

EDITORIAL

I feel that this Editorial should contain some sort of Christmas message, but as I write (mid-December) it is uncertain whether this issue will reach you before 1956. For in spite of my appeal for material in the last Newsletter, only a pitiful trickle has come in. In fact it looks as if the Newsletter is folding up for good. It seems extraordinary that in an active club of eighty members, of whom twenty or thirty are climbing somewhere every weekend, there should be too few people interested in telling others about their activities to keep in circulation even such a modest publication as this. That, however, is the sad truth.

But although this may well be my last Editorial, I feel disposed to put such gloomy thoughts behind me. Christmas is in the air. It is a happy season, and it is of one of the happiest Christmases that I propose to write. I spent that Christmas in North Wales with Phil Falkner and one Arthur Tubby, in the days before either Phil or I had heard of the Oread - and probably before you had, for the Oread was then only one year old.

The day I am thinking of started very ordinarily, almost depressingly. The three of us walked over into Cwm Idwal beneath a heavy sky. Deep snow lay everywhere, and the Llyn appeared inky black by contrast. The Slabs were smoothly blanketed with soft snow from top to bottom, so we looked higher for a climb and eventually decided on the Cneifion Arete. We met with no difficulties on the way, but the climbing was energetic and exhilarating, and we arrived at the top in a cheerful mood. The Glyders were wrapped in mist, so we turned down the Gribin and raced one another on the descent, stopping near the bottom for some horseplay with snowballs.

Then we noticed that the clouds were breaking, patches of blue showed here and there, with great shafts of sunlight making brilliant splashes on the snow-clad hills. We looked up at the Glyders. Along the edge of the plateau a sunlit cornice gleamed in simple purity against a blue sky. It was one of the loveliest sights a mountaineer could wish for, and Phil and I at once set off back up the ridge, Arthur being dispatched to the camp to prepare our meal.

We reached the top in an hour or so, there being no difficulties en route, and found the effort well worth making. The clouds had nearly disappeared and the summit was bathed in glorious sunshine. The Snowdon group was also in sunshine and looked too beautiful to be true. Certainly I have seen few more magnificent sights, even in the Alps. Tryfan was shining like a magic castle built of icing sugar, and even the Carnedd's, usually uninteresting to look at, were radiant with a wintry splendour.

The sun sank as we tramped across to Glyder Fach, and the snow underfoot changed from sparkling diamonds to burnished gold. At the summit we turned for a last look at Snowdon, now a purple silhouette behind which floated fire-haloed

tatters of cloud. The descent of Bristly Ridge was tricky enough to be interesting, and as we ran down the last few yards to Bwlch Tryfan we felt that it had been a full day. But it was not yet over.

The sun was setting as we went down into Cwm Bochlwyd. The western wall of the cwm was hidden in luminous purple shadow; the little lake was covered with darkly glistening ice; beyond it the West Face of Tryfan, now flushed a deep rose-pink, flung its fairy turrets against an indigo sky. Along the Nant Ffrancon, the western snowfields were a delicate green, while those on the eastern side deepened from orange to pink as we watched. And far away to the north, beyond it all, gleamed a thin bright line of sea, fading, fading away into an infinity of golden promise.

THE DINNER MEET, NOV. 12, 1955.....by OLIVER JONES.

"Bless this house, oh Lord, we pray,
Keep itsafe by night and day."

These lines, sung with an appealing tremolo by the staff of the Devonshire Arms, Baslow, greeted the members and guests who gathered for the annual invasion of these august precincts. A dinner was provided which was well up to standard and wine played from the fountains round all public statuos. Oratory, official and otherwise, also flowed apace. Harry Pretty told us how he was elected President while dissecting a penguin, then read a letter from Brazil. R.G. Pettigrew, in proposing the health of the guests, insulted only half their number. Is he slipping? Or did one of them sock him last year? He made up for it, however, by insulting more than the usual number of Oreads. Alf Bridge, in his reply, proved to be a veritable gold-mine of legend and tradition where the early history of mountaineering is concerned. Showell Styles proposed the health of the Oread Mountaineering Club and perpetrated the most shocking pun of this or any other century. The reply, by Pete Jones, achieved the ultimate in that brevity which is the soul of wit. O.A. Jones also spoke.

There was a certain amount of music, of various kinds, and a dance was held, competently M.C.'d by Stan Moore. Quite the most fascinating glimpse of the evening was that of the President's wife, looking like a terrior hauling at somebody's trousers, trying to drag a gigantic red-haired figure from the hall - a symbolic end to a joyful occasion.

On the following day, Birchen's Edge and the slave market at Addis Ababa could not be told apart. Haughty Grand Viziers and Caliphs strode hither and yon, jerking their female slaves along them at the ends of ropes. Trafalgar Wall was led by Don Rich of the Barnsley M.C. followed by Ria Loggott of the Pinnacle, and a number of Cavo and Crag types. Dennis Hammond led Yardarm quite brilliantly - the only one able to follow him being the Barnsley M.C. representative. When Alison Harper and Ria Loggott got up Sail chimney, quite a rush developed and within the next minute the chimney veritabily bulged with Cavo-and-Crag, Rock-and-Fell, and Barnsley, all mixed up. It was remindful of the occasion when the Derbyshire foxhounds included a lone female in the pack - and the fox came in fifth! A glorious weekend, with kindly weather.

WHAT OTHERS HAVE SAID - I: WHAT TO TAKE.....by GEORGE SUTTON.

BOOTS: "The soles should project at least half an inch all round beyond the uppers when the boots are first made....."

- Quotation from "Badminton", by Claude Benson.

ALPENSTOCK: "Wherefor the fellpole should still be held with the point above and behind one. The second notion, assisted by a vigorous effort at recovery, may be forwards. Wherefore the fellpole should still be held behind, lest haply it mix itself up with your legs and trip you. A white cross near the foot of Fioletwith Pike commemorates a fatal accident that happened to a young girl precisely in this way. She was running down thw slope with her pole held incorrectly in front of her, pitched over it, and with great violence over some low crags on to her head."

- From "British Mountaineering", by Claude Benson.

GARTERS: "The kind most generally worn is one which covers the upper surface of the foot and is kept in place by a chain passing under the instep.....I have used two pieces of German silver watch chain.....itis wise to take some spare chain in case of mishap, and wirecutters will be found useful for cutting it into proper lengths."

- From "Mountaineering", by Claude Wilson.

"A box of fuses or an English pipe are little things much prized by a guide, and some odd ones may be taken as presents." - from "Mountaineering", by Claude Wilson.

"Another time I should certainly carry a light wooden charpoi (bedstead)," - from "Climbing in the Himalayas", by Martin Conway.

"As to ice-axes I always advocate a combination of my own invention, viz. a 6 ft. 3 in. ash shaft, shod like an alpenstock, while at the top is fixed an ordinary ladies' ice axo head of the Swiss pattern. This serves as an alpenstock, ice axo, tent pole at night. The top screws off at the axo head, and I can screw in a big spear head, which will finish off a bear, walrus or seal. This head, and a loose harpoon head, I carry in a leather case at my belt." - from "Arctic Equipment", by J.Russell-Jefferson.

I must warn new members that they adopt the above suggestions entirely at their own risk, though there may be some use for the last-named in an encounter with the Roches yak.

ODD ODE.

If it's camping you'd go,
There's a tale you should know,
A tale of our old friend John Wolbourn.
He came to his tent,
But found it was rent,
And said that all women are hellborn.

CORRESPONDENCE

Dear Editor,

Knowing full well how dearly you have the welfare of the Oread at heart, I must bring a serious situation to your notice. An underground movement has developed within the Club during recent weeks, its fell object being no other than the fostering and encouragement of the vice of CAVING amongst the Oread. In short the disciples of Norbert Casteret are in our midst, traitors within the citadel of mountaineering. Are we to become a society of moles, trolls and troglodytes? Is the O.A.C. to become O.C.&M.C.? I sincerely hope not.

I suggest that an emergency should be declared, an Anti-Caving Committee (O.A.C.C.) immediately constituted, and members of the Club found guilty of CAVING summarily expelled. Loyal members of the Club should keep a sharp watch for caving suspects, and promptly denounce them to the O.A.C.C. The following list of caving characteristics may prove useful.

1. Odd headgear. Helmets (miners', crash, ex-W.D., with visors, etc.) Headlamps (anything reminiscent of Dr. Kildare in the darkroom).
2. Boiler suits, not generally recognisable as such owing to the general petrification, outer casing of clay and nameless subterranean filth.
3. The possession of digging implements, spades, picks, shovels, mattocks, crowbars etc. Of recent years, diving suits, ladders, pneumatic drills, explosives and collapsible boats have all been quite in order among the tyros. Anyone carrying an underground tramline about should be fairly easy to spot.
4. A tendency to prefer the dark, walk on all fours or grovel in the dirt at the slightest provocation.

Incidentally I'm opening a fighting fund to promote anti-caving propaganda. Send contributions to: The Treasurer, 101 Lenton Boulevard, Nottingham. (Thank you.)

Before closing this letter and as a brief illustration of the degradation to which cavers can sink, I quote the following incidents.

A well-known Oread has been sending his Corgi dog ahead of him down perilous tunnels in Derbyshire (I thought Lord Shaftesbury had eradicated these evils in the nineteenth century).

The wife and small children of another Oread were seen waiting near the entrance to a cave (as at the pit-head in a mining disaster), waiting for the rescue party to bring out "Daddy", inextricably jammed in a tunnel.

Enough, I forbear to harrow you with further enormities. The remedy lies in our own hands. Let our motto be, "Above board, above ground" (not too far above ground, please) - and don't forget the fighting fund.

Yours,
Claustrophobia.

(I am sure that all right-minded Oreads will be grateful to our correspondent for bringing this grave matter to the notice of the Club. However, I cannot help thinking that his (or her) list of caving characteristics should be used with the greatest care. A member wearing a helmet, for instance, may be merely one of the poorer members, i.e. those unable to afford a car and thus forced to endure the rigours of travelling by motor-cycle. He may be quite innocent of the dreadful offence of which he might be suspected. Similarly a person wearing a boiler-suit may have been redecorating his house or cleaning out a cellar; those carrying digging implements may be on their way to Bryn-y-Worn with only the noblest of intentions; those armed with pneumatic drills and explosives may be about to pioneer the first Grade VIII rock climb. A tendency to prefer the dark is a common feature in young mountaineers, especially among pairs of opposite sex. Walking on all fours or grovelling in the dirt may be nothing more serious than the result of too enthusiastic celebration of a good day's mountaineering. No, these are not infallible symptoms of the disease. We must look for more subtle points of recognition - the unhealthy pallor caused by prolonged periods underground; the enlargement of the pupils due to continuous straining to see in the dark; the guilty stowing away in rucksacks of piles of wet and muddy clothing; the tendency for the face of the patient to light up at the mention of words like "syphon" and "cavern" - though the former may be associated in his mind with the word "Scotch" and the latter may be taken for "tavern". Caution as well as ruthlessness is a sine qua non of the anti-caver. Let us beware of McCarthyism in any of its forms. - Ed.)

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TWO POEMS.....by JIM KERSHAW.

LET'S BE MORBID.

From my youth
climbing weekend has followed weekend,
Easters and Whitsuntides without
number,
Seasons in the Alps.
I surveyed with pride
my collection of summits
my mountaineering scalps.

And now
the dream has faded
the magic lake sunk in the arid sands.
I am suddenly old,
clutching the dust of fairy gold
in withered hands.

MILD AND BITTER.

Quiet the sea now,
calm from the rain,
languid waves caressing the shore,
the lonely tent on the green turf
as it was in times before.
We are at peace now
lulled in the twilight
dreaming of islands
and hills to the North.

The Islands and Highlands
O never again,
the biting of midges,
the incessant rain,
the monotonous diet,
the long chilly night,
a desert for drinkers
with no pubs in sight.
I dream of the fleshpots
of heaped roaring fires
of featherbeds and armchairs,
and curse the liars
who lured me hither.

PROFILE: RAY HANDLEY (known to his best enemies as "Wing-nut").....by ANCN.

How Ray Handley came to be included in the ranks of the climbing fraternity is shrouded in mystery. It has been said, however, that several members of the Valkyrie Club were poking about at Black Rocks in the late nineteen-forties, and happening to turn over a wet stone, R.H. popped out.

This was followed by a meteoric rise to fame, and he is now a Committee member of the M.A.M. However, as a result of his recent visit to the Lake District on the "Everest weekend", he was unable to extend his sphere of social connections beyond the Sherpas.

As a result of several visits to the Alps, he is now able to identify, on sight, photographs of most of the Chamonix Aiguilles (no mean achievement) and has a nodding acquaintance with the Valais and the Dolomites. This year he achieved his crowning ambition - to be benighted on an Alpine peak!

He considers himself to be the second-best colour photographer in the world (he admits that there might be a better one somewhere!).

He was at one time regarded by the second-hand car dealers in southern Derbyshire as one of the main sources of their subsistence - a different vehicle every six months.

Since his recent visit to the Haute Savoie he is, without doubt, the perfect example of the well-dressed climbing gentleman (no connection with Tissington).

He has in his time led notable climbs, including some first ascents in Wales and, we believe, in Cornwall, and has freely disbursed his technique at White Hall, giving yeoman service on Matlock Training College weekends.

During the past two or three winters he has attempted the gentle art of skiing. It has been well said that he presents a perfect sitting target.

Altogether then, Ray is one of the best, but the best what, we have never been able to discover.

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Pete Janes got engaged at 12.30 a.m. on the morning after the dinner. Paul Morris has been engaged for some time but has kept it dark - no doubt he raided the funds to buy the ring. Congratulations - but do tell us about the wedding, won't you?

TAILPIECE: Beryl and I were on holiday in North Wales, we had an off day and went up to Llandudno for a dinner and dance. Knowing that we should be late back, we had made arrangements for the back door at P.y.G. to be left open for us. When we returned the inevitable had occurred, Chris had forgotten to leave it unlocked. We went round the house trying all the doors and finally found a weak link in the defences in the shape of an open window. Beryl is narrower in the beam than I am so we decided that she should climb through. She climbed on to the window ledge and peered through the window. Then with the skill of a born climber she jumped back to the ground. "I can't go in there," she said, "it's the Gents!" - Roger Turner. (Interesting question - how did she know? - Ed.)