

OREAD MOUNTAINEERING CLUB

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Vol. 4, No. 4.

December, 1956.

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EDITORIAL

The Dinner was as usual a great success and it is unfortunate that this issue contains no account of it. The move to the Rutland was a good one, for the meal itself was first-class and of ample quantity, and the dining-room was much more sumptuous than we have previously enjoyed "in another place". All this was in keeping with the increasing respectability of the Club, upon which at least one speaker commented. The speeches too were of a high order. Two other events made the evening particularly enjoyable. One of these was the reappearance of Cyril Machin after his accident at Castle Naze in May 1954. Cyril is one of the Club's most remarkable members, in more ways than one, and it was obvious that everyone was very pleased indeed to see him again. The other event was the President's announcement of the election of Alf Bridge and Jack Longland to honorary membership. Both of these men are not only outstanding mountaineers in their own right but have also made very great contributions to the progress of the sport. They have both been associated with the Oread since the earliest days and the Club has benefited much by the association. It is to be hoped that each will take his membership of the Oread seriously, that is, as a very practical business, and take as full a part as possible in Club activities. Both are busy men, Alf in organising expeditions and Jack in training mountaineers to send on them, but we look forward to seeing them on meets - and to reading their articles in the Newsletter.

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The rationing of petrol and the steep increase in its price will hit mountaineers hard. But there are ways of avoiding the complete abandonment of long-distance meets. One way, as the President suggested in his speech after the dinner, is to revive coach meets. This may not be very easy, for coach operators will be severely limited by the fuel restrictions; but I am sure it can be done. Another way is for car and motor-cycle owners to co-operate with each other and with other members. The average car will do 250 miles on a month's ration. Two motorists, by sharing, can therefore drive 500 miles in a month, which is more than enough to get a car from, say, Nottingham to Bryn y Wern and back. In fact it would probably leave enough to take the pair of them to and from work. Similarly, three or four motorists, using their cars in turn could, if they wanted to, have a weekend in Wales every fortnight. It is also worth noting that a pint of paraffin mixed with a gallon of petrol will not noticeably affect performance but will increase your range by 12½%. Such mixing is illegal and this comment must not be interpreted as an incitement to break the law. Being a law-abiding citizen I wouldn't dream of such a thing. But whatever you do, don't go on a climbing trip with any empty seats. Whatever the government may do (would-be writers of anonymous letters please note that I make no comment, critical or favourable, on the policy of the present shower - the Newsletter is neutral) mountaineering must go on.

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D.C.C.

PATTERDALE MEET - SEPTEMBER 15th-16th..... by P. JANES.

The weekend was notable for the maiden voyage of the "Bury Humane Killer"! Jim's ascent of the Kirkstone Pass was so rapid that Betty Bird arrived at the camp site suffering from acute ear-ache. It could be that this is the highest she has been this year (you know, acclimatisation and all that), or as we suspect, the malady was accelerated by the stentorian breathing of Mike Moore.

Saturday loomed dull but dry, although light drizzle made things unpleasant for a while. Several of the more energetic parties went in search of rock. A party including the Cookes, Nobby Millward and Len Hatchett climbed on Dove Slabs and then went on to reconnoitre Deepdale. Their perambulations proved geographically at least that this valley lives up to its name. Judging by the expressions of privation on the faces of the survivors when they arrived back at camp, their trek must rank with "Seven Years in Tibet"! Fisher and Burgess similarly bent in Deepdale saw fit to locate their digital and pedal extremities on East Wall on Deepdale Buttress.

The remaining Oreads, including the leader and wife, the Prettys, and Cullums minus young, Dave Penlington and Janet, Fred Allen and the Langworthys, spent the day walking in Dovedale. The Bird had a premature return to base, her feathers badly ruffled.

Sunday again saw Dove Slabs as the most popular venue, although parties did "Impromptu" and "Overhanging Chimney" on Dovedale Buttress.

Thus finished an admirable weekend. The Sun God had seen fit to shine on his worshippers, and to the Oread mind, the Lake District had lost its popular tag - "The Chamber Pot of England"!

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FIREWORK MEET - NOVEMBER 2nd-4th by MICK HARBY

This joint meet with the M.A.M. produced a hut with some 33 people sleeping in it, a further contingent camping in the garden and two people who slept in their vans. It says much to the skill of the people who did the initial work in the hut that there was only one bottleneck all weekend, and that was, of course, the bathroom.

Saturday saw Derrick Burgess, Ray Handley and Fred Allen depart for Cwm Silin, where they did a selection of routes, culminating in an attack on Kirkus's, which they were unable to complete, due to a lack of time. Other visitors to the Great Slab were Mike Gadd and his friend. The M.A.M. group went walking on the Horseshoe, returning to say how much they liked the "Oread" valley. Len Hatchett and the Harby's climbed on Craig Isallt and the President with his hangers-on went down towards Black Rock Sands to build a bonfire, stopping en route to prospect a small wood in order to obtain timber for the fire.

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The climax to the weekend came on Saturday night, when everybody left Bryn-y-Wern to go to the Bonfire. Two stops were made en route, one for beer and the other for further supplies of timber. The fire was erected and the President lit it. A comment was made that the battle of fireworks could now really start in earnest. Ray Handley was the first casualty, or rather his fireworks were. Ray, who always does things in a big way, let them all off at once and then spent the next four minutes dancing on his fireworks in a vain attempt to put them out. Gene Kelly at his greatest would have been envious of Raymond's intricate footwork and body movement. We had only just recovered from this superb exhibition, when Derrick Burgess attempted to beat Ray's best. Standing near to the fire, a spark went into his pocket. This would have been commonplace if the pocket had not been filled with rockets, jumping jacks and other inflammable delicacies. An even more intricate dance followed, which reached its climax when Derrick managed to rip the flaming garment from himself and hurl it into the sand, when he proceeded to jump on it.

Only one President was present at the meet. We must have scared the one belonging to the M.A.M. away. However, ours, just to show that he is superior to normal mortals, went swimming. The first thing we knew about it was when a naked figure hurtled down the beach wearing what appeared to be a beard and sporran, and disappeared into the sea. Members were too staggered to take any action and allowed him to have his swim and get dressed again. Later on, however, when he went for another swim, he was joined by Mike Moore, and this time the alarm was given in time. Two naked figures were hotly pursued seawards by the "mob". One member, who had a surfeit of enthusiasm, ran in after them until the member concerned realised that paddling in climbing boots was uncomfortable. Rockets were lit and fired at the swimmers. Roman Candles were lit to illuminate the scene and to fire at the naked human targets. No direct hits were scored but some very near misses were registered. Chestnuts and potatoes were roasted and eaten, songs sung in the firelight, and then everybody returned to Bryn-y-Wern and bed.

Sunday was the anti-climax, with leaden skies and drizzle. Our M.A.M. friends again went up the valley. The President plus hangers-on went a tour of the Bryn-y-Wern estate, and a small working men's group met in Jim Bury's van.

Finally one last thing; cups, saucers, plates, saucepans and frying pans were left dirty by several people who used the hut. Dave Penlington tells me that this is becoming far more prevalent. If this is correct, then all I can say is this:- Please wash up your things immediately you have used them, and if you cannot be bothered to do that, then do not bother to use the hut, because such hut manners are not required at Bryn-y-Wern.

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BRYN-Y-WERN WORKING PARTY - 16th NOVEMBER by ERNIE PHILLIPS

A small party of Oreads came by various routes to the Hut on Friday evening, with the intention of redecorating the dining-room and having a look at the lounge fireplace with the intention of rebuilding it sometime.

Everyone was up with the dawn - well nine o'clock anyway - and Penlington rushed off to Portmadoc for sand and cement immediately after breakfast, while the rest of us started to strip the paper off the wall of the dining room. This was a most delightful job; I started at the fireplace and removed the paper right round to the window in one piece in about ten seconds. Something tells me that the walls must have been a trifle damp.

Most of the plaster was in fair condition, and the cracks and holes were soon filled up with the aid of a few packets of a strange substance rejoicing in the name of Polyfilla or something like that. Whatever it is, it is most effective and can be highly recommended. Eventually the walls were prepared and ready for the distemper, and Penlington, having returned from his expedition to Portmadoc, made ready the White for the ceiling. He had assured us on the previous Tuesday that ample supplies of decorating material were available at the Hut, but the ceiling white gave one the impression of about one teaspoonful of flour stirred up with a couple of gallons of water!

The situation was retrieved by adding a little primrose to it, and the ceiling finished up a delicate shade of ivory. The walls were quickly covered, by rollers and brushes, with a good coating of primrose, and the whole left to dry in readiness for a second covering later on.

While this had been going on, the heavy brigade had ripped out what was left of the lounge fireplace with gay abandon, rapidly to be followed by a mass of firebricks and clay. The hole which remained was of impressive dimensions, and this was increased by building a stone pillar on each side. The original intention was to have an ashpit below floor level, with an airpipe into it from under the floor, and a valve to control the affair. As Penno had not manufactured the device, however, a compromise was arranged, with a pipe under the floor, and an outlet just in front of the fire itself. The device was dexterously produced by Nobby Milward in about two minutes, with the aid of a hammer and two pieces of asbestos pipe. The whole affair was set under the floor, and the lot cemented into place.

As the dining-room was still not yet dry, we decided to have a go at the back-kitchen wall, and gave the wall round the window a lick over. It is still not anything great, but at least it is the same colour all over! Eventually, after about twelve hours continuous effort, we decided that we had had enough, and retired after troughing and knocking back quantities of Milo. As a result of a catastrophic oversight on someone's part there was no beer in

the Hut; I suppose I ought to have seen to this matter myself - too many unreliable people about.

We had agreed to rise early on the Sunday, and get cracking as soon as possible, and Laurie Burns said he would wake us. He did, but only after his return from a two hour wander up the valley, and no-one else woke until about eight-thirty. After a rapid breakfast the dining-room decorators were in full swing, but the fireplace project seemed to enter into a state of suspended animation, as no concrete ideas were forthcoming as to the method of completing the job. Eventually, a large slab of stone was laid across the two pillars, and cemented into the appropriate position, and a hauling party set off for the quarries. A jury-rigged sledge made of corrugated iron was loaded with slates that some long-departed slater had thoughtfully left there for us, and the lot dragged back to the Hut.

The fireplace was finished by putting a pile of square slates at each end, and then filling in between with rectangular slates cemented vertically, giving us a magnificent stone-built fireplace delightful to behold (at least to those who had a hand in building it). The finishing touches were completed, and then came the acid test - to light a fire in it. A collection of paper and sticks burst into flame at the touch of a match, and in a few moments some large logs were burning with great vigour, a fine sight. Logs two feet long are now the order of the day.

In the meantime, the dining-room walls had been distempered again, and the skirting board, picture rail, door, shutters and hatchway painted, tables and benches scrubbed up, and the floor mopped over. Clearing up in the lounge and back kitchen followed, and the debris carted away. By five o'clock normality was restored, and we left the place to its own devices.

Another good weekend like this, with about fifteen people there, could see most of the major operations completed, and it is to be hoped that this can be done in the not too distant future.

Those present were: Dave Penlington, Janet Hughes, Laurie Burns and Taffy, Chuck and Margaret Hooley, Nobby Milward, Ronni and myself.

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AN OUTING FOR CHILDREN by TREVOR PANTHER

On 6th November I found myself with a week's holiday, so I went to Llanberis Pass with Raymond Stephens (a remarkable protege of mine). I was running a new piston in on the bike, so the journey up took a long time, and it was dark by the time we arrived at the Pen-y-Gwryd - frozen stiff. After some hot ginger wine, we felt much improved and went down to Cromlech Bridge. We had intended to stay in the dave under Dinas Mot, but it was such a dark night that we failed to find it, in spite of the fact that I had stayed there many times.

So we bivouacked by a wall below the Mot scree and spent a peaceful night. The weather was kind to us, and the occasional yellow moonlight through the heavy clouds was very mellow. In the morning I was feeling rather ill, so we moved up to the cave as soon as it was light and I slept most of the day. Raymond apparently spent much time in tidying up the cave. About midday I recovered somewhat and we drove to Caernarvon, had a meal, bought supplies and returned to do "Cracks" on the Mot in the late afternoon. The next day we awoke to a roaring East wind - dry but very cold, so we walked round the Snowdon Horseshoe in thick mist.

On top of Lliwedd, however, the sun shone through and all was bright and beautiful instead of black and fearful (but nevertheless beautiful). After each day out we returned down a deserted Llanberis Pass to a huge cook-up in the cave, and later went over to an equally deserted P.W.G. for a drink.

The next day was much warmer, so we did Wrinkle on Carreg Wasted and some other pleasant little routes above the Grochan.

The following day was our last in the mountains, so we went up to the Cromlech and did Dives Route, followed by a ride round to Ogwen on the motor-bike, where we did Scap Gut on the Milestone.

These days Soap Gut is only hard severe under good conditions. In spite of all the dry weather we had up there, I was surprised to find Soap Gut streaming with water. Consequently, it was V.S. and we both did it in socks.

How much easier are these Very Severs in Ogwen than those in Llanberis Pass. Nevertheless, it was just as nice a climb as ever although a little different for me. My second was a chap who could follow up almost anything without assistance, but I dare not fall off on to him; Raymond Stephens is only 12½ years old!

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LAMENT AT THE PASSING OF A FRIEND .. by ANON

Oh Johnny dear, the time is here
To leave the life you love so dear,
No more wandering down the lanes
For your feet are soon in chains.

No more hills for you to climb,
The old Church bells will soon a'chime!
Staff Nurse Ruth is here to stay -
John Welbourn must change his way.

To the Bell on Tuesday night
He will try with all his might,
But the boys will wait in vain
For Johnny's washing up again.

Too late now to change his mind
All too soon he sure will find.
When he's cooking Nurse's meals
Instead of playing in the fields,
He will say, "I've had my day,
Now I guess I've got to pay."

Well, best of luck, mon Petit Jean,
It's up to you to "faire le pain",
Welbourn vous 'ave 'ad it, chum,
L'amour! Toujours! Till Kingdom come!

(Extract from "Blow Torch", the official organ of the Power House & Loco Welding Operatives)

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THE PANTHER PUTSCH by ERNIE PHILLIPS

A short while ago one of our younger and more stoical members was bivouacking under the boulder at Pont y Cromlech and, while groping in the night for his bosom companion, his hand came to rest on a curiously shaped object which he could not identify. Being more than half asleep he stuffed it down his sleeping-bag for further inspection in the morning.

Instead of the half-empty rusting tin of beans which he expected, it turned out to be an earthenware gourd of curious design and brownish hue, having embossed round the neck the words "Omne Mene Padme Um". These words seemed strangely familiar to him, and on unsealing the neck, he discovered inside a roll of copper foil covered with hieroglyphics.

Being a Good Member, he immediately reported the matter to one of the Club Elders, who, realising that there was more in it than met the eye, straightaway sent it off to his friend, Sir Whortimer Meeler. The latter opined that it was not a matter for an Egyptologist, and sent it to the Department of Oriental Studies. The pundits there announced that the outer inscription was written in Archaic Tibetan (with some spelling mistakes) and could be roughly translated as "Hail to the Jewel in the Lotus Blossom". The hieroglyphics were, however, Greek to them, and indecipherable.

The whole issue was then consigned to the archives of the Hut Subcommittee, and but for an amazing stroke of good fortune would be there still. One line, however, seemed to be repeated over and over again, and the key to it was obtained from an article entitled "Climbing or Swimming" in the November Newsletter.

The oft repeated line read :-

"Hsibbur si gnibmilc eht kniht I ylknarf etiuq tub, ecalp ecin A."

but viewed through a mirror it became relatively intelligible. The Intelligent Member of the committee was commissioned to transcribe the rest of the scroll, and the time now seems ripe to make public the grandiose scheme revealed.

It turned out to be the Minutes of what is known as the "Shadow Club Hut Committee". The idea is to descend on the A.G.M. and oust the present committee lock, stock and barrel (Worthington "E"), and then let off Bryn-y-Wern as a rest centre for Aged Climbers who are reduced to ascending such nondescript routes as the Craig Cwm Silin "Ogof Direct" and walking and ski-ing on insignificant pimples such as Moel Hebog.

The proceeds from this action are to be used to finance the New Club Hut. The original intention was to call it "Muzkanch", but in view of recent happenings it will now be called "Mitrebrum". It is to be erected on a peculiarly appropriate site in the "Mushroom Garden" on Glyder Fach, the fabric for the structure having been culled from the summit of the Muztagh Tower by Joe Brown, and carried back in his rucksack, under a special commission from Panther himself.

The internal arrangements will be spartan but sufficient - one room containing twelve bunks, the first being six feet long, and lined with Dunlopillo Foam (for Panther), while the rest will be four feet long and hewn from the living rock, for his attendant retinue of schoolboys. Fuel will present no difficulty, as trips to N.Wales will go via Leek, so that the footrocks of the Roches can be scoured for Yak-dung, while rancid butter can be obtained at any Post Office cum General Store beyond Chirk. Chapattis will, of course, be de rigeur.

To facilitate access to the climbs, a re-enforced concrete structure is to be erected between the Hut and Craig-yr-Isfa. The first part will consist of a prestressed boom, which will provide a free hand traverse for a mile or so, leading to a vertical over-hanging wall. Piton cracks are to be provided at intervals of about ten feet, but in order to avoid any suggestion of artificiality, each crack will be different from all the others, and pitons will be issued in complete sets of two thousand.

Occasionally gaps of 200 feet or so will occur. These will be negotiated by the use of rockets with jumping-jacks attached to them so that the nylon line they carry will be securely wrapped round the fixed peg provided, in readiness for the pendule.

To provide access to Clogwyn du'r Arddu, the Aberglaslyn is to be dammed at Tremadoc, and the hydroelectric power generated transmitted on pylons 400 feet high via Pen-y-Gwryd to the Llanberis Pass. Here it will be used to operate giant refrigerators which will maintain a scimitar blade of ice 2000 feet high from the Hut to the crag; this, of course, will be traversed a cheval. The Tremadoc Cliffs will be under water, but are not considered to be worth preserving.

At the appropriate point, a notched boss in the ice will be arranged to give a free abseil down to the Three Cliffs, the return being made by cutting steps up the wall. In order to preserve its virgin form, the last man will catch the ice fragments from Panther's axe in his school-cap, and use them to fill in the holds below him by the process of re-gelation.

Sightseers and bus-trippers will pay a nominal charge of 6d. per head to view these antics. The fee will be collected by a small boy carrying a cast effigy of a negro which protrudes its tongue when one of its arms is depressed, the coin then being drawn into its cast-iron belly.

To be serious, though, Trevor, a considerable effort was made to find a place capable of being turned into a first-class Hut, but, as you must realise yourself, such places no longer exist among the Giants of Snowdonia, and we had to look elsewhere.

In my opinion, Bryn-y-Wern fills a long felt want among the climbing fraternity, as a glance at the Visitors Book will show. Those who seek will find what they are looking for.

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A LONG WEEKEND IN THE PASS by BRIAN RICHARDS

Walter Richardson and I had managed to obtain three days' leave at the end of October, and we planned to spend from Friday to Sunday in Wales, travelling Thursday evening and Monday afternoon. Our schedule was tight, being governed by our having to attend night school on Thursday and Monday evenings.

I have recently sold my faithful old M.G. and bought a very serviceable 1937 Ford 8 to tide me over the cold winter weather.

It was in the Ford, with the rear seats piled high with gear, that we left a wet and windy Burton at 9.15 p.m. This being my first longish ride in the Ford, we were both apprehensive about our chances of reaching P-y-G without oily or grimey hands. But the car never faltered and at just 1.15 a.m. we rattled to a proud standstill outside the sleeping Pen-y-Gwryd. The idea was to bivy in the field across the road from the pub, and the night, windy but lit by a bright moon, augured well.

I was just "sinking into a blackness" as John Fisher does, when I heard a faint pit-a-pat all around. Successfully fooling myself that it was just the groundsheet crackling a bit after being unrolled, I burrowed under the eiderdown, but all in vain as in a moment Walter roused me with the news that it was starting to rain. Too true. The now watery moon illuminated a towering cloud mass, which was rapidly obscuring the sky above us.

We dressed quickly and, rolling up our bedding, made our way back to the road through steadily increasing rain. Not a moment too soon. No sooner had we slammed the door shut behind us than the heavens opened. Sleet lashed down outside the car, cancelling thought of a further bivy or of pitching a tent. I restarted the engine, and we drove cautiously through the torrent which now contained a lot of snow up the road to Pen-y-Pass. At Pen-y-Pass we left the jalopy in the car park and inspected the outhouses adjacent to the inn, prospecting for a pit space. The best spot appeared to be in the garage, where mine host houses his numerous stage-coaches, phaetons, buggies and other ancient vehicles whose technical names

I forget. It was dry and waterproof, so we unrolled the bug-bags thankfully on the concrete floor in a space left between a black Morris Oxford and a green Morris Isis.

At about 8 o'clock next morning we were awoken by the inconsiderate slamming of a car door by the owner of the Isis. On reaching the doorway of the garage a magnificent view confronted us. Against the pale yellow of the early sky, the jagged crags defining the edges of the pass were thickly coated with new snow down to a level of about 2000 feet. We stood around for a while taking photographs and savouring the crispness of the atmosphere, while our breath rose whitely into the sharp air, then repacked our gear and motored down the pass to the farm just below Yrys Ettws.

By way of a change, and to taste the joys of a "high" camp, we struggled up to Cwm Glas and pitched camp there. After breakfast we sauntered down to the road and up the lower slopes of Glyder Fawr to Dinas Cromlech.

It was a grey, rather cold, day and the rock was still quite greasy from the previous night's downpour. Cenotaph Corner, running with water and towering up silently in one vertical and unrelenting sweep, looked an incredibly hard climb. Neither Walter nor I felt quite up to "doing a Whillans", so we notched our ambitions down by our VI grades and instead attacked Parchment Passage, a Mild Difficult. We couldn't finish this route and had to get off by an easier way. We were really roused by that ignominious defeat, and next became very tigerish, doing a V.Diff, Spiral Stairs.

By now the previous late night was beginning to make itself felt, so we made our way down to the car and up to the Pen-y-Pass. The bar was not yet open, so to pass the time we strolled in the dusk up the miners' track and into the Horseshoe, watched by the encircling snowcapped crags.

After spending the evening in the cosy but very phony "Everest Room" at P-y-P, we had quite an adventure finding our way up to Cwm Glas in the darkness. We slept for 11½ hours that night.

The sun was beaming warmly from a blue sky when we emerged on Saturday morning. Across the valley the Three Cliffs looked hard and exciting. A multi-coloured array of tents had sprung up during the night, and were dotted along the floor of the valley close to the road. After a drive down to Llanberis to replenish the Ford's tank, we climbed the steep talus, as the Americans call screes, up to the foot of Carreg Wastad.

The guide book's description of Halan, Severe, looked interesting, but after spending half an hour in a steep, frost shattered groove, showering the base of the cliff with erstwhile jug-handles, we decided that we were off the route and descended. The sensationally exposed Crackstone Rib next took our fancy. This fine climb is well provided with large "rugosities" while taking a superbly exposed line. A party was doing "Erosion Groove" while we were on the Rib. This is not in the guide book, and looks a very steep and fierce climb.

To complete our sortie on to the Three Cliffs, we wandered over to Clogwyn y Grochan after lunch, and did the very pleasant Severe route, Nea, which we completed as darkness began to fall.

We had a fine programme in mind for the Sunday, but rain started to come down just after breakfast. We retired to the tent to sit it out, but after 1½ hours, it was evident that the weather had come to stay. It would have been pointless to spend the rest of a wet day and a pub-less wet night in Wales, only to travel home the next day, so we struck camp in the pouring rain, and stumbled down the hill to where the car was parked.

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THE FIRST WEST TO EAST TRAVERSE OF
JEKKEVARRE (Concluded) by HARRY PRETTY

..... Dick was in the lead, his anorak curiously tucked up round his buttocks, the point of his axe clipping the hard and immaculate surface with a steadily increasing frequency. He was setting a pace. Nobby drew level and was about to pass, but the pace was stepped up and Dick remained in front. One sensed an atmosphere of rivalry - no personal animus, but determination to be first on top seemed to infect us all. The party swept up a thousand feet with increasing speed, like a wave rolling shorewards and, like a wave, the offord broke and shuddered to a halt as in one movement a sudden flood of light engulfed us and the ridge lay beneath our feet. It was 21.10.

Traverse to Østre Jekkevarre The down slope steepened, wide depressions in the surface caused us to move with deliberate circumstpection, feeling our way across lines of crevasse until, quite suddenly, we were brought to a complete halt above a line of crags. These were invisible from above, and dropped with considerable directness to the upper end of a glacier descending to Fugledal.

For the past three hours no gradient had presumed to be anything more than gentle and it must be admitted that the unheralded appearance of this sharp declivity caused a certain amount of clucking and tut-tutting in the ranks. It was normal to push Bob Pettigrew to the front where some sacrifice in the cause of experiment was required (Pettigrew was always thought of as expendable) - but Bob was not one of us. In his absence there was always a tendency to call upon Dick, for the diverse vulgarity of his conversation when thus forced into an awkward situation was calculated to remove all seriousness from the proceedings.

Dick had meanwhile taken himself to a steep nose of rock, from where he announced the existence of a snow gully away to the left. We proceeded thither in an orderly fashion - Dick being left to follow. In this way I found myself being forced by pressure from behind into the funnelled head of a narrow snow groove, descending from my feet as straight as an arrow to the level ice of a col, three hundred feet below. Demanding a rope, I prepared to cut

steps for the gully was of pure snow-ice, much too hard for kicking. Hoots of derision greeted my request and bitter scorn was the only reply to my continued demands.

"Get on and glissade it", piped up Brown from the rear - the instruction was repeated several times in the coarse vernacular normal to my companions.

Realising that I had been outplayed, all available self-respect was mustered, and a careful study made of the slope beneath by boot soles, now projecting clear of the holds I had cut for my heels. Whilst so doing, my body swayed out of balance and, in a flash, I was off. I slid fifty feet or so carefully controlled - it was the steepest thing I'd ever run. Exhilaration caught me and I must have withdrawn the brake because I remember little else except the ultimate discomfort of skating right across the col flat on my back.

My windproofs had suffered badly, but I turned with mounting anticipation to watch the others. For five minutes or so they were all recovering from the effects of my riotous descent and I gathered from their actions that they were not displeased with my performance.

Some jockeying for position and Philip came down in the traditional Falkner sitting posture, completely controlled over the whole distance. Stan made a workmanlike job of it, staying on his feet with some effort to the bitter end, but careful to retain the maximum braking power available. Nobby was supreme. He made a text-book glissade, a polished performance, with an arrival that was as unruffled as it was distinguished.

Now Dick is a man who understands the subtleties of clowning and has a marked flair for producing uproar where quiet decorum might otherwise be the order of the day. We have never known whether this particular exhibition was intentioned or not, but in any case it reached a peak of perfection hitherto unknown.

For a second he was on his feet, from which position he seemed to be in the act of falling on his face, and at this point he disappeared. All that could be seen was a high wall of snow which hurtled down the gully with enormous and increasing velocity until it came to rest in a heap almost at our feet. From beneath the pile a pair of spectacles appeared thickly plastered in snow and still resting in their normal position. An ice-axe was also apparent protruding at a peculiar angle; while slowly, and in an oddly disconnected fashion, a full complement of arms and legs started to emerge. A certain amount of tentative waving was sufficient proof that Brown was still in working order, whereupon we all sat on the col quite helpless with laughter. The body showed immediate signs of life and, sitting up, became very peevish - but it was of no avail and for several minutes we were completely carried away by visions of that wall of snow, of a leg which appeared and disappeared and, above all, the ludicrous vacancy of that snow encrusted gaze.

Descent from Østre Jekkevarre It was 23.00 when we reached this last summit. Nicking steps down the south-east summit dome, the party assembled on the rock ridge which runs down to Skartind. There was much discussion as to the best line of descent.

The four thousand feet of snow face and avalanche groove, which had taken Phil and Pat down to the Lille Jekkevarre glacier only seven days ago, seemed a depressing proposition in the conditions of hard snow, and no-one (not even Moore) relished the idea of chopping out four thousand steps - for it was at this point that Dick and Phil confessed to not having brought "claws". On the other hand, the idea of traversing the ridge on which we stood, over Skartind, (then unclimbed and an unknown proposition) and down to the Tobre Skar, was equally unpopular. Only the face overlooking Lyngsdal remained and, from above, this appeared to be a long succession of steep crags bending outward into space.

"We shall find a gully somewhere", remarked Nobby, who was much taken with the idea of descent on to the Lyngsdal glacier as being the shortest way to a cup of tea and a quiet smoke. It was now six hours since we had finished our last scraps of biscuit. We were not feeling too good.

We climbed a short way down the ridge, crept along a ledge below the wave of a hard frozen cornice, and came to the upper end of what seemed a particularly horrible-looking gash. Steeply funnelled at the top, it ran down between vertical walls and buttresses of rock in the desired direction. A V-shaped groove, worn out by falling debris, was the main feature of its narrow snow bed, which disappeared around a bend some eight hundred feet below. "This", said Nobby, with grossly untoward enthusiasm - "is it!" There was a mutter of uncertainty, the cramponless ones becoming blatantly rude until Stan put forward a suggestion. With the available three hundred feet of rope, those with claws could rig a series of rope hand rails for the less fortunate pair. The only disadvantage was that the last man down each pitch would start his descent with the equivalent of a three hundred foot run-out. Stan accepted it with equanimity. I led down to the full extent of the combined ropes. There were no rock belays to be had and the five foot deep avalanche chute, rock scoured and ice hardened, was a constant reminder of our position. There were not many feet of snow on either side of the chute in which to manoeuvre. An adequate shelf had to be excavated out of the bed at the bottom of every pitch. Dick and Phil came down in rapid succession, with snap links clipped on to the taut nylon, and obtaining the maximum of friction with the rope around one arm and shoulder - it was a simplified form of roping down. So we progressed until the gully ended on a broken open face of rock and snow, whereupon we reverted to more normal methods of descent.

This southern face of Østre Jekkevarre is 3500 feet high, and there are probably easier ways of descending it than the one we took, but in the doing of it, we gave a name to the steep gash that runs vertically down the upper face, and considered it justifiable since it had given us the hardest three hours of a long and

memorable day. It was named after the man who, apparently conscious of its less obvious virtues, had talked us into it. Ever afterwards we referred to it as the Couloir Clarke.

Below the glacier each man walked alone, down the wide expanse of stone, beneath the still shadowed face of Tobretind, through the ice-cold torrents to the fringe of birch and juniper. It was always the same. The torture of that last mile was best accepted and endured as an individual - and nineteen hours after departure, the individual was very tired.

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

White Hall,
Manchester Rd,
Buxton,
26th Nov, 1956

To The Editor, Oread Newsletter.

Sir,

At the recent Oread M.C. Annual Dinner our friend, Jack Longland, was made an Hon. Member, and a brief resume of his qualifications for this honour was given, but omitted all mention of his brainchild, White Hall. In my opinion, this contribution which he has made, not just to mountaineering, is quite the most important, if not the most spectacular of his qualifications for becoming an Hon. Member.

It is all the more odd that this omission occurred on an evening when so much was said about encouraging youth and new blood. Yet perhaps not so strange when we know that on the last two occasions when Oread M.C. was invited to supply six W/E instructors, and agreed to do so, on the first W/E only three arrived, on the second only one. There were good excuses each time but they would not have been good enough a few years back, when more strenuous efforts would have been made to fill the places, and find deputies when having to withdraw. It would therefore appear that the club now preaches one doctrine, and practises another.

If we are not attracting new blood, it is because we are too self-sufficient. The club which energetically supported White Hall, which has supplied three of its Assistant Wardens, which has encouraged work friends to take to the hills, and tied protesting rambblers on to the end of ropes - that club never had trouble with its new blood.

Standing on my improvised platform of any boulder problem, and preaching hellfire and damnation (as any good Vice-President should), I ask you to search your consciences - have you ignored some fresh face (even if not attractive) - have you answered all letters from would-be mountaineers - have you snubbed or talked over the head of some petrified stranger - have you ladies torn to shreds some new Oread, stitch by stitch - have you blokes ostracised that chap

in the corner of the Bell - I bet you have, and so have I quite often. But a club exists to show kindness and welcome and interest in people - once these qualities were one of the better-known characteristics of the Oread M.C., as many of you must be aware.

Incidentally, I am leaving White Hall at Christmas, so no more letters to that address please. I could write at great length about White Hall - one day I might - certainly I'm taking with me two log-books full of memories. All told, at White Hall, well over a thousand young people have learned something from me, or taught me something, for the impact of personality and the transfer of experience is a two-way process. I am left with the same impression about children as I have about dogs - there's no such thing as a bad one.

George Sutton.

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

George Sutton proposed the toast to the club at the Polaris M.C. Dinner at the Scotsman's pack on November 3. The Dinner was good and the company was graced by the presence of Eileen Gregory and other Himalayan women.

Charlie Cullum represented the Oread at the Chester MC. Dinner on December 7. Other guests were Gwen Lees of the Pinnacle Club, Arthur Clark of the C.C. and Bernard and Dorothy Wright of the Karabiner M.C.

Trevor Panther has had a share in the founding of the North London M.C., which has an indoor meet every Wednesday evening and climbs somewhere almost every weekend.

Conversation piece: "Do they go out together? He takes her on Oread meets, but I don't know whether it goes any further than that." "CAN you go any further than that?"

Ken Wright is now in Canada and seems to be enjoying himself there. Betty is due to follow next spring.

AGONY IN STONY PLACES..........by CHARLIE CULLUM.

(The following is the Editor's attempt at a little light-hearted Christmas reading. It has nothing to do with Christmas, however; in fact it would have appeared in the Journal if you'd written anything to go with it. Reference to any person, living or dead, is entirely intentional and with malice aforethought. All the incidents herein described are perfectly true.)

I was reading Bill Murray's fine book, "Undiscovered Scotland" when I came across the sentence, "We went up to Coire nan Lochan and pitched the tent in the middle of the loch". It took my mind back to the time when I did a similar thing with a recalcitrant Primus stove during a camp by Llyn Llydaw. That was the morning I sat on an ants' nest before breakfast, wearing only a pair of bathing trunks. I had, so to speak, breaches in my defence but no defence in my breeches. And those ants didn't intend being sat on.

And this thought in turn led my fancy over other dismal episodes of my mountaineering career. People will tell you that they climb for pleasure. Ha, ha, ha! Read on!

Another camp at the same spot. My companion woke me at 1 a.m. (a remarkable feat) and said, "There's some water coming in."

Since the tent we were using ordinarily made only a feeble pretence of keeping rain out, I showed neither alarm nor surprise. I said, "Ugh."

He repeated his awful warning, fortissimo.

Assuming that the course of action I normally take in such circumstances would be efficacious on this occasion I replied, "Oh. Well, brush it down to the eaves of the tent. It'll be all right."

"It's coming in through the door."

"Oh. Well, roll the ground sheet back."

"It's coming over the ground sheet."

"Oh."

I sat up. A broad, deep, placid river was flowing majestically through the opening of the tent, following a natural watercourse between the bags, and after sweeping in a noble right-hand curve, swished through my companion's bag and out of the tent. I said, "My God, it's happened to me at last!" We eventually diverted the river and moved the tent at daybreak, carrying it after the fashion of a Salvation Army banner.

Things like that happen to me. I once tried to dry a pair of saturated corduroys by sleeping on them. (Another member of the party had already incinerated his in trying to dry them by placing a blazing Primus inside them. He was, of course, not wearing them at the time.) I was astonished to discover how much water you can transfer from a pair of trousers to a sleeping bag without causing any perceptible drying of the trousers.

Speaking of wet sleeping bags reminds me of the Marsden-Rowsley walk of 1954. On the Friday night we slept out near the Isle of Skye Inn. My nether half was encased in a waterproof bag and my upper half was wrapped in a ground sheet. It rained all night, but I drew comfort from the knowledge of my secure protection from the elements. Yet, inexplicably, before setting off next morning I found it necessary to pour a considerable quantity of water out of my bag. Members of the "Blow You Jack" section of the Club, who, let it be known, had slept INSIDE the inn, seemed to consider this spectacle funny.

But enough of these aquatic antics. Let's go back to Scotland. That country has been the scene of many curious adventures. Once we came down off Nevis at midnight loaded with camping gear. We took shelter in a barn at Achintee Farm, where the farmer kindly warned us against marauding rats. We thanked him, but reasoned that if we hid our food in our rucksacks, the rats would eat the rucksacks to get at the food. (This too has since happened to me. Oh, most wretched of mortals!) Rucksacks are expensive. So we spread

the food all about the barn in positions accessible to the least nimble of rats and went to bed.

Came the dawn. A weary climber stirred in his bag. He sat up. He looked round. He saw that the rats had eaten half of his right boot. My right boot. I packed up and went home.

But even packing has many a pitfall for the unwary. And for the wary too, for that matter. Once I packed a packet of cocoa next to my camera. Ever afterwards all my photographs were covered in little brown specks. Another time I arrived in Glencoe and on opening my rucksack I found that a bottle of meths, no doubt activated by some malign intelligence (see the present author's treatise, "The Sheer Perversity of Inanimate Matter") had inverted itself and drained its contents into a packet of porridge oats. I expect you've seen people set Christmas puddings on fire. You have? Good.

And once upon a time we arrived in Arran and put a camp in Glen Rosa. That was the day I nearly bled to death through having a flag-seller's wares pinned to my bare chest. I boasted continually of the comprehensive range of goods contained in my enormous pack - of the amazingly varied and elegant clothing, of the sumptuous food and drink, of the carpet slippers, reading lamps, mouse traps, runcible spoons and the like, wherewith I proposed to make our holiday a pleasant one. Beneath the silent, awestruck gaze of my friends I proceeded to unpack my array of merchandise. At last all was unpacked except the Primus. I delved and emerged with the tank. I delved again. Alas! The bag was quite, quite empty. The legs and burner were 400 miles away in Beeston.

But perhaps you are beginning to think that such a sea of troubles must prevent me from ever climbing. Not so. I remember well, for example, my first abseil at Black Rocks. Somehow I got upside down and dangled head downward some forty feet above the assembled multitudes who, regardless of the extreme gravity (gravity - get it?) of my plight, hooted with laughter at my inverted struggles. I remembered that occasion when, years later, I ascended the Grinnett. During the intervening time my technique had improved beyond recognition. This time I dangled right way up.

Sometimes I even succeed in finishing a climb. On one occasion when this had happened I occupied the walk back to camp by concocting a delicious recipe with which to celebrate the event. When we arrived I had it complete in my mind. Out came the cooking pot. In went porridge oats, cheese, Worcester sauce, tomatoes, canned rhubarb, baked beans and a host of other ingredients. At last it was ready. I tasted it. The flavour was rather unexpected. My friends, who were creatures of unrefined tastes, and unable to recognise a masterpiece, refused to eat any of the dish. They even complained about "the waste". Afterwards they insisted on referring to it as "Cullum's Calamity".

Even in the Alps I have been overtaken by misfortune. In 1952 I had three accidents in two days. On my first day on a glacier, on the Wildspitze, I fell into a crevasse. I was unable to get out, because it was fully three feet deep and because I had one of the points of my left crampon deeply embedded in my right leg.

We had a hectic time that day, and when we reached the glacier on the descent

we were very tired. The glacier was very steep and it was difficult to avoid running down it. Nearing the snout I reached about 45m.p.h. Somehow one of my crampon straps worked loose and flipped about as I ran. The other crampon, no doubt fearing I was going to leave the flipping strap behind, very considerately impaled it on one of its points. My consequent mode of descent has not yet appeared in any of the mountaineering text-books. Not that it has much to recommend it, anyway.

But that isn't the end of the horrid affair. The following afternoon I hobbled up to the Vernagt hut and saw a beautiful chestnut horse grazing by the door. I like horses. I approached and patted its shoulder. The horse enthusiastically returned my greeting. It bit me. (Note for others in similar circumstances: the German for, "Your horse has bitten me" is, "Ihr Pferd hat mich gebissen". Not that anyone will care.)

Easter 1951. The last day of a fortnight's camp in Torridon. We decided to traverse Ben Eighe. There was a fierce, cold wind, and ice everywhere. We went on and on, along that seemingly endless ridge, and at last arrived at the col below the last summit. Very cold and very weary, we started to trudge up the final grind. My companion soon left me behind and I plodded up the frozen snow-slope with great and increasing difficulty. Each step required more effort than the last. My legs were gripped by a fearful, numbing cold which robbed them of all power. As I reached the summit and clutched thankfully at the cairn, I was as powerless to move as if my ankles had been tied together. Complete paralysis seized me. I glanced down. My trousers had come down.

There are many more such incidents which unkind acquaintances seem to find amusing - missing a once-daily bus to Glencoe by a few minutes, two nights running; breakfasting on dry bread and pickles while fiends (sorry, that should be friends) in the next tent ate bacon and tomatoes, the Primus being over there; of a leader swept by a small avalanche from a gully on Stob Coire nan Lochan.....

But that brings me back to Murray and his tent. On reading further I discovered that the loch was frozen solid and that "pitching the tent" meant putting it up, not hurling it.

Does anyone want to buy a pair of boots (one partially eaten) ?

At last it was ready. I tasted it. The flavour was rather unexpected. My friends, who were creatures of unworldly tastes, and unable to recognize a masterpiece, refused to eat any of the dish. They even complained about "the waste". Afterwards they insisted on referring to it as "O'Neill's Calamity".

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