

EDITORIAL.

A certain popular newspaper has recently been inviting some of its correspondents to predict the major events of 1956. I am going to undertake the same task for the Club; gazing darkly into the bottom of an upturned tankard, I will attempt to answer the question, what does the New Year hold for the Oread and for mountaineers in general? Old Moore Cullum predicts the following.

The Editor's appeals for contributions to the Newsletter will continue to be largely ignored, and he will continue to be the last member to hear of any news. There will be at least two letters to the Editor complaining probably about the contents of an Editorial but possibly about some other feature of the Newsletter. At least one of these will be anonymous, and both will be from members who have never previously written a word. The Editor may be so discouraged by all this as to chuck the whole thing up.

Someone will set his tent on fire with a petrol primus. Someone will get into trouble with Mr. Froggatt over something or maybe over nothing. Someone will start a movement to rename the Club, "The Oread Motoring Club". A movement to make ownership of a car a condition of membership will fail. Someone will turn up at a meet wearing a cow-bell.

Joe Brown will lead the world's hardest rock-climb and a new grade will have to be invented for it. The C.C. will refuse to follow Continental practice and just call it Grade VIII. An attempt on the world's seventeenth highest peak by a party of Brazilian schoolmistresses will be unsuccessful.

In Great Britain a hundred people will be killed or injured in climbing accidents. In most cases it will be their own fault. I hope none of them will be Oreads.

At the A.G.M. Eric Byne will raise at least one point of order. At the Photo Meet the first prize will be won by either Pete Janes or Bob Parslow. At the Guy Fawkes Meet Phil Falkner will blow himself to pieces. At the Dinner Meet tankards will again be presented and Oliver Jones will play a Wurlitzer. Christmas will fall on December 25 and will be marked (if not disfigured) by a meet at Bryn-y-Wern. There will be an addition to the Editor's family but this will have no connection with any Oread meets.

Club funds will remain in two figures.

The President and Vice-President will be expelled from the Club for caving. George Sutton's S.G. book will sell 100,000 copies. John Fisher will discover the correct pronunciation of another Welsh or Gaelic word and we shall never hear the last of it. Laurie Burns will be prosecuted by the R.S.P.C.A. Fred Allen (Please turn to page 9.)

CREADS AT SEA.....by HARRY PRETTY.

(The following contribution has no particular connection with mountains or mountaineering and is intended as a light-hearted addition to the New Year issue.)

"Get those five lazy @/&"%?(£)@!!!! who've been sitting on their @f&!"//!!! for six &&&):??@/£!!! months on board!"

Four Oreads and Ram Jham Brookerjee the expedition doctor (who's almost pure Oread in taste and temperament - a disgusting fellow) looked bleakly up at the source of this profanity and sighed a little. They were back to the "Southern Opal", and there was the sylvan voice of Capt. Alec Baikie welcoming them after all these months of hardship and peril which, even as they stood on the flying bridge of the whale-catcher "Morsa", were ripening in purple print for the pages of the better-known mountaineering pulps.

They were pleased to hear his voice, however, since this was only the second time he had ever spoken to them, although some technically-minded witnesses have asserted that in this instance he was addressing the world at large rather than them in particular. The first occasion was when he screamed "Hard luck!" at the two clots left on an Antwerp quay as the "S.O." turned her nose downstream. This was also from the bridge. Sea-captains are seldom anywhere else, as most of you will know.

There is a vague report going the rounds that there has recently been a third occasion when he (Capt. Baikie) stumbled over the naked body of Allhallows Brown. The latter, having just risen, was enjoying the late afternoon tropical sun and working on his chronicles - "My Life and Hard Horizontal Times". He has been sufficiently generous to interpret Capt. Baikie's remark as "Good afternoon". We feel however that in the circumstances this is most unlikely.

I revert to the morning of April 1st 1955 and the expedition preparing to transfer itself and a ton of gear from diminutive "Morsa" to the tanker "Opal", which lay at anchor in Leith Harbour - half a mile distant from the shore factory. The latter, unaturally quiet, waited for the winter, fronted by quiescent lines of catchers stained and shabby after six months of hunting - hardly recognisable as the trim little ships which had prowled out of Stromness Bay shortly before midnight on Sept. 30th 1954, their overhauled guns on trial, barking back and forth between the mountains.

The "Morsa", to use a non-technical phrase, was bobbing up and down a bit, and her high flared bow struck the "Opal" with several resounding thumps before the forward spring and a few engine revolutions brought her right alongside. On hearing the metallic grinding sound an irascible face appeared once more above the "Opal's" bridge-screen. The Norwegian gunner, grinning beneath an enormous

1 Term much used in science fiction circles. Vide: R.A. Brown's definition in his recent "Space Opera for the Professional Gentleman". A mountaineering equivalent would be "The Alpine Journal".

2 "S.O." is the diminutive form of "Southern Opal" and forms part of the widely known trading slogan, "S.O. for B.O." "B.O." is the technical term for "better oil".

(Continuing foot-note). A rising young whaling executive was hustled into oblivion a few years ago when the Chairman asked him what he was doing about the then recently started "B.O." campaign. The young executive's lack of perspicacity still has an interesting memorial in the endless issues of Lifebuoy soap on board certain whaling vessels to this day. (Now read on.)

oap of exaggerated flatness, twiddled with his wheel on the open bridge of "Morsa", and ignoring the scowl, carried on a shouting match with one Kjellstrom, gunner of the "Southern Guider", which drifted aimlessly half a cable's length away.

Handling our gear from "Morsa" to "Opal" was a question of timing and some elementary rope technique. In eight months of handling equipment etc. from shore to ship and from ship to shore - in loading and off-loading in a great variety of conditions, on surf-pounded beaches complicated by ice and seals, in transferring from sealing prams to sealers and vice versa, on innumerable occasions, we had become reasonably expert and found this a relatively straightforward job.

Half an hour after coming alongside we were once more settling into our old port-side cabins aft.

In this latitude one was grateful that the cabin floors were always warm from the engine room immediately below, and Dick and Clive were prepared to relish the bulk-head which formed part of the funnel casing and was perpetually hot. Two weeks later with the cabin temperature creeping steadily into three figures, despite four blowers going flat out day and night, only George could stand it.

We left South Georgia in the latter half of a miserably raw afternoon - sliding out past small stranded growler bergs at the entrance to Leith Harbour - past Mutton Island and the Black Rocks until, clearing Cape Saunders for the last time, we stood out to sea with only a score of bergs to keep us company.

Drab coastal peaks above the Fortune Glacier where it tumbles into the sea were almost the last we saw of the island and we thought it an unfriendly scene. Years of travel breed fatalism towards departures and this it seemed was just another - uninspired and without particular merit.

There was, therefore, a certain thrill on being called over to starboard some time later to see what was our genuine last view of the island whorcin we had found such combination of mon, mountains, birds and boasts, in an environment so creative of strange atmospheres that one can only acknowledge the impossibility of conveying the singular impressiveness of the place.

For a short while there was a glow of light over the southern peaks. The familiar double pyramid of Cape Charlotte projected a blackened finger toward off-shore bergs - seen only as pale tabular shapes against sea and sky, both of which remained indistinguishable one from the other.

Precisely four weeks later we entered the Mersoy.

This long traverse of the South and North Atlantic could be described as "mainly tedious". It was far too hot and was not improved by the inevitable monotony of the food. On isolated occasions there occurred events sufficiently stimulating for one to assume a temporary vertical posture and very occasionally there were interruptions so unusual as to induce speculation upon the immediate

future.

There were the usual days of bad weather in the Forties when the "Opal" (which never really stops rolling) corkscrewed steadily north at no more than 8 knots, and Brown was trapped in the open waist, immediately aft of the bridge, by a roaring deluge which swept across the open shelter deck from one side of the ship to the other. It was our most convenient route to the forward mess deck and we invariably risked the incoming seas which sluiced back and forth in heavy weather. Brown, in leaping about, slipped and put his hand through the glass-fronted notice board, cutting himself rather badly. He wandered aft towards the hospital, effected a dramatic arrival, and was told to go to bed for two days; a somewhat unnecessary directive since he only occasionally and for specific purposes got out of his (or some other person's) bunk, during the whole four weeks. In fact R.A.B. was distinctly off colour for most of the voyage, hardly ate, and only gave full rein to the normal Brownian comedy of habits and utterances during "the fire" and on the occasion of our 12-hour skirmish with the St. Vincent (Cape Verde Islands) bum-boats.

From nights of lying wedged into our bunks with the aid of rolled blankets and pillows we progressed to perpetual sunshine and increasing heat. We achieved our standard 10 knots and waited for the noon position reports impatiently. Perhaps it was going to be a smooth trip after all.

Wandering albatrosses kept us continual company almost into the thirties, swooping and dipping with incredible grace, their tremendous wings ever motionless above our wake. By the light of the first moon one occasionally saw them as dim white ghosts never ceasing from their interminable flight.

Almost on the Equator the forced draught fan broke down. The slow crawl through a thick, humid afternoon, with the funnel ejecting black clouds of only partially burned fuel vapour, came to a climax when the upper end of the funnel began to glow, and soon the lot was merrily incandescent.

Speculation attained considerable proportions by 10 p.m. and the "exports", and all those who had just seen the "Chief" or the 1st Officer were hard at it passing on the latest reports from engine room and bridge - together with some harrowing tales from past experience. "Oh yes, it has happened before" - "Last time, in the Channel, the funnel fell off - it was a salvage job!"

The paint came off the red hot funnel in a single homogeneous sheet, and one began to wonder if the stays would hold. All round the horizon, and sometimes overhead, lightning flashed but not a drop of rain fell. Down below, with every fire extinguisher aboard assembled, the engineers struggled to get the fan going in an atmosphere that passed all description. Others rigged wet tarpaulins and fought boiler flash-backs.

Our cabins were furnace-hot but in any case everyone had congregated on the upper deck to watch the funnel. At least nearly everyone, since amid the excitement we didn't notice the absence of George who sat in his cabin dressed only in a towel, working on "the book". He subsequently remarked that he thought the bulk-heads and floor were rather hot - they were - the paint had begun to blister on the inboard side.

Brown, of course, thought it was wonderful, and having consulted a map,

pronounced that St. Paul's Rocks (a weird group of rocks somewhere between Brazil and Africa and inhabited only by carnivorous land crabs) were a mere two hundred miles to the west. We were not impressed.

Sleep was virtually impossible that night.

Flying fish and occasional sperm whales were the only matters of interest for the better part of another week - and then, late one afternoon, we sighted the peaks of the Cape Verde Islands. No sooner had we dropped our hook, three quarters of a mile off-shore, than the oiling barges were alongside. The twelve hour refuel had begun.

It was our first relatively cool night and there was a brisk little wind raising quite a chop on the water, but this was nothing to the bum-boat operators who were around us four deep before the screws had finished turning. Every light on the deck was turned on and various persons prowled about in an effort to prevent company stores (blankets, sheets, pillows, food etc.) from being sent overboard in exchange for some of the lines promulgated on the usual "changey for changey" principle. Clothes and cigarettes were the principle requirements of the dark gentry who fought with oars in the semi-darkness at sea-level to get alongside our hull. Brandy and muscatel were principally desired by the whalers.

Brown had assembled a macabre selection of what had once been clothing, and reckoned on getting at least a monkey, a stock of bananas and a bottle of something. Unfortunately the bum-boat business is the only local industry in an island which has to import water. Being almost barren and totally unproductive it is useful solely as the refuelling point of three or four vessels a day and as a consequence the St. Vincent bum-boaters are vastly experienced and are no longer satisfied with pure junk. R.A.B. ranged from point to point and finally was content to obtain a small coconut for a pair of boots. We wondered if the sellotape would be strong enough, and were apprehensive of the soles and uppers falling apart on their way down to our prospective client.

Straw hats, carved horn ships, fancy baskets, bananas, coral shell necklaces, coconuts, silk scarves of villainous design and colouring and, surreptitiously taken from under a thwart, an occasional bottle of brandy were the principle stock in trade. The brandy was raw stuff in curious bottles with red plastic screw-on caps. Its effect was evident for the following two or three days.

Everywhere on board were dark-skinned policemen dressed in uniforms of infinite variation. One obtained the impression that they were there to accept consideration from certain of their commercial friends whom they allowed on board. Most of the policemen were pushing a line of their own in any case.

There was one queer little man about 4'3" high, dressed in a creased linen suit, who perpetually dragged about the deck a bulging sack, approximately 3'6" high. I never saw him open it.

The hullabaloo went on all night and once again sleep was very difficult.

At 07.00 on the following morning George was nowhere to be seen. He appeared a little later in an alcoholic condition, saying he had been trapped in a cabin for nearly an hour by a Shetlander with several bottles and two companions.

who were either unconscious or asleep. The leader seemed slightly unhinged and for two hours rushed backwards and forwards between cabin and deck, returning on each occasion with more scarves, carved ships, coral beads and straw hats - he had discovered that bars of chocolate went like shavings off a shovel. He badly wanted a monkey. I hid the theodolite - just in case.

I tried a tin of pipe tobacco. "Opium Johnny?" was the excited response. "No", I said, so it came back, completely valueless.

A fireman staggered from below with two buckets of white paint and before anyone realised what he was about had emptied them over a cluster of boats under the stern. The uproar was fantastic.

Above the stern a screen had been erected for Kino¹ nights. It was a lashed up affair of wood and painted canvas but since the projector had gone haywire it had been little used during the homeward journey, although we had spent many hours during the tropical nights going south sitting on barrels of oil over the bakery watching such epics as "Winchostor 73" and "Indian River". On this beautiful bright sunny morning a certain nameless Scot who, not to do him an injustice, could at least stand, offered the screen - wood, canvas and all - to the bun-boats in general, in return for some small item. They all wanted it (timber is probably worth its weight in gold in St. Vincent) and were prepared to fight for it. Our Scotsman, being a forthright man, simply cut the screen supports adrift and the whole structure fell into the seething mass of boats and dark humanity. There were no broken heads and a fierce internecine battle immediately broke out between rival boats. The occupants of each boat seizing some part of the loose lashings made them fast to their particular craft and started rowing for the shore. It would have been all right if they had all made for the same shore, but instead a curiously indeterminate tug-o'-war was the result and for all I know they're at it yet.

Another curious incident of the night before concerned Webb. An Australian engineer friend of ours was prepared to barter what he called an old jacket for a bottle. It was the kind of jacket that the original type Oread² would have worn only on Sunday or on particularly formal occasions. The coat was duly lowered towards the Plimsoll line but Webb, from a lower porthole, snatched it. This, of course, is pure "original type Oread", and Webb is to be much commended for his initiative and enterprise. You may have seen the coat - he was wearing it at the last Annual Dinner - a kind of dark beige affair.

Whilst speaking of Webb it is perhaps worth recording his further reversion to type. Tired of lying down, sitting up, reading, using a certain illustration for target practice with an air pistol, or just sitting, he suddenly became nostalgic over bygone "stoking days" on Sunday men-o'-war. His talk of 20,000 h.p. at one's finger tips wasn't doing Brown's power complex much good in any case. So it came about that Webb discovered some obscure pump in the bowels of the engine room which required attention and thereupon he indulged his little-known passion for "taking things to bits".

Quite suddenly the sea turned a dirty yellowish grey. We were almost home, and our first visual landfall was the peaks of Snowdonia half smothered in cloud.

¹ General whaling term, from Norwegian n, for cine shows.
² The octatempere ry Oread is a thing of sartorial elegance by comparison.

Nine months previously we had sailed northwards up the Minch en-route for Norway with the prickly Cuillin ridges to starboard and the Outer Hebrides a smoky undulation across the opposite sky. For a mountaineer it was a satisfying view - one to take with you. Now, at the end of the long voyage, we stood on the deck of the Opal and saw the deep corridor of the Nant Ffrancon between familiar hills. It was a most proper arrival.

Somewhere between Anglesey and the Mersey we had a bottle of rum - it was raining hard - we were home.

RECENT MEETS

KINDER-BLEAKLOW, DEC.10-11, 1955.....by CLIVE WEBB.

Saturday's stroll commenced when the "Nag's Head" closed, which probably explains why the Meets Sec. covered 20 miles instead of the 4 he would have covered had he been a crow. In torrential rain in the shortest distance across the "Scout" was naturally taken. This involved the descent of Blackden Clough, where the meet leader, trying to be a modern Raleigh, offered to carry Alison Harper across a raging torrent - slipped in mid-stream and covered his passenger and himself in icy-cold water.

Sunday's trek, instead of crossing Bleaklow as originally planned, involved yet a nother crossing of Kinder, this time via Ashop Clough, Crowden and Grindsbrook to Edale. This route had the great advantage of allowing the wind-blown snow from the north to spend its fury propelling the party southwards. Maps and compasses came into play on the summit plateau. At Kinder River the party split into two groups, the motorists heading northwards back to their transport. Edale was reached half an hour after our hoped-for train had departed, the four hours' wait for the next one being spent eating and drying clothes (sic! - Ed.).

Altogether 16 members and guests turned out and enjoyed themselves, despite the conditions.

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CHRISTMAS MEET, BRYN-Y-WERN.....by MIKE GADD.

On arriving on Saturday night I noticed a warm and friendly atmosphere in B.-y-W., no doubt due to there being a fire in every room and to P. Janes' presence. However, Christmas Eve was a quiet affair, as Pete, Mike Moore, John Welbourn and Ronnie Phillips took themselves off to the local hop in Portmadoc. I gather that there wasn't much talent there, but Mike and Pete returned displaying the magic words "Rate fund" in indelible ink on their right hands - for "convenience". About ten o'clock John Addorley and Clive Webb arrived, with motor-cycle, and were living proof that you can't spend twelve hours on the road from Brum without a lot of refreshment. They then dispersed into the night.

Christmas day was rather grey and cheerless, but most people made an attempt to get to the hills. John Fisher was particularly energetic all the time, writing the Oread contribution to the climbing guide. By the way, at the

coming joint meet, at which I hope to see you, please let John have the gen. on any new routes.

Cooking the enormous amount of food for dinner turned out to be easier than it looked, largely due to the efficiency of the cooks - the two Ronnies (Phillips and Langworthy), Anne Leverton, Dave Penlington and several others part-time. Apart from minor mishaps, the dinner was served on time and was so huge that several long digestive pauses were necessary. Gerry Britton and Pete Janes spoke and thanked the cooks, including my mother who did most of the pre-cooking. The rest of the evening passed with riotous jollity, much singing (Ernie Phillips being the soul of mirth), playing of mouth-organs and guitars, and brilliant conversation, punctuated by the voluble Janes. All in all, an evening worthy of the best Oread traditions. Dave Penlington was the genial guardian of the barrel, while Mike Moore entertained us with his lament on the guitar, the chief virtue of which was that he didn't have to use the left hand. Adderley was nowhere to be seen.

I needn't say any more except that the safety valve on the boiler does work (seven baths were taken in one evening), the "drws" is fatter than ever and was actually seen to refuse food! And may I take this opportunity of wishing you a happy Christmas 1956?

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

The Editor, L.P.O.T.S.F.T.E.O.P.A.T.L.C.¹

P O E M

William McGonagall
Wrote poetry that was absolutely abominable.
Cole's blank verse
Is worse.

(As for Jim,
H'm.)
Even the Editorial prose
Has a touch of Rose.

This may not be sublime
But it does rime.

¹ Literary Publication of the Society for the Encouragement of Poetry among the Lower Classes.

L.L.

(Log-pulling apart, you may or may not the verses - or prose - which have appeared in recent Newsletters. But their authors were at least trying, which is more than can be said of the seventy-odd members who contributed nothing to those issues. You, reader, were probably one of them. This is your Newsletter, and if you don't like the way it's written, write it yourself. Write it yourself anyway - that's what it's for! And for pete's sake - and my sake - and your own sake - DO IT NOW! -Ed.)

Dear Editor,

I am grieved at the lack of response to my appeal for funds to aid the fight against caving. I doubt whether a 2 lire note (in poor condition), a kopek piece and an assortment of used stamps will prove of much assistance in the matter. Furthermore, I consider the excavations made by unknown persons in front of 101 Lenton Boulevard unamusing and highly dangerous. I refuse to reply to anonymous communications from the underworld, perhaps the Editor would offer space in his columns for anyone wishing to put the case for caving. Finally, I have received an encouraging letter from the Corgi mentioned in last month's Newsletter. He offers his unqualified support in the campaign.

Yours,
Claustrophobia.

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THE RUBAIYAT OF GEORGE SUTTON + III.....by GEORGE SUTTON.

Visited White Hall before Christmas. Two-day expedition via Hayfield to Edale. Vile conditions. Went off course as far as Edale Rocks - ice-glazed. Returned via Rushup Edge next day, in high winds. Third day did Bagshawe Cave - the lot - tight crawl, lake, Glory Hole. Years ago I laughed when Pretty fell over Shark Rock in the lake and vanished from sight - it has now happened to me.

Took possession of Ardvreck Castle, on Loch Assynt, for Christmas - "where Montrose was betrayed". Long days on Quinag and Suilven. Weather very rough - but wonderful effects in this strange country. My tent was torn - and a bit of metal tookoff from the stove and hit me in the eye - otherwise uneventful.

Witnessed sight of Ullapool doctor offering to stand a drink to an old lady whose job is collecting for temperance. She advised me in all seriousness that it would be a good thing for climbers to wear cowbells, since whistles were no good when she got lost on the hills! Who of the Oread will be brave enough to support this new idea?

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Editorial (continued from front page).

will be cautioned by the N.S.P.C.C. Jim Kershaw will become Poet Create. Betty Bird will continue to laugh. John Welbourn will get more grease-spots on his tent. No-one will care. Ron Dearden's hair will grow again. Trevor Panther will start bringing a whip out on meets. Bob Pettigrew will sign a contract to do a "Courage and Adventure" series for I.T.A.

I hesitate to predict that two Wrights will not make a wrong, but I have no hesitation at all, in spite of this lot, in wishing you a very happy New Year.

---O---

D.G.C.

PROFILE: PETE JANES (alias "Whympet" or "Rubber-face").....by ANON.

When Janes became of age, his dotting parents provided the wherewithal for a holiday at Zermatt; on this occasion only the Zermatterhof was good enough for him. The last time he visited the resort, being more or less self-supporting, he shared the top attic at the Bahnhof with three other people at one franc a night. Janes is the second tightest chap in the Club with money (no prizes for guessing the first!). As an example of his parsimony, it should be noted that he budgets for one roll of film a year. One of the shots, of course, guarantees first prize at the Club Photographic Meet.

If you see a photograph of Pete himself, you will always find him standing, back to the camera, on a pinnacle of rock in the middle foreground, a lone rampant figure looking out over a panorama of peaks ranging to infinity. Hence the soubriquet "Whympet", we believe. Confidentially, what he is actually doing is answering an urgent call of nature.

Although we have never been fortunate enough to be entertained by his histrionic ability, his friends tell us that he treads a pretty board. He's no mean performer on boards that turn up at the front, either.

In the art, or craft, of professional diner-out he is second only to Tony Moulam. He dines out regularly with everyone we know, and a lot of people we don't know. In recompense, on odd occasions, he disburses small samples of his mother's cooking as a rare elixir. If he ever makes a mistake and invites you home for a meal, acceptance with alacrity is recommended.

In view of his recent betrothal, we feel in all decency we should draw a dark veil over his erstwhile nocturnal activities, although it seems a pity to ignore the material at our disposal, and at the same time disappoint our readers. A full account would make very interesting reading, as Janes has no inhibitions.

There is no doubt, however, that Pete's wit is his outstanding talent. No other member has the ability of raconteur, punster or fool to compare with him; his prowess in the extempore is as astounding as his belching is voluminous. Everyone agrees that he is an asset at a Meet or any gathering.

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The same authors (or is that a regal plural?) submitted the following curious compositions, said to have been inspired by Christmas at Bryn-y-Werne. (The fact that they - or he - was at B.-y-W. over Christmas may be a clue to their - or his - identity. The Editorial money is on the Phillipps, though Janes himself is a possible culprit.)

ODD ODE NO. 1.

If it's eating you'd go,
There's a tale you should know,
A tale of our old friend Pete Janes.
The sound of his belch
Translated to Welsh
Made Betty Bird clean out the drains!

ODD ODE NO. 2.

If it's joking you'd go
There's a tale you should know,
A tale of our old friend Jim Bury.
We voted him best
In a joke-telling test
(Salaciousness judged by Gerry).