

O R E A D M O U N T A I N E E R I N G C L B
N E W S L E T T E R - M A R C H 1 9 6 3

A N O R E A D I N T H E S I W A L I K S .

by Bob Pettigrew.

'Who goes to the Hills goes to his mother.'

They had crossed the Sewalik and the half tropical Doon,
left
Mussorie behind them, and headed north along the narrow
hill-roads.

Rudyard Kipling. KIM.

It took me four days and three nights by train from Rajkot in Saurashtra to get to the foot of the Siwalik Hills, north-west of Dehra Dun. The Dak bungalow at Kalsi, in which I bagged a rickety charpoy bed, is a few minutes walk from one of the famous rock edicts of Asoka inscribed about 250 B.C. in Prahit, a pre-Sanskrit dialect of the region. These Indian "Ten Commandments" are enlivened by a superbly inscribed elephant representing Buddha in his holiest reincarnation. Twenty-one centuries of weathering had taken their toll before the Kalsi Stone was recognised, enclosed and protected as an Ancient Monument.

The school camp, which had brought me to Himachal Pradesh in December 1962, was housed in an old British rest camp on the right bank of the River Jumna near the road between Dehra Dun and Chakrata, a hill-station and military cantonment, straddling the crest of a long ridge at 7,000 ft. Before the advent of motor transport Kalsi Rest Camp accommodated the contingents marching betwixt hills and plains.

Already I had gained a few tantalising glimpses of great snow-capped mountains of the Dhauladhar range beyond the Siwaliks as the train hauled its pilgrims and soldiers along the forest flanked single track to Dehra Dun. In Dehra there was scarcely time to snatch a chupatti before embussing for the two hour ride up the Doon - which began characteristically as we stormed through the bazaar scattering people and goats indiscriminately. For the duration of the journey I had my face pressed against the windscreen of the bus by the weight of passengers and it was a relief to climb down in the pine-scented air of Kalsi Camp.

For my first outing I chose a shapely hill to the north-east of the camp which had been disputed by the British and the Gurkhas during the great battle of 1815, by which we won the Doon. The Dak bungalow is 2,000 ft. above sea level and I estimated the hill to rise a further 5,000 ft. It was thickly forested to within 2,000 ft. of the summit and the "jungle" conditions would undoubtedly make route-finding difficult. Hence you can appreciate that the

Siwaliks are pure Laurie Burns country. Vast tracts of undulating brown hills, heavily forested at base and flanks, culminate in barren, level ridges which resemble parallel folds in a ruffled brown carpet.

Since the Chinese invasion of November 1962, road making is proceeding apace in the Himalayan marches and I soon picked out the course of a new road incised across the east face of the hill. Through the binoculars it seemed that I could make my height through the forest by that road and from its highest point do battle with the dense tract of conifers for the next thousand feet.

My dawn start was delayed by the time it takes a sleepy cook to make six pieces of toast before a reluctant fire. Eventually I headed for the hills for the first time since that memorable holiday of Easter '62 with Hebog Jack Ashcroft in Glencoe when we roughed it in Highland cottages.

Before I could get to grips with my objective I had to cross a moderate gorge occupied by a tributary of the Jumna flowing down from the direction of Chakrata. A substantial bridge spanning the river had been recently constructed to take the new road which is intended to be an all-weather route into the upper reaches of the Jumna. To escape the spring floods and avoid crags it climbs, alpine fashion, to a height of 5,000 ft. before zig-zagging down to Jumna level and its destination. A wandering gang of small boys, obviously school-bound for each carried a large slate, delayed the evil moment a bit longer by showing me a short cut down the side of the gorge to the bridge. Bhutanese workmen were putting the finishing touches to the masonry of the single span bridge which would soon be carrying the short wheel base diesel trucks and buses into yet another Himalayan valley. But now the road was unfinished, deserted and peaceful.

The forest on both sides gave me a cool walk to 5,000 ft. At intervals I heard cow bells clanging and the sound carried me back in a nostalgic flash to some grassy alp in Austria or Norway. Once or twice I walked round a corner into a breakfast group of monkeys who sprang into the trees, screamed imprecations, and crashed away through the forest.

Now the road started to descend and from its highest point I had an excellent view into the upper valley of the Jumna. The river flowed serenely on in its December strength making such a high route seem extravagant, but no other river in Hindustan changes its course as frequently as the restless Jumna.

Above me on the hill a tangled matted curtain of forest growth covered for a 1,000 ft. the spur up which my route lay to the balding summit, perhaps 2,000 ft. above the road. Before facing the jungle, which was reminiscent of the dense birch forests of Lyngen or the tropical evergreens of Malaya, I sat down for a tea bread.

The local brew of cinnamon-flavoured tea is very refreshing and the ex W.D. thermos flask had kept it piping hot. Feeling strengthened I fought my way into

the "ulu" and struggled upwards in strenuous undulations for about half an hour. By then I had located the semblance of a track which soon gained the crest of the spur and established itself beyond all doubt. Halfway up I made a detour to inspect a "crevasse" caused by a fault. It contoured around the hill like a defence ditch and would give a nasty shock to anyone descending in haste or dark. Shortly after I emerged at the top of the tree line to a terraced section of the spur bearing remains of the millet harvest. Coarse grass slopes swept up to the summit, a few trees struggled on but were more like giant cacti - owing their existence at this altitude to inversion of temperature in the valley.

To eat lunch I chose a comfortable outcrop of rock looking south over the writhing Jumna. A hillman left his goats and cattle to inspect me and exchange a few words. As he did so a pariah kite dived on my toast missing its prey (and me) by what seemed a fraction of an inch. Looking up at the bird, which by then had orbited up many hundreds of feet, he called out, "Chil!" To me this was a personal revelation of the magic of Kipling's writing: 'When Chil the kite swoops down a furlong sheer.....' and I asked him if there were any more Jungle Book characters living on the hill. He replied that shikar and road making had driven most of the wild life deeper into the Siwaliks. Only the Bandar Log (monkey people) and the wild pig remained. There seemed to be very little water on the hill so I asked him where it could be found. He pointed to a nearby gully. Hard by the spot I was astonished to find a flourishing hamlet neatly concealed by a subsidiary spur and surrounded by numerous terraces, each a field in itself, marching like a giant staircase up the south side of the hill.

It seemed to me that both the people and the wooden chalet-like houses were similar to those of Kulu, as the crow flies 150 miles to the north. Sweet lime trees shaded the track and a couple of old men sharing a hubble-bubble on a stone threshing platform greeted me and indicated the way to the top. Well trodden tracks traversed the steep grass banks above the hamlet and I contoured round to the foot of a grassy funnel walled in by two rotten rock outcrops. It reminded me of the sort of scrambling to be found above the limestone dales of Derbyshire. This was the last lap and I soon emerged at the edge of the summit field of sugar cane. Now there was no physical barrier between me and the lonely white pyramid of Bandarpunch (20,720 ft.) in the Kumaon Himalaya for I had topped the multiple brown ridges of the Siwaliks and I could see what "lay beyond that last blue mountain barred with snow."

An hour sped by on photography, high-level jungle interpretation and refreshment. For the descent I took the opposite ridge, the west, which I joined across the upper basin of a prominent nullah which seams the south side of the hill. A fast track led down through the forest and I was soon wading the tributary above the gorge a few minutes out of camp.

Some days later I took bus to Chakrata at 7,000 ft. and walked hard for two and a half hours. By then I had crossed the projected high level road between Dehra Dun and Simla and entered a superb forest region of deodars and pines. At 10,000 ft. snow added to the seasonable atmosphere and I reached the Forest Rest House at Deoban feeling invigorated and rewarded. Before me to the north were the peaks, snowfields and glaciers of the Dhauladhar range of the Kumaon Himalaya shimmering in the noon sun. I tried to identify them and I think I saw Bandarpunch, Srikanta, Gangotri, Kedarnath, Chaulhamba, and in the east did I see the massive pile of Nanda Devi? I was loath to leave and delayed so long that I had to run down the mule track to be in time for the evening bus down from Chakrata. The only people I saw during the descent were two muleteers bringing a caravan of timber-laden animals along the narrow hill roads. One of them was singing, and his song of the hills is in my ears now.

OREADS IN SHORTS

Stanage Access Area Litter Collection. A Litter Hunt will be held on Sunday 31st March 1963 in the Stanage Area. You will know how bad this area has become during the last year or two and volunteers are asked to give their services. As the club has a meet at the Roaches that week end we can't advise Oreads to attend but it might be a good idea to pass the word on to friends who won't be on this popular meet!

Quote at the A.G.M.... "Chook Hooley is still our Hut Warder.

Quote at a committee meeting...." If Fred is not elected to the new committee we will have to have someone else to fill the rocking chair.

Brian Cooke was talking about climbing in Cornwall the other day.... " It's very good down there, do you know, there is a large stone with a hole in it and it's called the fertility stone? -- It must be true because Marion crawled through it and then we had twins!

The Peak Park Planning Board announce a Warden Training Scheme. It consists of attending lectures at Edale for three week ends commencing 18th May. Any member interested should contact Colin Hobday (Our new Sec) for further details.

Already news of accidents have been reported caused by rock loosening during the very hard winter. One has only to look at the state of the roads to realise what damage the frost has done. Particular care should be taken, not only now but during the rest of the year, to guard against loose rock when climbing and when standing below the cliffs.

Eric Wallis has just returned from a fortnight in the Zermatt area. Whilst there he managed to hit the headlines of the National Press who reported that he and three others were spending "A night of suspense hanging from ropes on the Lyskham Wall" Eric has a different story and says that he only got as far as to spend three nights on the glacier, (Camping) above the town, waiting for the weather to clear. It was so cold, even the bread froze!

OREADS IN SHORTS - NEWSLETTER - MARCH 1963 - GEDDIE HAYES

I can't report much about the Ogwen Meet this year. Although I did get to Wales - just. The van was in collision with an 18 ton coal lorry about half a mile over the border. The meet leader was also in the van so he won't be able to give his usual report. I'm pleased to say that the Nottingham Team who ended up in Shrewsbury Hospital are almost back to normal. We are having to tie Doreen Gadsby down with her climbing rope to stop her throwing herself back on the crags, broken ribs and all.

The B.M.C. have just issued a list of English and Welsh Mountain Huts available to member clubs. Details of these huts are now with the secretary.

"The Climber", a new monthly magazine for the Mountaineer and Rambler, is now in its fourth issue. At the moment it is only available direct from the publishers D. Macleod Ltd., 45-49 Cowgate Kirkintilloch, Dunbartonshire. It's well worth the 2/- per copy or at least the 12 months for 27/6d

DEATH OF A MOUNTAINEER

A myriad of glittering vengeful stars,
Poised like vultures in the sky
Leer down and tease the stumbling creature
The mighty winds have wished goodbye
And left the macabre scene.
He tatters, falls; His frosted limbs
No more defile the landscapes feature.

It's thumbs down for him,
His mountain days are closing on the Ben
In twenty years he's lived three score and ten
The mocking moon gleams fiercely on the broken axe
While tattered remnants of his trusted rope
Stay clasped within that iron-like frozen hand.
His muscles now devoid of hope
Relax and sink him closer to the frozen land.
The ~~erie~~ world's translucent splendour,
Fades on this creature's last agenda
His mind in melancholy hibernation
Averts the desperate body's heat starvation;
Whilst in the thousand corridors of the brain
The once wild drive to live
Abutts against closed doors;
Until the soulless body which the snow has slain
Finds comfort in the solace of the moors.

Gordon J Gadsby.

ARRAN

As we stand on the crest
Of the mountains we love
The sun lends it's light
From high up above
It shines on the valleys
The lakes and the streams
What a heavenly sight this
Day we have seen.

Beryl Turner

Written on the summit of Ben Tarsuinm after a wonderful
day on th Main Ridge.

And whilst on the subject of Arran, don't forget to reserve
Whitsun for the Isle of Arran Meet. It is rumoured that Fred
Allen and family will be there, complete with latrine tent and tools.
You will recognise Fred as he will be wearing the bog seat
around his neck as he walks down Glen Rosa to the Camp site.

And talking about the Latrine tent.....

The Hut Warder applied for the use of the tent recently.
His house was completely frozen for quite a time during the cold
spell and he thought of erecting the tent in the back garden.
However the committee decided they could only allow this if Chuck
would also have a meet in the same area!

Perhaps it would be as well to tell how I came to do the Chinley variant to the Marsden Rowsley. It happened thus. Picking my way across the bogs of Bleaklow Head, in absolutely first class bog condition, and idly musing about all and sundry. 4 Blondes, Brunettes, Beer etc., I looked around for the first time for half an hour or more and found it all unfamiliar. I fished my compass out of the rucksack and found I was walking North West. The compass refused to change its mind even after several serious blows and kicks had been administered. So I reluctantly concluded I was on my way to Manchester. I took a compass course of 175° and found I had dropped into ? Clough, two miles from Glossop. Ascending the other side of the Clough I was on the Snake Road but rather late for Kinder and Win Hill in October. So crossing Featherbed Moss I made my way to Chinley, catching a train to Bamford and walking to the Yorkshire Bridge with a few minutes to spare before the first of the purists arrived. Just time to consume a long visualised pint; and look a little self satisfied.

Arriving in Derby after a Marsden - Chinley - Rowsley meander, I was a little hurt by the comments of a bystander, who, watching us extricate the Rucksacks from Falkner's Vanguard, remarked, "You B--s never walk anywhere, all you do is scavage lifts around the countryside" Then in heavily jocular vein asked " Been for a couple of miles"? In order to prove that I was capable of pedestrian locomotion, I walked briskly across the market place but here I was compelled to examine with great interest several pairs of Bra's and briefs exhibited in the nearest shop window before I could procede in a manner not calculated to similate that of a man who has had a serious lapse in his sanitary timing. Interest in less intimate female wear - wallpaper- television sets etc., enabled me to make inconspicuous progress to my car at a local garage.

The above account should have appeared in a newsletter soon after the M-R Walk but was mislaid. It was recently found on a meet when someone appealed for paper before heading off into the woods!

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - BASLOW 2 March 1963

The New Officers and committee for 1963

President. Jack Ashcroft.
Vice President. Brian Cooke.
Secretary. Colin Hobday.
Assistant Secretary. Roger Turner.
Treasurer. Laurie Burns.
Meets Secretary. Derick Burgess.
Hut Warden. Chuck Hooley.

Committee. Wally Smith. Gordon Gadsby. Pete Janes. Fred Allen.
Geoff Hayes.

This years A.G.M. was quite a peaceful affair really, not the cut and thrust meeting of former years.

The retiring President spoke of his wish to see members being more adventurous in their ideas for climbing areas and to be always on the look out for new routes both at home and abroad

Laurie Burns, who does the job of Treasurer in such a quiet and efficient manner that people hardly ever realise who is doing the difficult task, until, of course, when he asks for the subs, reported that the club was still in a good financial state, and that £100 would be repaid to members this year, leaving about £200 still to be repaid to members. A whole lot of money for the hut. The draw for the money turned the meeting into a Bingo Hall. Harry Pretty, who was one of the lucky ones to come up in the draw this year, made a very fine gesture by donating his £5 share to the hut fund.

Pete Janes the retiring Secretary, apart from reading the minutes of the last A.G. meeting and making it sound as though it was a meeting of the goon club, gave a report of some of the meets during the past year.

Derick Burgess also spoke about the meets - at great length. Perhaps this was the result of the Beer which magically appeared in front of him during the whole of the evening. This Beer also resulted in Derick's departure to a frozen tent on the hillside, instead of the luxury of the hut.

The report from the hut warden told of the work done to the Hut during the past year, which included the fitting of a bath and wash basin in the spare room, also repair work to the roof. The hut is becoming increasingly popular with other clubs, but members don't seem to make as much use of it. The idea of letting more clubs use the hut but leaving spare places to members of the Oread is to be discussed at the next committee meeting.

Hebog Ashcroft, the new President, gave a jolly fine opening speech in the true old Oread manner, showing that the spirit of the Oread still shines as bright in old Jack.

The evening ended with the traditional Rum sippers. Afterwards members and friends retired home, or to the hut or tents. On the Sunday with a Derbyshire still covered by snow and with a bright warm Sun, parties set out to climb on the Edges, Walk on Bleaklow and ski in Edale and Thorpe

THE NEW MEETS LIST IS NOW BEING DRAWN UP. WILL MEMBERS WHO WISH TO LEAD MEETS, OR HAVE ANY IDEAS ON WHERE MEETS IN 1963 SHOULD BE HELD, PLEASE LET THE MEETS SEC. KNOW DURING THE NEXT FEW DAYS.

With 30°F of frost and reports of main roads blocked by snow Oreads and friends left for Langdale on the Friday evening. Some took a risk and went via Buxton while others traveled on the Leak road. Four hardened Oread's actually caught the Manchester Bus from Nottingham the reason being that Geoff's van was snowed in at Whitehall the previous weekend, even then the bus driver refused to go via Longhill, so so they had to walk from Buxton to Whitehall to retrieve the van and did not get to Langdale until 4am!

Arriving at Rawhead Cottage we were soon informed by the Fell and Rock Hut Warden, a certain Mr Horrace Baxter, that we would be unable to have a fire as everything was frozen and water could only be obtained from a hole in the ice on the stream. He also told us that there had only been $\frac{1}{2}$ an inch of snow in the last five weeks (what a drop off, we had travelled through head high drifts to get to the Lakes). George Rhodes, Ray College, and Trevor Jones soon arrived in an A35 of all things. Odd bods arrived during the night, which is usual.

Next morning was bright and sunny with a distinct increase in temperature. The wrath of the Hut Warden was soon to descend upon us when he complained bitterly about someone pinching his bucket of water. Some went climbing on Gimmer and Pavey Ark, while Janet, Derek, Laurie, Uschi and myself walked up the Band over Bow Fell and down to Esk Hause, Angle Tarn, over Rossett crag and down to the O.D.G. for a cup, finding Gordon, Doreen, Walley and Hebog, who had been over Crinkle Crags.

With no fire in the hut, everyone decided the Britannia Inn at Elterwater would be a pleasant place to spend the evening.

Sunday saw the departure of the keen skiers back to the Peak District and snow while the rest of the club climbed on Gimmer, doing such climbs as Bracket and slab, 'A' Route, Ash Tree Slab, Herdwich Butteress, 'D' Route Etc., The rock was dry and warm! We returned to clean up the hut, and so back home to SNOW!!