

O R E A D

M O U N T A I N E E R I N G

C L U B

M O N T H L Y

N E W S L E T T E R

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TWO DERBESHIRE WEEKENDS

JIM KERSHAW.

I : DECEMBER 7 - 8

Ashbourne is a friendly sort of place. Moore, Geoff. Hayes + myself arrived there on Saturday hot on the trail of Welbourn who had left for Dovedale on foot. It began to rain and I was persuaded into waiting for the Ilam bus by the other two members of the party who refused to follow my example in buying a pac-a-mac (price 17/4).

It arrived eventually.

Now the Ilam bus isn't really a bus at all; it's a sort of rival time machine set 50 years in reverse. Cold Comfort characters share their seats with a crate of fowls, an old sow or two, oblivious to eccentrics in anoraks.

We stepped back into 1957 and the rain at the Isaac Walton and set off for the stepping stones and Dovedale (myself in pac-a-mac value 20/-).

Just past the point where you always fall in the river we came across a group of huddled figures outside a cave. They spoke and pointed upwards to where Welbourn had disappeared in search of an old Valkyrie campsite.

impressed at this well-deserved translation to a higher plane of existence, we retired into the cave and discussed the rival merits of a memorial on the spot or at Stange, but were relieved to have him back with us a few moments later in a most ungodly condition. The whole party proceeded to Halldale where tents were set up in high wind and heavy rain.

Sunday morning was fine and sunny, Moore, Geoff. and myself setting off for Hartington, and Welbourn and party pegging on Ilam Rock and walking over to the Manifold. It soon began to rain again, Moore and Geoff. eyeing my pac-a-mac enviously (value 30/-). We followed the usual path up Milldale and Beresford dale, tried a scree run down the side of the valley, all going well until a short cut over a bridge which no longer existed, involved us with the serpentine bank of the Dove and brought us into Hartington bar with a cloth on the pumps and all the farewell sadness of late Sunday dinner.

We ordered a pot of tea, eyed the polished horsebrass on the walls and rafters, deplored the weather, and memories came back of previous Oread visits to the inn.

It is unfortunately possible to walk through Lathkilldale to Bakewell from Hartington. Moore and I were persuaded to do so

against our better judgement, as it was still raining and I was obliged to refuse Moore's offer of £2 for my pac-a-mac.

I don't need to discuss the Hartington-Lathkill walk. Most of you have done it in your younger days. There isn't much to it really if you keep walking and talking - time soon passes and you find yourself walking downhill into Bakewell wet through and wondering what the hell you do it for.

The black wet misery of a winter evening stimulates the mind into activity. The night's particular fantasy took the shape of an Oread National Anthem, (tune - Jerusalem), something to sing in your bath at Bryn-y-Wern.

It might go in the following manner:

"And did those feet in Gibson's time
Walk upon England's mountains green,
And was the President himself
Upon the gritstone Edges seen?

etc. etc.

And was the Oread builded here,
Amongst these Welsh Touristic Hills?)

Try it yourself and you'll probably get stuck on the second verse as I did.

We finally ended up in a Bakewell cafe where Moore was delighted to find that I was as wet as he was in spite of the pac-a-mac, and, assuming his impeccable Yorkshire accent, shamed a number of walkers from Sheffield into silence.

That's about it, really, except that I had a day off on Monday to get over it. Healthy pastime, mountaineering.

Dick and Liz Brown are expecting the arrival of a small Brown in March or April. Liz is now in England and Dick returns in May.

Young Jamie Hatchett has had a muckspreader from Father Christmas. His father has denied the consequent rumour that the Hatchett household is without the benefits of modern sanitation.

DERBYSHIRE WEEKENDS - (Contd.)

II: JANUARY 4-5.

I suppose I am too easily talked into things. Someone in the warmth and comfort of the Bell says Bamford Edge this weekend and you automatically agree without really considering what Bamford Edge in January entails.

However, there I was on the 12 O'clock bus on a Saturday afternoon with Geoff Hayes, looking at the snow on the Derbyshire slagheaps, and before long, listening to the life story of a Glossop exile in the Bakewell bus shelter, a confused story of a man with one leg, the inescapability of mothe-in-laws and Christmas Day in Bakewell. Retreat to a cafe for tea involved another skirmish with a local, fortunately on the safe ground of weather, and we caught the bus to Grindleford without further incident. John and Janet Ashcroft were found thawing out in the Sir William Cafe after a motorbike trip from Derby. We arranged to meet them at Bamford Edge as we intended walking from Grindleford via Lawrenfield, Millstone Edge and Stanage. Conditions weren't very pleasant with two inches of snow on the ground and a drizzling mist obscuring visibility. We were glad to reach the campsite where a cloud of steam was issuing from a corned beef hash in the Ashcroft tent. (This particular site is reported to be where R.G. Pettigrew erected his tent on a Marsden-Rowsley walk after previously assuring the rest of the party that tents would be unnecessary - it rained, naturally). Fortified by hash, the party walked down to the Yorkshire Bridge where draught Younger bitter and a dartboard occupied us until closing time.

Heavy rain fell during the night and washed away all traces of snow, the value of a sewn-in groundsheet for keeping water inside a tent being admirably demonstrated.

Geoff and I went to look for Welbourn on Sunday morning but were unable to catch sight of the "Towers" in any of the usual places. We returned to collect John and Janet and went to look at Bamford Edge. There are certainly some routes there for those capable of doing them, with a sling hanging in a hair-raising position to show the possibilities. Geoff did 1 1/2 routes in atrocious conditions and we called it a day. There is an excellent view of the Derwent reservoirs from the Edge, and a gamekeeper in residence who seems friendly enough out of the grouse breeding season.

As for the return journey, I can't say I really enjoyed walking from Bamford to Baslow by road in the rain, but as I say, I am easily talked into things.

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BRIGHT JEWELS

TREVOR S. PANTHER

Some of us have very definite beginnings to our climbing but mine was so gradual that I do not really know when it started.

As a boy, I was brought up, from the age of eight, in North Wales, so the effect of climbing and mountains on me was part of my growing process - hence the difficulty of stating when I really started.

After many years of reflection, I believe that one instance in 1946 was the event which has welded me to the hills for ever...

It was about December, 1946, I was just 14, and living in Llan-dudno in North Wales. From near my home I could see many of the hills of Snowdonia, including Carnedd Llewelyn and the cliffs of Craig-yr-Ysfa, although they did not mean a great deal to me then.

On this particular morning in December, 1946, the air was fresh and clear, much fresh snow had fallen on the mountains and the early morning sun shone with incredible brilliance. The dazzling white mountains stood out, sharp and clear, into a deep blue sky while the air was crisp and utterly invigorating. I had never experienced anything so beautiful, invigorating or exciting before - how I longed to be up on those snow covered mountains....

Well, that moment has gone for ever but its vision often returns to me as it has done here, but alas, I can never quite recapture the feelings I had as a boy. Then all was new and mysterious - now I know too much about mountains and I am never surprised even on rock climbs or on mountains which I have never seen before. A deeper appreciation, however, more than makes up for this.

My next "Jewel" popped up in late August, 1949. I was staying at Cwm Ystradllyn Hostel, 800 ft. up on Moel Hebog. It had been a damp, still and dreamy day with much clinging low mist. As the evening drew on the mists cleared and I decided to run up to the top of Hebog to see the sun set. Two other chaps had the same idea so I raced them to the top in the ever increasing dark. It took half an hour of very hot work, but on arriving at the summit, a moment repaid for all. The sky above was quite dark and the Snowdon group was just a deep mauve shadow, but across the Western sky was a narrow but vivid orange strip against which the Rivals were etched in jet black. The wind was strong and refreshing, and apart from its roar through the emptiness, the only other sound was the thumping of my own heart.

Once again nature tightened her grip on me, and I became still more at one with her.

One memory which I shall not forget was a fall on the overhang of Pharaoh's Passage on Dines Cromlech in Ja., 1953. It was

not a happy incident but it was a "bright jewel" in so much that it was the first time I had (under the conditions) met more than my match.

In the presence of such men as Dave Penlington and Chris Bonnington I felt obliged to give a good account of myself. My memory of the twenty minute struggle is one of desperate effort. Struggling to get my worn out trikes on to some smooth nick, struggling to get my cold fingers into some non-existent "jug" and struggling with the force of gravity and the ever increasing tiredness in my arms. Never before had I gone "flat out" on any climb regardless of difficulty.

The battle ended without warning.

My long suffering fingers opened and I was stopped (with a capitals) at the bottom of the climb with a triply cracked pelvis.

My appreciation of the Cromlech, of the meaning of difficulty, of flat out effort and of utter failure came to me for the first time in my climbing life. I had learnt that felling to what might be the end was not so bad - to die is as natural as to be born. The unpleasant part is living in pain and maddening inactivity after such a smash. This incident taught me a salutary lesson - I must never fall off anything again.

The last of my memories for this article takes me to Lyngen in 1953. The occasion was the first ascent of the famous Fingertind (or Slangertind). The difficulties and tension on the last thirty feet of the V.S. aiguille coupled with the verticality and terrific exposure of the Northern face combine to form a vivid memory.

Standing on Dick Brown's shoulders I felt around for some place to fix a piton. In my immediate left was the vertical and overhanging north face falling in an unbroken bound of 2,000' to the Andersa Glacier. On my immediate right was the wall of the Fingertind up which we had just come, and then the upturned tense face of the third man, Bob Pettigrew, some 100' below. Beyond him, some 800' of slabs swept down to a small snowfield.

Unable to find a crack to take even our thinnest peg I stretched up and up until my fingers closed over a small hold. A series of fierce finger pulls accompanied by quivering muscles and quick nervous breathing followed for several minutes.

Suddenly I was on top, we had succeeded and I could not stop myself letting out a violent shout. My screwed up nerves and pent-up feelings burst forth uncontrollably. The descent was pure joy. A couple of fine abseils and a long trudge down in magnificent Arctic lighting conditions saw us back in camp after

17 hours.

Naturally, there are millions of memories; certainly far too many to write about - many just little instances and others occasions of great consequence.

After much climbing - sandstone, Derbyshire, Lakes, Wales, Scotland, Cheddar, Lyngen and Switzerland over a period of some eleven years one begins to form a balanced philosophy about mountains and indeed, "life in general and an appreciation grows in such a way that one becomes very "at one" with natural things. I find now, that the benightment in a blizzard is not a terrible thing if one can attune oneself to it. The mountains are not hostile, it is only we who are too weak to stand them in all their magnificent fury of storm. It is this attuning of the body, mind and soul to nature that enables us to enter the mountain realms of endless possibility. In the correct state of mind, man can achieve almost anything!

ANTHOLOGY OF OREAD VERSE - 111.

UNQUIET NIGHT.

No water trickles down the ice,
And silence shouts
Across the dimming bowl of light;
The corniced ridge
No longer bares a razor edge of liquid fire;
And I,
Upon the plunging edge of night,
Sing songs of praise to solitude,
Until the flickering blue-black bat-like bird
has fled before the sudden wind,
Shorewards, - beyond the rising drift of snow.
No silence now,
The night is hideous and loud,
With blizzard winds rough-tongued,
And fresh from brawling in the southern ice;
But I,
Within my down bag lying,
Storm-drowned amid the seething wrack of snow,
No longer sing;
The eye-like mind, once strong,
Is blind to all the discipline of years,
And knows at least the shapeless underworld
of strange primeval fears.

Harry Pretty. Sept. 1957.

THE HOUSE

JIM KERSHAW

Asombre deserted land hemmed in by grey cloud and steep grass slopes, wet slabs of rock gleaming in the light from loch and sea to the west.

I turned the headland, crossing an old wall healed green into the hill and followed the track of cloven feet down to the tide. A mile away was the house, an empty walled croft, black wounds gaping in the slate roof of the barn, deer stealing away up the hill. I was alone with the cry of the gull that circled my head on the incoming breeze. Its harsh satirical laugh followed me as I dodged the paws of the sea lazily stretching between pink and white starved islands of turf, guarding mysterious bottles, bleached bones of wood, matted grass and seaweed, the drifted harvest of the spring.

At length I stood before a half opened green door, and, entering, found the usual litter of a deserted house, a tin or two, a scattering of fleece on the floors, damp lifeless ashes in the fireplace, names scrawled in pencil on the paintwork, nothing of interest except the yellowed pages of a newspaper pasted on a wall revealed by boarding stripped for the fire.

My interest grew as "The Scotsman 1902" promised the cure of alcoholic excess drink and drug habits, "The Graphic 1899" advertised cigar cutters and sovereign purses. The "Graphic" was a Boer War issue containing early photographs; "Our men cutting off the retreat of the Boers from Papworth Hill, position 1200yds. from the enemy"; a drawing in a series of Heroes of the War, "The private who stayed all night with his wounded officer after the battle of "Elands Langte", the gentleman in question leaning back against a fallen horse surrounded by dead Boers and succoured by the private who was no doubt his butler in civilian life; "Life in a camp on the Mooi River which was lately shelled by the Boers, soldiers washing their 'togs' on the bank"; gentlemen in topees, trousers rolled to the knees, a daring view of a shirtless man in long toms looking the other way; a curiously prophetic note in a satirical cartoon of infantry mounted on traction engines pursuing the enemy, a drawing of the Kaiser shooting at Sandringham with three companions, the ground littered with dead birds, two ladies looking on passively.

I left the house, fifty years dropping away as I climbed the zigzag hill path into the mist, and I thought about the Boer War, and my own war and whether there would be a house somewhere in half a century's time treasuring a day from the past, lonely for the cry of the seagull, the step on the threshold that never came.

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CHAPTERS FROM AN OREAD JOURNAL - II

ERIC BYNE

THE COMING OF OWEN GLYNNE JONES TO OG'VEN

Haskett-Smith records that in the summer of 1893, which was an extraordinarily dry period, a young man claimed to have made a solitary ascent of the left wall of the Devil's Kitchen. For some reason this was scoffed at. Many said pityingly that he had mistaken the place, although how anyone can mistake the great chasm for anything else around here seems curious. In the light of later events it seems probable that he may have ascended the left wall exit, for after all, no one else seems to have seen the possibilities before him.

In the middle of May of 1895, Haskett-Smith and Owen Glynne Jones were exploring the climbing possibilities of Cader Idris. They made the first ascent of the Great Gully of Craig-y-Cae and also the East Gully. Jones was very impressed with these two climbs and in particular with the Great Gully which became a favourite course of his.

At this time and date, Haskett-Smith was very well known, not only for his wide experience and explorations on hills and crags, but also for his very popular little guide books to climbing which had been published the previous year.

Owen Glynne Jones was rapidly becoming the foremost climber of his day and in another two years was to publish his monumental work on "Rock Climbing in the English Lake District". Jones was cursed with very poor eyesight and beyond a short range saw everything flat, hence he seldom waited long at the safe places on a climb but was inclined to push on and leave his deliberations until he was right up against some difficulty. His great muscular strength and endurance enabled him to think calmly in positions where an ordinary man would have to consider the question of holding on or getting down again. On exposed rock it needs an exceptional man who can think calmly without worrying whether he can hold on or return.

We have it recorded by Haskett-Smith that Jones liked to indulge in scratchings and scrapings of bootnails on the rock, before he made a serious effort to advance, for in his own words, he used to say, "It helps me to think, it keeps up my courage, and it keeps up my steam". This failing he later completely eradicated and the climbing records prove that his "steam" still remained.

It is most probable that whilst Smith and Jones were climbing on Graig-y-Cae, they discussed the claim made by the young man in 1893 concerning his ascent of the Devil's Kitchen. The alleged route was up the left hand wall some fifty feet from the

waterfall which comes down over the great upper cave pitch. The route was supposed to pass first up towards the left and then back again to the right. Wet weather was said to have made impossible a second attempt by the same climber, this time accompanied by a friend. As we now know, this brief description of the supposed ascent might well fit that of the well scratched trail up the Kitchen Wall which is so well known today. Both Smith and Jones seemed to think that there was a "feeble searching after truth" in this claim, and with a view to ascertaining further information about the Kitchen, they planned to meet at Ogwen for the Whitsuntide. Unfortunately, unforeseen circumstances rendered it impossible for Haskett-Smith to keep the rendezvous and so O.G. Jones decided to visit the place himself.

On 31st. May, 1895 we find records of him at Ogwen. It is evident that there were no other climbers there, for Jones ascended the track to the "Kitchen" by himself. It was a showery day with conditions unfavourable for the formation of any accurate opinion of the difficulties of the climb.

He ascended easily up to the great waterfall. At this point there is a long thin pinnacle jutting out from the main right wall. Climbing this to the top he was enabled to inspect the proposed route up the left wall. Having planned out what looked like a possible line of advance which seemed also to coincide with a route proposed by Haskett-Smith, and also with that alleged to have already been done, he descended the pinnacle and prepared himself for the assault. It seemed to him to be no route for nailed boots, so he divested himself of everything except shirt, knickerbockers and stockings.

It must have taken great effort of willpower to have commenced that first overleaning crack, which even today seems to be horribly insecure. However, Jones was no ordinary climber. He had great tenacity and prodigious strength and apparently the crack gave him no trouble. The second crack is very steep and Jones seemed to experience most trouble from loose holds and falling stones which damaged his stockinged feet.

It was now raining hard, and on reaching a stance at the level of the traverse, he paused for scrutiny. He didn't like the remaining moves. The position here is very exposed and the sheer walls of the chasm have a great psychological effect on one. Jones seemed to feel this for he was reluctant to make the move across to a prominent block at the commencement of the traverse, and after some deliberation, he chose to return down the cracks dangerous as the descent appeared to be. His impression was that there could be no justification for anyone to continue along the traverse by himself. As he gazed down those cracks it must have been a hard decision to make and it says much for his skill and nerve that he managed to descend safely.

Subsequently he started along the traverse from the opposite end, hoping to reach the position from which he had retreated. He was safeguarded by a rope which he had tied to the rocks above, and he confirmed his first impression as to the dangerous character of the finish. It is curious that in these modern days, we find the traverse to be the easiest portion of the climb, although the move across to the big block belay from the stance above the cracks is still a hard and uneasy one. Evidently a vast amount of loose stuff must have been cleared off the traverse beyond the block.

How many others reached the inner cave of the Kitchen, and after inspecting or trying the wall, retreated, we do not know. It has been recorded however, that the brothers Abraham and Oscar Eckenstein failed two years later to ascend the first overhanging crack. About 12 months later G.W. Young's party failed to make it go, but almost immediately afterwards the ascent was accomplished by W.R. Reade and W.P. MacColloch on May 7th. 1898.

The December of 1897 saw the formation of the "Climbers' Club" and the following Whitsuntide, 1898, we find Owen Glynne Jones celebrating the new club by leading a party of "mighty length and famous strength" up a new route on the Gribin Facet. The climb was the severe crevice now known as the Angular Chimney, and behind O.G. Jones we find such notabilities in the climbing world as Roderick Williams, Archer Thomson, W.G. Williams, H.V. Reade, G. Collins, and last but by no means least, that great enthusiast, J.W. Puttrell.

O.G. Jones was by now at the peak of his climbing career. He had a large number of first class first ascents to his credit in the Lake District on such crags as Pillar Rock, Scawfell, Kern Knotts and Dow Crags. His routes on the Pinnacle face of Scawfell had revolutionised the climbing technique in the district. His marvellous performance in ascending direct from "Lord's Rake" to the "Waiting Room" and then by way of the "Mantleshelf" to the "Crevasse" had shocked the gully fanatics and opened their eyes to what could be done. The exact line of this route which he took up Scawfell Pinnacle can never be known, but to those who know Scawfell intimately, it is not hard to visualise Jones in his stockinged feet crawling up those slabs in the early evening whilst the whole atmosphere and grandeur which Scawfell possesses seemed to be centred around him.

It was an incredible effort by a phenomenal climber and considered at the time to be unjustifiable.

(To be concluded)

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Some bits of news about Trevor Panther: (i) he has re-
signed from the North London Mountaineering Club, (ii) he planned
to spend New Year week in Llanberis (but so far no word about his
activities there) and plans for this year include N.W.Scotland
at Easter and Lyngen again in the summer, and (iii) he has a 1000
c.c. Vincent, 'Bertha', which, he says, "cruises long happily
at 90" and which even the fearless Panther daren't drive flat out.

Mike and Margaret Turner have a baby son, Neil Christopher,
who arrived on Mike's birthday. Well done!

At 5 a.m. on Boxing Day our revered Vice President returned
to Bryn-y-Wern from a mountain walk to find the fiendish Geoff
Thompson climbing down from the Pretty's double bunk. Our rep-
orter does not, however, indicate whether Molly was in it or
not, so maybe Geoff had just been for a quiet smoke.

A very hearty "thank you" from all members to all those
responsible for organising the Annual Dinner and the Christmas
Dinner at B.-y-W.

The news that 14 square miles of Bleaklow have been
opened to walkers will come as a surprise to those of us who had
never realised we weren't supposed to go there.

Contributions are required NOW from old and new members
for the February Newsletter. In particular, more verse for the
"Oread Anthology" is urgently needed. No contribution is too
small. All offers please, to D.C.Cullum, 4, Longnor Rd., Hazel
Grove, Cheshire.

There have so far been two offers to help in typing the
stencils for Newsletters. Any further offers will be welcome.

There have already been two climbing accidents in
Britain this year. It can happen to you - but don't let it.

(To be continued)