ocean-Nymphs and Hamadryades,
Oreads and Naiads, with long weedy locks,
Offered to do her bidding through the seas,
Under the earth, and in the hollow rocks."

The bachelors may well beware, for they have learned their lessons well - and seldom do they fail.

It might be well to end in this flippant fashion, but there remains the future, the unlimited possibilities ahead. Where is the Oread going? How is the intimacy of a small club, the almost family spirit which is pre-eminent today, and which is probably the most precious of its charms - how is it to be maintained against a growing membership?

It has been said recently that if the Oread stays close to the moors and edges of its native Derbyshire, where it can meet and make merry, and walk and climb with a social emphasis, and if it weave these things into the wider issues of Wales, the Alps, the Arctic, and ultimately the Himalaya, then it will have nothing to fear. Perhaps this is the answer, and in the years to come if the Oread can still say 'Yes' with a firm voice to the question I would pose: "Could you on this fair mountain leave to feed, and batten on this moor?" - if they have not forgotten how to batten on a moor - then I think it is.

Latest Bulletin on Cyril Machin at time of going to press:

"A little better". Previously his condition had been described as "Poorly".