

OREAD MOUNTAINEERING CLUB

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER.

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Editorial

THE FIRST VISION.

Have you ever thought back to your earliest climbing days, and mourned, as I have done, the passing of the peculiar magic that mountainous places held then, and which somehow rubbed off as the mountain scene became more familiar? Possibly you are still at that enviable stage - if so, cherish your present delight, for it is of a rare kind that you will not find again. I remember the wonder of it - scrambling up the Milestone and wandering around the Tryfan buttresses, each sheltered bay and sunny nook a new thrill of pleasure; first seeing the Scottish glens and marvelling at their scale, the heather and the herds of deer and the snow providing yet further joys. The first glimpse of the Alps, years later, was exciting, but it lacked that indefinable magic of the first days of all.

However, I have found that a little, at any rate, of that precious something can be recaptured by leaving for a while the old favourites and visiting new hills, new crags, new climbs. Perhaps you have made the same discovery for yourself. But it seems that many Oreads haven't. For last year, the meets planned for new or unfamiliar locations were badly supported and in one or two cases fell through altogether.

Now again this year we have a sprinkling of unfamiliar places in the Meets List - Yellowlacks, Eskdale, Cwn Silin, the Brecon Beacons. So let us see if we can recapture that "first vision", and add it to the deeper satisfaction of "being at home" among the hills. After all, isn't the urge to do just that what we mean when we talk about the "spirit of adventure"?

L. C. C.

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SIXTY SEVEN YEARS AGO - CONCLUDED

Just as he was exact in his choice of companions so was Nansen in his choice of equipment. He took 9 pairs of Telemark type skis, 2 pairs of oak skis and 7 pairs made of beech fitted with steel edges. Bindings were made of leather. All the equipment was loaded on to 5 sledges which were specially designed for the trip. They were 2.90 metres long and weightd 11.5 kg.

The party used ski boots; Nansen himself used Laplander's brogues for most of the trip. Most of their clothes were woollen, and the grey suits which the party used became very popular with Norwegian skiers in the years following the trip.

The planned crossing of Greenland was itself a hazardous trip but even more dangerous was the course that they took - drifting on an ice-floe. They left the boat on the 17th July 1888 and they were alone on the ice-floe around LAT 65°N. They drifted 200 km in 14 days till they reached LAT 61° 30' where they landed on the coast; however their toils were not yet over. They rowed northwards again through the broken ice close in to the land till they reached Umivik on LAT 64°. From here they started the ski trip in the middle of August.

During 6 weeks of skiing they encountered every kind of weather from glorious sunshine to snowstorm and biting cold winds. The land and ice steepened and by the first week in September they had reached a height of 2700m.

The worst trouble met with was snow blindness. Faces became sore from the winds. Christianson suffered most, his face swollen and blistered and bleeding. Silk scarves and sun glasses gave protection from the scorching rays of the sun. Food became scarce and many times they turned into their sleeping-bags feeling very hungry. They used two sleeping-bags, 3 men to each sack.

After the trip Balto was asked if he was ever satisfied with the rations he received. He answered a definite NO, but he was always happy. After eating a double ration Sverdrup was heard to say "I am as hungry as a wolf".

One of the main difficulties experienced was the descent to the coast from the ice, where huge crevasses made it nearly impossible to manoeuvre the sledges. Nevertheless they made the trip and on September 24th, after 7 weeks on the ice, they again set foot on solid rock. The trip which was branded as madness had been carried out without mishap. To finish, Nansen and Sverdrup rowed for 5 days in a little boat made from tent-cloth to Godthaab to get help to bring back all their equipment. They were too late for the last ship which left in the autumn so they had to winter in Greenland, finally arriving back in Norway on 30th May 1889.

Nansen's trip did much to develop skiing as a sport the world over and after his book "På Ski over Grønland" had been translated into German, French and English in 1891, production of skiing equipment in Norway increased many fold.

Nansen became Amundsen's "hero" and there is no doubt that his adventures spurred Amundsen on to undertake his expeditions.

Nansen's Greenland trip of 1888 is one of the most important events in the history of ski sport.

(Translated by John Welbourn from the Skiforeningens Årbok "Snø og Ski: Fridtjof Nansens ferd på ski over Grønland i 1888" av Jakob Vaage.)

Please note that owing to a change in the street name the Hon. Ed's address is now: D. C. Cullum, "Craigmere", 11 Corkland Road, Chorlton-cum-Hardy, Manchester 21. Don't forget it, because you owe him a letter. (see page 8).

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RECENT MEETS.

Dove and Dane Valleys, January 6th/7th.

This was a very well attended meet - a promising start for the new year. Eleven Oreads used the barn at Crowdecote after a delightful mud bath in the Dales. During the evening members visited the Pack Horse Inn for "en drama".

Sunshine and a sharp frost together with snow to a depth of several inches made ideal walking conditions on the Sunday.

A break was made at the Traveller's Rest on Axe Edge, and lunch was a hurried affair at the Three Shires owing to a keen wind. After a somewhat sheltered walk down the Dane valley, a really keen wind was encountered on Roach End.

At this stage of the walk I.R.F. and two companions set a very fast pace. They were rewarded by their effort for they were the only members of the party to make Leek in time for the 4.55 p.m. bus. The rest unfortunately had to kill time until 7.55 p.m. in the rain. However, a cup of tea soon revived the only lady in the party, Ruth Bottger. J.W.

Llanberis Meet, January 21st/23rd.

With memories of the great gale on the Llanberis meet of 1953, and the superb snow conditions of 1954, we looked forward eagerly to this week-end, wondering what meteorological phenomena awaited us. From this point of view, the Saturday was disappointing - mild, damp weather, low cloud, and practically no snow remaining. The parties at Ynys Ettws and Cwm Glas Mawr, having come equipped with axes, claws and ice-pegs, had difficulty in adjusting themselves to the unexpected conditions. Eventually Colin Morris and the Hon. Ed. went off and climbed Great Gully on Cynr Las. Several

other groups wandered over Snowdon and the Glyders in thick mist. The Meet Leader and Geoff Thompson, feeling that their advancing years exonerated them from any pretence of Spartan enthusiasm, spent the day on a leisurely pub crawl from the Vaynol Arms to P.Y.G.

On Sunday, beautiful mild sunny weather did much to compensate for the absence of snow. Several parties climbed on the Three Cliffs, and a small group of tigers led by Colin Morris and Ray Handley, fought their way up the Trilon. Other parties walked over the Snowdon ridges, basked in sunshine on the summit, and took numerous photographs.

After a rather late start, the return was enlivened by a concert given by the Oread Glee Club.

P. R. F.

(Reliable sources report that Johnny Fisher's party used no less than four pegs on Trilon! - Ed.)

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

Sir,

Is the Oread News Letter to become a Journal of Polar Exploration? Whilst not criticising in any way way the admirable articles on this topic in the January issue, I do feel that more space should be given to Oread activities in this country. My criticism is not directed at you, sir, but at the apathetic club members who fail to provide you with accounts of their doings, especially those (and there are quite a large number of them) who have never sent a single article to the N.L. since it s inception.

Yours etc.,

P. R. Falkner.

(Hear, hear! - Ed.)

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

Phil Falkner, practising what he preaches, sends a note that he was in Wales with Betty Bird, the Handleys and members of the Polaris on February 5th-6th. There was a fair amount of new snow and on the Saturday the party walked over a number of small peaks near Nantlle - Mynydd Drws y Coed, Mynydd Tal-y-Mignedd, Carnedd Goch and "Pen y Silin". Phil comments that parts of the ridge are narrow and craggy and especially enjoyable under snow.

The party spent Sunday in photographic ruminations up and down the Snowdon ridges. By the way, Phil recently passed his driving test.

Dave Penlington is now in Belgium. He expects to be home on March 3rd.

Ken Griffiths is in hospital at Grantham. The nature of his illness is unknown. Ernie Marshall is still at Ashton Infirmary, and would-be visitors are still welcome at "Craigmores".

Chunky Cartwright's Paris address is Deloitte Plender Griffiths & Co., 39 Rue Cambon, Paris 1er.

The "Nottingham shower", apparently in preparation for the Dolomites, went a-pegging at Stony Middleton on February 6th.

YOU HAVE OBSERVED
THIS EMPTY SPACE, DEAR FRIEND;
IT WAS RESERVED
FOR NEWS YOU DID NOT SEND.

BLOODY BILL THE BOGTROTTER

Bill was a product of the Manchester Rambling Club before the 1914-18 war. He and his companion, the famous Harry Gilliat, explored the fastnesses of Bleaklow and Kinder, and then around 1922 joined the Rucksack Club - a move that was to open a vista of new friends and great deeds, and to earn him the sobriquet of "Bloody Bill the Bogtrotter". No walking feat was too long, no open air bivouac too wet or too cold for this tough moorland wanderer, and it was to his inventive genius that we owe many famous high level bog trots of today. "The Three Inns Walk", the "Double Marsden Edale", and many all night bogtrotting crossings of Bleaklow, Kinder, and Black Hill were all planned and executed by him, often under vile conditions of rain, blizzards, and pitch black nights, during which the use of torches was considered taboo and progress was always a matter of skilled compass work.

Other areas also received his attention - the Berwyns - the Welsh three thousands - and the Scottish four thousands which he and Gilliat accomplished in the fantastic time of 11 hours 0 minutes walking plus four hours travel by car which transported them from the Ben Nevis area to the Cairngorms. However, perhaps his most famous expedition was the planning, inauguration and execution of that great "milestone misery", the 70 mile "Colne to Rowsley", in 1926 - a master route which today is considered the greatest classic in the Peak, and a feat of considerable endurance if accomplished under winter conditions. (! Ed.) A little later it was Gilliat who extended the course from Colne to Matlock in an incredible time of under 24 hours, a record which probably still stands today.

By now you will be wondering who is this "Bloody Bill", this man who for a wager of a pint of shandy once walked barefooted over the hills from Derwent Village to Eiale, and who once was noted for his hospitality at Tunstead, that calling house between Hayfield and Kinder Low.

In later life he became the inspirer of youth, took over the licences of the "Church Hotel" and the "Nags Head" at Edale, became a Rural District Councillor - and indefatigable worker for the Peak District Branch of the Council for Preservation of Rural England - fought strenuously and successfully against the steel magnates who attempted to industrialize the Edale Valley with great steel works, and indirectly planned many great walks and inspired many great walkers with his slogans of reward for success, such as "A pint on the House", or, (as in the case of the 120 mile "Tan Hill to Cat and Fiddle") "Breakfast on the House".

He is still there at Edale - jovial, friendly, ever ready to greet the climber, mountaineer, and bog-trotter - always willing to listen to the deeds of the day, to pass comment, to give advice, to help plan a route, and to pull you a pint of the best. That is "Bloody Bill the Bogtrotter", mire host of the "Nags Head Inn" at Edale - none other than our old friend - Fred Heardman.

Eric Byne.

DOES IT MATTER TO YOU?

The new arrangements for financing the Newsletter mean that once again every member will receive a regular supply. Will they be worth reading? Will they be worth the work put into their production? That's up to you. Have a critical look at this issue - two longish articles, neither of them "news" (but praise be to their authors just the same for providing such reserve material recent meets, and that's about the lot. No Club gossip, no "Profile", no sparkle. Now, if you're interested in the Newsletter - and since the great majority of you paid your three bobs last year I think you are - why not enlist now as a reporter? Notes about your "extracurricular activities", Club chatter, articles, "Profiles", etc., are all useful, and only you can write them. If you don't like the Newsletter, let me know what you don't like and why, and if you do like it, support it. Only for pity's sake, don't just ignore it! D.C.C.