

OREAD MOUNTAINEERING CLUB  
MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Vol. 4, No. 3.

November 1956.

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EDITORIAL

A few weeks ago I had a circular signed by Sir John Hunt and others appealing for contributions to a Trust Fund established on behalf of Tom Bourdillon's widow, Jennifer, and her children. Perhaps you have had a copy too. It is a splendid thing that such a Fund should exist, and I am sure that donations will reach a large total. But pause a moment to think of all those other mountaineering tragedies, involving people who are not famous and popular, and which pass unnoticed by the great majority of people. In many cases, the dependents of the victims must suffer very great financial hardship in addition to the grief of bereavement. What a fine gesture it would be if some nationally known body would make itself responsible for a universal trust fund to provide relief for any family bereaved by a mountaineering accident and unable to support itself unaided. Your suggestions on choice of Trustees and on the organisation of such a fund are invited.

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The Firework Meet has come and gone and I wasn't there, due to the untimely demise of my motor tricycle. No doubt it was a lively affair. Maybe we shall read about it in next month's issue. (Meet Leader please note!) I hope that the celebration occurred without any damage to property or annoyance to other residents in Cwm Pennant, for it is of supreme importance for us to maintain friendly relations with the local farmers. In this last fortnight we have seen what harm fireworks can do when let off in an irresponsible manner.

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Take a good look at this Newsletter. Ten pages. But no news. Not one item about contemporary events in the Club. Are there in fact any contemporary events? I don't know. I'm only the Editor. No-one ever tells me anything. Meet Leaders no longer bother to send accounts of their meets (Ernie Phillips excepted, of course). Members do send some contributions, but NO NEWS. Maybe you like it that way. Well, that's all right with me. But it seems a bit silly to go on calling it a Newsletter, doesn't it? And maybe we'd better drop the word "Monthly" from the title. "O.M.C. Letter"? But perhaps you'd prefer to send a contribution. Please do it now.

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D.C.C.

PHOTO MEET, 1956 ..... by ERNIE PHILLIPS

A batch sample of opinions taken in the Robin Hood on Sunday morning indicated that this year's Photographic Meet was as successful as its predecessors. A goodly number of tents appeared at Moorside Farm, including the Cookes, Harbys, Gadds, Penlingtons, Bird, Richards, Richardson, Moore, R. Turners, Gardiner, Renwick, Burns, Millward, Griffiths, Bury, and not forgetting the Cashs.

The attendance on Saturday evening also included some ephemeral notables, to wit, the M. Turners, Geoff. Thompson, Falkner et al, in fact it would be quicker to record who was not there!

Ronni, Nobby and I arrived at the boozier on Saturday afternoon to find the landlord in a state of alarm, having concluded that we were not coming. It appears that on previous occasions the Meet Leader has arrived about 9.0 a.m. However, after some rapid work with the sellotape and scissors, the prints were mounted, notices written (by the President), and all was more or less complete in the Exhibition.

At this point Harry had the brilliant idea of lighting the combustion stove. The landlady was quite agreeable, but pointed out that it didn't burn very well and alleged that "The man had been to do it but it still wouldn't burn." Harry charged the device with paper, wood, and coal, and after a few seconds it was roaring away. After a few more seconds it was belching forth smoke into the room with great vigour!

Vizualising gobs of soot all over the prints, we opened the door to provide some fresh air, but after a while were forced to move outside. Eventually six o'clock came, and I decided that a five minute visit to the bar was indicated to get rid of the coal dust, as there were still few arrivals. When I came out again about 7.30, well fortified with Bass, I was astonished to find a seething mass of humanity, about sixty strong, in the tea-room.

The rest of the proceedings are a little vague in my mind, but I recall that the 120 or so colour slides were very fine; Sid Cash must indeed have had a difficult job to select the winner.

In the print exhibition the 1st prize Pictorial was taken by Bob Pettigrew, while Brian Cooke was second. Harry Pretty took 1st and 2nd in the Club Interest section. Mike Gadd produced the winning colour slide, closely followed by Jim Bury for second place.

There is one point, however, which may not have been appreciated by those present; with the exception of Bob Pettigrew's winning print, all the others exhibited in the room were provided by three Club Members. If the Photographic Meet is to continue in the future in its present form, I feel that there must be more support for this part of it, so that it is truly representative of the work of the whole Club.

Finally, I should like to thank all those who sent in material for the Meet. Without the co-operation of the Photographers it would be impossible to have a successful event of this kind.

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CLIMBING OR SWIMMING? ..... by TREVOR S. PANTHER

An odd sort of holiday for me, inasmuch as I climbed with generally odd people and stayed in this country.

Three weeks in North Wales was the most noteworthy, but for no other reason than it poured with rain almost the whole time. It started off with a completely drenching ride on the motor bike from London. The next day a completely drenching day on Lliwedd - interesting cakes of slime and no visibility.

The next day was even wetter and I led Glenna Shaw and Jim Horrox on the second ascent of my new little route Toccata and Fugue. It is "very V.S." in pouring rain and took us three hours to do sixtyfive feet!

We had an entertaining day on Trilon accompanied by Alan Boker - Jim Horrox coming up as last man fell off at the peg and swung across Shadow Wall. He had to be lowered to the bottom of the Wastad.

I also spend a pleasant and very hot day leading three Sandhurst men up Soap Gut in socks, and later paid my first visit to Bryn-y-Wern.

A nice place, but quite frankly I think the climbing is rubbish. Surely we are not so good and experienced that we can leave the great routes of Cloggy, Three Cliffs and Craig yr Isfa and play about on small Welsh outcrops covered with tress and ivy. While at Bryn-y-Wern, Dick Berger, Alan Boker and I did a route which might have been new or it might have been Ivy Buttress direct start. Whatever it was, it was V.S. But somehow it never savoured of the mountains - too small and vegetated.

Alan and I made an attempt on Joe Brown's Cobweb Crack and failed - it is ridiculous to grade this route V.S. when it's considerably harder than Spectre. We also had a prolonged attack on Cenotaph Corner finish and found the exposure interesting!

Eventually all my climbing friends went home and the pass was wild and empty. I have never seen it so deserted!

Finally, one Raymond Stephens, a boy of 12½, came to climb with me. He lives in London and is a pupil at the school at which I teach. I had already taken him several times to Harrison's Rocks and High Rocks near Tonbridge Wells and noted that he was completely natural, enormously strong and agile, and very keen.

We did some climbing in Llanberis Pass and on Tryfan in spite of worsening weather. It was a great joy to me to see this amazingly capable, impressionable and likeable boy enjoying the things which I live for. To him the mountains were completely new and for him, like all of us, they are immense challenges and at the same time, things of indescribable beauty.

The continuous rain eventually drove us out of the North Wales and we had a wet and slippery ride back to London on the motor bike. Somehow we felt we had not climbed enough, so Raymond and I went down to High Rocks for three days. A group of us, including young Raymond, have been to these sandstone cliffs every weekend since I returned from Wales. We have had some good days there and I have at last succeeded in leading the Niblick (5C) at Harrisons which has only been led about a dozen times in the last twenty years.

Another success was the third lead of Simeon's Mistake at High Rocks - gave it 5B (Hard V.S.).

Also, last weekend, young Raymond led Simeon's Progress (5A) (V.S.) at High Rocks. This must have been a great day for him - very few people lead V.S. at 12½ years old. I have great hopes for him - who knows, he may end up better than Joe Brown!

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THE FIRST WEST TO EAST TRAVERSE OF JEKKEVARRE ..... by HARRY PRETTY

The following is from an unpublished M.S. "The Mountains of Lyngen". The events, now five years old, are a part of that unique occasion when seven Oreads, and two from "another place", retraced over a period of twelve weeks many of the climbs of Haskett-Smith, Hastings, and others, made fifty years previously. The author makes no apology for the lyrical style - Lyngen 1951 was like that. Among that party truly "..... ran a joy undiminish'd".

JEKKEVARRE - Ice covered massif containing highest point in Arctic Norway - surrounded on all sides by great walls and fine ridges - the source of three major glaciers.

In many ways Lyngsdal became the focal point of the expedition. We all visited it and most of us went back for a second time. I spent almost three weeks working and climbing from the camp we established among the birch trees below the Lyngsdal glacier snout. Among these men who came to live, very temporarily, in this beautiful valley the camp itself has become a legend of perfection. One came upon it close by the tumbling seracs of the Lille Jekkevarre ice-fall, with the broad shimmering highway of the Lyngsdal glacier extending westward to culminate in the delicate symmetry of the col at its head and, above all, the great south face of Jekkevarre, four miles long and four thousand feet high, capped with the broken hanging edge of the plateau ice-fields, and alive with the constant thunder and processional of ice avalanche.

In close proximity to the wilderness of rock and ice, as upon a threshold, one camped on grass which, even in June had lain nine inches deep in snow. Amidst the feathery grace of silver birch, by the grey-blue water of braided melt streams, with juniper to hand, and a myriad starry flowers for company, we pitched successive camps.

From these camps were climbed all the major peaks around the Lyngsdal watershed, whilst Dick and myself tramped up and down and back and forth upon the Lyngsdal glacier, comprehensively equipped with tripods, plane-table, chrometers and compasses, aneroids and alidades and, in a manner befitted to our high scientific purpose, bore ourselves before our fellows with that nice mixture of self-righteousness and self-esteem which served to camouflage our envy of their uninhibited pursuit of mountain tops. But sometimes, when the weather soured, idle talk and Rabelaisian jest, and verbal nonsense barbed and peppered with the flickering wit of Brown, held us for hours, even for a day and half a night, around the flaring light of a juniper fire. Crouched in the aromatic smoke that bid defiance to the ever waiting pestilence of mosquitos, we learned to appreciate these hours of inactivity and, looking back, one sees them interwoven with long splendid days of blinding snow glare and even finer nights when our shadows marched in elongated company across the snowy domes of Jekkevarre.

In all our camps, Lyngsdal is remembered through the blue haze of burning juniper as a place wherein flourished the rich spirit of a mountain camp, and where some of us grew little roots to await the quickening of another day.

..... The young bulls greeted the arrival of a second party with evident joy, and jostled each other in anticipation of the fun ahead. They stood at a discreet distance and watched our erection of stronger barricades with solemn eyes, tentatively pushing their noses through the rope and sapling fence when it was more or less complete. On their more vigorous investigation of our defences we fell to and thwacked them good and hard, whereupon they retired some ten yards distant where they lay down and observed us closely from under lowered lids.

..... Philip had been talking about the north-west face of Klokketarn, a fine rock tower overlooking the upper Lyngsdal glacier, in sentences conspicuous for their use of superlatives, and since no other member of the party had seen it, we were anxious to test the truth of his words.

..... We set out for the glacier, our ultimate objective undefined. Dick carried stakes for glaciological purposes. Phil carried pitons, hammer and enormous quantities of rope and thought only of Klokketarn, Stan was not to be talked into anything without first having seen it. He was, it seemed, open to influence from any direction and one knew instinctively that on being brought to the brink, he would weigh the matter carefully, developing an analytical series of arguments, for and against, with the air of a

man accustomed to resolving obscure problems in the theory of structures. Nobby was his usual self. The atmosphere was drenched in sunlight, there were mountains on every hand and good ice underfoot - what more could one ask? He would drive stakes across a glacier, sleep indefinitely on a sunwarmed rock, or take on a severe rock or ice pitch, and accomplish them all with ease and enthusiasm. He was, as ever, the ideal companion.

..... on our left a shallow bay opened out, backed by the north-west face of Klokjetarn. It rose in a jagged wall of rich brown rock, broken only by two snow patches at a little over half way height.

"It looks very steep", said Stan, who knew more about Chamoni Aiguilles than most of us.

"Of course it's steep", snarled Phil, rattling his pitons, and somewhat irritated by what he considered a fatuous remark.

We studied it in silence for some minutes.

"Damn fine climb", said Stan, repeating it several times with increasing emphasis, and quite unmoved by Falkner's tone of voice. "A wonderful problem in route finding", he carried on, mainly talking to himself, - "Hours and hours of severe rock climbing - the top five hundred feet look almost vertical", and having said this he relapsed into silence.

Phil knew very well that Stan was just the man to lure onto such a face of virgin rock, and opened up with a deluge of persuasive argument.

"It's four o'clock", said Dick, "..... Be very cold in four hours - clear sky, wind from north-west". We thought this shrewd reasoning and no-one seemed over anxious to start a long rock climb at such an hour. Philip conceded defeat and we decided merely to go up to the col at the head of the glacier.

..... 18.00 on the col. There was considerable argument as to what we should do next. With no thought of an excessively long day in mind, each man had brought only a normal mountain ration eight biscuits, one and a half ounces of cheese, two ounces of chocolate and the same of dried fruit. Most of this we had already eaten. After prolonged debate (the loss of Klokjetarn had entered deep into Philip's soul) Dick thought a quick ascent of the ridge up to Søre Jekkevarre from our present position would be an excellent compromise. Falkner and Parks had already made an ascent of this ridge in bad visibility and had given it a fine character.

..... the climbing was never difficult. The exposure is superb and will satisfy the most fastidious of men.

..... summit of Søre Jekkevarre. Visibility was brilliant and yet, as one looked down those broad lanes of yellow

light, there seemed to be an agency at work whereby objects both close at hand, and distant to the point of fifty miles, were seen as through the most delicate of veils. The materialist will speak of high relative humidity and other rational phenomena, but his voice will be small. For many there is a return of the feeling that this is a land of only half-reality. A place of curious dreamlike atmospheres, full of soft and violent colour; of an intangible quality that breeds unreason and irrational belief. In this place the long night is supreme when the snows are an everchanging reflector of the sun - from evening lemon to crimson midnight - and the eastern sky is an unlikely shade of green. There is madness in the air and perhaps a hint of madness in the mind.

..... The idea of return by our way of ascent was unthinkable. Ahead lay the sweeping lines of Storeand Østre Jekkevarre. No-one had yet carried out a west to east traverse of all three major summits.

(To be concluded)

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"DREAMS GO, BUT OTHERS COME" ..... by TREVOR S. PANTHER.

It was with mixed feelings that I received the news of the successful attempt on the Muztagh Tower.

On the one hand was the intense disappointment, as this was a mountain I had dreamt of climbing for several years and had spent many hours gathering together all sorts of information and plans.

On the other hand I inwardly congratulated the two successful expeditions which climbed it within a week of each other, especially that first ascent led by Hartog and including J. Brown. I was also pleased to learn of the quantity and type of gear taken by that expedition as it almost exactly coincided with the gear I had planned to take in 1958, showing me that I was on the right lines.

I was, however, very surprised to see that the party took such a direct line up such a mountain - still, with Joe Brown on an expedition there is no such thing as technical difficulty. A friend of mine once remarked, "The Battle for Kanchenjunga was won on the Three Cliffs of Llanberis". How much more does this apply to the Muztagh Tower which was more like an overgrown Cromlech. - "Why, Kanch! It was only a snow climb!" (quote Joe Brown).

It is becoming more and more apparent to me that the old days of Himalayan climbs just being enormous snow slogs requiring super powers of endurance (praiseworthy though they were) have almost gone.

Today and from now on we must approach the fiercest untrodden giants of the Himalayas with the same frame of mind that we would summon up if we were about to start the North Face of the Grande Jorasses by the Walker Route or Eigerwand. We must approach these

ultimate monoliths with humbleness and knowledge and get with ferocious determination armed with pitons and wedges by the score, with axe, hammers and improved bivouac clothing, with huge lengths of abseil cord and an even closer eye on the weather. In 1958, the Oreads will still set forth for the Karakorum with these thoughts at the backs of their minds; but we will not be setting out for the Muztagh Tower, but for something in the order of the Gusherbrum or or better still the Mitre Peak.

OTHER CLUBS' HUTS

Here is a list of some of the huts at which Oreads may stay. In all cases bookings should be sent directly to the warden, and you should state that you are an Oread.

Carlisle M. C. Hut, Warden: H. Williamson,  
Rosthwaite, Lismore Cottage,  
Borrowdale, Lismore Plane,  
Carlisle.  
Acc. 12. Fee 1/6.

Chester M. C. Huts. Warden: T. Stockton,  
Maenllwld Uchaf, 12, Ethelda Drive,  
Llanberis, Hooke, Chester.  
Map Ref. 1"O.S. S66595.  
Acc. 20.

Capel Curig Hut,  
Opposite Plas-y-Brenmin.  
Acc. 6.

The Karabiner M.C. Hut, Warden: G. Bosson,  
Irish Row, 32, Sharples Street,  
Coniston, Lancs. Heaton Norris,  
Stockport.  
Acc. 12. Fee 2/-

Barnsley M. C. Hut, Warden: P. W. Wright,  
Wood Cottage, 155, Thorne Road,  
Snake Pass, Doncaster, Yorks.  
Derbyshire.  
Fee 2/6.

Gristone Club Hut. Warden: E. Gudgeon,  
1 mile from Ribbleshead Railway Station, 22, The Rise,  
Morris Lane,  
Leeds, 5.  
Fee 2/6.

Northumbrian M. C. Hut,  
Grandy's Knowe,  
Nr. Crag Lough.

Warden: R.J.D.Pattison,  
6, Embleton Gardens,  
Newcastle, 5.

O.S. 1" Map 77. Ref. 782674.  
Acc. 9. Fee 1/6

Bristol Exploration Club Hut, Warden: P. M. Ifold,  
On Mendips, 4 miles from Wells. Sunnyside,  
Rectory Lane,  
Compton Martin,  
Nr. Bristol.  
Fee 2/2.

IF YOU WANT TO KNOW THE TIME - by ERNIE PHILLIPS.

"Ernie!"

"Whassamarrer?"

"What's the time?"

"Too early, Laurie!"

"Well what is it anyway?"

Reluctantly drags his arm out of the bug-bag and peers at the watch with one eye. "Says half past four."

"Too early, like you said."

"I say, Laurie!" "Yes?"

"Is it time to eat yet?" "Dunno. Feels like it, what time is it now?"

Peers at watch again. "Says half past four!"

"Can't be. We haven't slept for twelve hours since you looked before."

Both sit up. "Well let's eat anyway."

The Primus was lit, the breakfast cooked and eaten, and the coffee drunk. A cursory examination of the watch showed that it had only run down. A few twists at the knob and it was going again. Eventually -

"I say, Laurie!" "Yes?"

"We don't know the time now. Must have been the cursed beer that made me forget to wind it up."

"Probably. We can put it right by the car radio in a few minutes. No clocks for miles round here."

"That's what you think, Laurie, don't forget that the radio has gone defunct!" "So it has."

The low clouds and rain squalls scudded across the Loch.

"Bit miserable not knowing the time, Laurie."

"H'm. Wouldn't know if they were open even if we were within striking distance."

"By Gad, that's serious! That hadn't occurred to me! We'll have to ask somebody." "Nobody to ask."

After a period of cogitation -

"We ought to be able to work it out, Laurie."

"Yes!"

"Well, if a watch and the sun can be used for a compass, it ought to be possible to use a compass and the sun to tell the time."

More cogitation. Two heads nodded together like idols, and thoughts came out sotto voce.

"Plane of the Ecliptic - 360 degrees round the Equator - twelve hours from sunrise to sunset at the Solstice - nearly midsummer now - "

"I make it that the sun travels fifteen degrees in an hour, Laurie."

"That's right. It's no good though, we can't see the sun."

"Well, we don't actually need to see the sun. If it brightens up a bit we'll be able to tell near enough."

After a while a fitful, watery sun appears for a few moments.

"Take a reading with the compass, quickly, before it disappears again."

Squints through the sights. "162 degrees."

"Don't forget the magnetic deviation."

"Or to allow for summer time."

The calculations were made, and the watch adjusted.

"Well, we know the time now, at least."

Later on in the day, while taking a walk down to Ardtoe, we happened to meet a Clerk in Holy Orders, and were engaged in conversation about this, that, and the other. As we were bidding him adieu, I ventured cautiously, "Do you happen to have the time, I think my watch may be a minute or two out!"

"Surely, it's two minutes to four."

I glanced surreptitiously at the watch. Whether we were wrong with the summertime, or the magnetic deviation, I don't know, but it pointed to two minutes to two!

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"Probably. We can put it right by the car radio in a few minutes. No clocks for miles round here."

"That's what you think, Laurie, don't forget that the radio has gone defunct!" "So it has."