

OREAD MOUNTAINEERING CLUB

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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Editorial

RACING OR RAMBLING?

Interested in motor-racing? If so, you will be pleased to hear that plans are afoot for constructing a road racing circuit twelve miles long in the Hartington area - the exact location and other details are still secret (why?). It appears, however, that the course will trespass on the northern end of the Dove valley, and that it will include a straight section on which cars may attain 200 m.p.h.

But what is the roar of cars at 200 m.p.h. to those for whom the measured tread of boots averaging two m.p.h. is as sweet music? What is the stink of petrol, oil and burning tyres to those who ask for no better perfume than clean air? And what are the crowds who will flock to the area to those who love the peace and solitude of the countryside? There is a collective noun for these phenomena - a bloody nuisance.

An interesting item in the report is that in 1953 the Minister of Transport toured the proposed course "in a taxi to avoid public notice". Good God, man, what's wrong with your own two feet? And why avoid public notice, unless you were doing something you were ashamed of?

It may be argued that the people I have referred to above (i.e. us) are a minority of cranks. I challenge that, but even if it were true are not the interests of minorities among the things democracy is supposed to safeguard? It is true that the area involved is small, and not a particular favourite of ramblers. But that is irrelevant. The proposed track has one feature in common with cement works, television masts and hydro electric schemes. It is intolerable.

D.C.G.

H O L I D A Y S

Now that the summer is rapidly approaching, climbers and lesser mortals have been, or are going to start, thinking about holidays. All of us at sometime or another have seen people departing for their holidays laden with luggage, and we must have wondered what enjoyment they got from the holiday of their choice, or even wondered how anybody could possibly enjoy any sort of holiday other than one spent mountaineering.

The question must be reversed however when people see climbers departing for their holidays. They probably wonder why our faces are not already frowning with an advance dose of nerves, due to thinking of the terrible ordeals we are to go through. Well, this is an attempt to enlighten them; it is also a slight picture for the newcomers to our ranks, who as yet have not had a long climbing holiday.

As I am a child at heart my stomach starts to feel rather on edge the night before departure. This it must be admitted is nervous excitement due to the thought that my much awaited holiday is shortly to arrive. This excitement then mounts steadily until the transport is caught on the following evening, and never really decreases until I return home. It is inevitable that somewhere on the journey a bus or train will be boarded but even the usual fight with a rucksack seems enjoyable.

The following day, be it morning or evening, the peaks that we have been waiting long to see come into view. The thoughts are spontaneous; if the area is new to us, our eyes dash round in a berserk manner, and we think, "Will that go? Look at that gully! What a magnificent face! Shall we have enough time for this and that and the other?" If however we have made this particular pilgrimage before, our eyes find scenes of desperate encounters, places where we have basked in the sun, in fact we are greeting old enemies which are also friends.

On my holidays the days seem to follow a definite pattern. The first morning of the holiday, I am out of bed like a flash and ready to go at a fantastically early hour, then as the holiday progresses the hour of rising gets later. It must be admitted that there is always a remote chance that one is getting fitter but the bed has a growing attraction which is hard to combat.

After about a week of seeing nothing but rock, snow, ice, scree and mountains in general, my soul gets a feeling of revulsion that can only be overcome by an "off day". Happy thought, stay in bed late, do nothing all day - how lazy can the climber become? There is one fact that must be mentioned here and it is that if the holiday is a wet one, and after climbing in rain for a week, you do have a day of rest, you can be sure your day of rest will be fine and it will be the only fine day of the holiday.

The companions of my holiday wanderings are those who are tried and trusted, in other words people I know well. I once went to Skye with a stranger and after two days we could not stand the sight of each other. Fortunately there were other parties in the house and we were able to go our respective ways. When the holiday was over we became the best of friends, but we have never climbed together since.

Of course the financial aspects of a holiday weigh heavily upon the minds of most climbers. The usual question when the holiday is first thought of is "Can I afford it?" and whilst on holiday the horrible thought is constantly in one's mind, "Will my money last?" Apart from the personal financial problem the question of currency allowances for the holiday abroad crops up. Here climbers are lucky, for they can usually live very cheaply in the huts and save their valuable francs for the more important things in life - Paris on the way through, and the local wine cellar. A word of advice to newcomers to the game: do not (as some friends of mine did the other summer) spend the last of the party's francs upon badges, but consider the interests of your

companions - unless of course you do not want to be invited out with them again.

Unfortunately like everything else, a climbing holiday must come to an end, sooner or later. However here a climber is lucky, because he is usually "snap happy", which means that he will have taken photographs of everybody and everything whilst he had the opportunity, and this means that he also has some pictures to look at, instead of memories, which grow dim over a period of years. He has also acquired a supply of information on which to base his "line shoots" for the next twelve months.

The steps of the journey are retraced and the climber returns home. Sunburnt if he is lucky, dirty inevitably, some marks of battle usually, but one thing is certain - he will have had a marvellous time and a holiday that he would not exchange for fifty weeks at Brighton. - M.H.

RECENT AND FORTHCOMING MEETS

Brassington, February 12th/13th. A group of Oreads arrived at the foot of Brassington rocks, to camp in perfect South Georgia conditions. A blizzard sprang up while the tents of the last contingent were being erected, and in the meantime a party of scouts arrived with a bucket of ice.

Eventually the happy roar of primus stoves echoed from tent to tent. But louder and far more fierce was the voice of Pete (Abominable) Janes who flinging his primus into the snow shouted "The -! stoves out! -! about waiting on you ---! "

The night was cool, and Sunday dawned bright. Uncle Eric and Charlie arrived wishing everyone a bright and breezy good morning. The time was 12 noon.

The climbing was excellent, especially as Moore buried his head in a hole in the rock crying for a top rope. I have always thought that his posterior would look far better than his face, and this was proved true.

Laurie Burns and his mechanical leader after rescue proceeded systematically to tick off all the best routes available, until dropping with fatigue the winch-hand crying "I'm -! "

Two parties ascended Brassington Face, saying the reason their knees were shaking was because they could beat a tattoo on the rock with their toes, so keeping their circulation flowing.

Some very interesting skiing on the grass slopes approaching the rocks was had by one member of the meet who introduced an acrobatic method of somersaulting on ski when stationery so as to turn round.

The meet broke up eventually late in the afternoon. We all agreed it had been a highly successful week-end. My only comment is that it was a pity more Oreads did not get out for the full week-end. R.H.

Glan Dena, February 25th/27th. This was our third annual joint meet at the M.A.M's country residence, and what a hectic weekend it turned out to be! The leader, along with Charles Ashbury and John Adderley, arrived almost simultaneously with Ken Brindley and John Fisher, after exciting journeys over icy roads. The hut was completely blocked by a huge snowdrift, and all water systems were frozen solid. Adderley now blossomed forth in his true colours as an anarchist, as with blow torch in hand he endeavoured to set fire to the hut under the excuse of de-freezing the water pipes and lavatory systems. Only the frozen nature of the wood and the grace of God prevented this; nevertheless by 4 a.m. Saturday morning he and Charles Ashbury had everything under control. Brindley had stoked the boiler, and the leader had organized a roaring fire in the lounge, and so we retired to bed in pious but complacent moods.

Saturday was glorious. Bags of snow - too powdery for axework - a bitter wind, clear skies, and glorious yellowing sunshine tempted everyone out early. Some

skied, some went ridgewalking, Ken Brindley towed Adderley and Fisher up thigh deep snow in Western Gully on Glyder Fach, and Mike Moore and Gerry Britton on the advice of the leader tackled the formidable pitches of Tryfan's North Gully, probably the best classic winter route in the area, with the result that they returned late but elated. Said Gerry "I stood on a mound of powder snow whilst Mike stood on my shoulders, and I wondered which would collapse first, me or the snow mound, but at the critical moment Mike moved up the big pitch and both the snow and I breathed a sigh of relief".

Judy Handley, the first to open the hut that afternoon, found tremendous bursts in the ladies' bedrooms, and with true plumbers zeal scrambled into the loft to see what she could do. She forgot the kitchen was underneath and almost made an unpremeditated and rapid descent as the asbestos roofing gave way beneath her feet. Beating her breast with woe she dashed out of the hut jealously clutching the water standpipe, and crying out loudly to the blue skies, "Oh where, oh where do I turn it off?".

A frenzied hour of "toil and wet" now followed. The leader was heard to bleat feebly that only water from the river could be used from now on, and was seen to cower in the icy blast as standing upon the bridge he hauled up innumerable buckets of water whilst cruel jeers floated from the doorway of the hut.

Fortunately, Brindley once more came to the rescue, discovered a stop cock in the roof which isolated the ladies' side of the hut, and so once more fires roared up the chimney, the water chortled in the pipes, and the leader gloomily nursing a cold, collected with fiendish glee the hut dues, and hugging the limp and tattered bank notes to his bosom, retired early to bed.

Sunday was even more glorious as to weather. Adderley who previously had been seen waving the blow torch and exclaiming to all and sundry "I'm an unbungerupper of bunged-up lavatory cisterns" was now persuaded by Brindley (ex Valkyrie) who had a tigerish gleam in his eye, to go and try

forcing an unclimbed gully to the left of Devil's Kitchen. They departed festooned with pitons of incredible length and were only defeated by lack of time.

Fabulous Phil and Ray Handley forced one of the harder gullies on Y Garn, on snow which was definitely improving, and many others were out walking. But the leader and his pard, with admirable fortitude, declined the invitation of the peaks and with true stoicism and muttered oaths, cleaned up the hut and washed up all the pots, pans, and cutlery, which everyone said they'd washed, but which still littered the dining room and kitchen in filthy disarray.

Once again we thank the N.A.M. for the use of the hut, and sympathize with the problems that remain.

E.B.

The Easter Meet, Glencoe and Ardgour.

The coach is now full, so if you're not one of the lucky ones with a seat you've had it - sorry, but the circular did say first come first served.

The recent severe weather augurs well for the climbing in Glencoe. Don't forget that Easter in Scotland can be Arctic, so bring full winter gear. If in doubt where to camp, write to me telling me where you intend to climb, and I'll try to advise you, as I know Glencoe fairly well. For the affluent, excellent accommodation can be had at a very reasonable price at either Kingshouse or Clachaig Hotel. There is a primitive barn at Allt na Feadh (on the Glencoe road about two miles west of the Glen Etive crossroads). It might still be possible to get in at the S.I.C. Hut, Lagangarbh (men only).

If you have not yet paid for this meet, will you please do so before the day of departure? Money should be sent to Mick Harby or me, and cheques and postal orders made payable to the addressee, 100 The Broad Way,

B.T.C.C.

ORREADS IN SHORTS

The Cookes attended the annual dinner of the Mountain Club of N. Wales on February 19th. Brian responded for the guests - though he didn't know he was going to until he arrived! Mike Moore and Laurie Burns were also in N. Wales that weekend. On the Saturday they ascended Moel Siabod and on the Sunday, together with Brian and Marion, climbed a snowy gully on Pen yr Oleu Wen.

The same weekend, Eric Byne was principal guest at the S.U.M.C. dinner at the Marquis of Granby. On the Sunday Eric, with Frank Fitzgerald, (President S.U.M.C) and Maurice Twentymen, climbed the North Face of Back Tor under very icy conditions, taking four hours. Eric believes this may be a first winter ascent.

Mike Moore and his Hut Subcommittee have been continuing their hard work looking for a Club hut. They have a "possible" in the Stenage area, and another in Capel Curig - a cottage called "Maenhir". This led John Welbourn to make a Quote - "What's the news about this Ben Hur place? "

Speaking of huts, Eric Byne functioning in his capacity as President of the Mountain Club opened their new hut, Tyn y Twll, on March 5th. The hut is situated below Craig Cowarch. The Rucksack Club have already offered the Mountain Club reciprocal rights; it's time we got one!

It has long been apparent that only half a dozen members want a Journal, and it looks as if the same number or less want a Newsletter. Isn't either of these worth supporting? Are you going to let both of them die?