

LIMESTONE CLIMBING IN DERBYSHIRE
BY D. BURGESS

The development of Limestone climbing in Derbyshire has opened up a new field for the climber from the Derby and Nottingham area. We have for years considered ourselves fortunate in having the gritstone edges so handy and Black Rocks situated close enough for an evening's trip in summer. The "dolomite" limestone of Brassington and Harborough was considered the only limestone rock sound enough to climb upon. This was the general view. "Classics" had been done on limestone, the chimneys had been climbed on High Tor years ago, Ilam rocks challenge had been answered, but the only serious ascents up to about 1950 were Golden Gates (formally Valkyrie) and morning Crack on Stoney Middleton, and Sunset Crack on Wildcat Rocks, climbed by members of the Valkyrie M.C. The full potential of the crags with wich Derbyshire abounds was seemingly still unnoticed and there was, of course, still plenty of scope for development on Gritstone.

As the Edges became more commonplace there was an automatic swing to limestone. At first it was by climbers seeking artificial practice for the harder continental climbs, and it soon became apparent that many of the routes would go 'free'. The rank of 'ivy puller' was created and soon many crags, stripped of their ivy cloak, revealed good rock with many obvious lines. As a result of this development the guidebook "Climbs on the Mountain Limestone of Derbyshire" was published giving details of many cliffs and first class climbs.

This development has, of course, its drawbacks. Many inexperienced parties 'artificial' up free routes; the occasional use of pitons has resulted in parties putting the odd peg in to "make it go". Routes graded V.S. on limestone are V.S. and it's no use thinking otherwise, the practice of climbing above one's standard and banging a peg in at every hard move is to be thoroughly deplored.

"What are the best places to climb on limestone?" you may well ask. Stoney Middleton undoubtedly offers many first class routes and at most standards. Routes such as Glory Road, Aurora and Golden Gates are all "Severe" in standard and worthy of becoming limestone classics; harder still but still good are, Sin, Froth and What the Hell, in fact the choice at "Stoney" is wide and varied. Unfortunately the crag is over popular, the proximity of the road and quarry detracts scenically and the transistor radio, well! that's your opinion. But where else can a climber come face to face with a pot-holer half way up a route or sit in the local cafe and listen to "fast lads" with their bikes discussing the morning's 25?

Chee Dale, marred by the railway, is famous for "The Big Plum" a 250 foot route with A3 overhang. However, its companion route "The Stalk" is more for the ordinary man whilst further left there are some excellent cracks and corners. Water-cum-Jolly is rather disappointing, numerous routes but not such good quality, however "Mecca on Ravenstor is a challenge for the peg man with a liking for expansion bolts.

LIMESTONE CLIMBING IN DERBYSHIRE - Ctd.

Leaving Water-cum-Jolly one can enter Ravens Dale and at last a limestone crag pleasantly situated. Not many routes but those on the left hand buttress are short and good. Medusa is the easiest route on the main crag and with the steep hillside below gives a feeling of exposure rare outside Wales.

Further south lie the limestone crags which are more the domain of the local climber. Matlock Bath is hardly the place for lovers of solitude, but High Tor offers a challenge to any mountaineer, although permission to climb there must be obtained and that granted only throughout the winter. Opposite the New Bath Hotel lies Wild Cat Rocks, which are the home of the Nottingham Climbing Club. Apart from Sunset Crack, climbed many years ago, the N.C.C. are responsible for stripping the crag of its extensive growth of ivy and putting up all the routes; some of these are very good although in many places the rock is loose and dirty from being covered for so long.

Starting within feet of the main road and yet seemingly secluded, Willersley is the most easily accessible and possibly the best of the Limestone crags. The 'original' crack and cucumber grove are the only routes at 'severe' standard, slightly harder is the impressive Sycamore Flake which is comparable with such routes as Ivy Sepulchre in the Pass. Pot Hole Wall, Overhanging Wall and the "Sinuous Diedre" are for severity, enough to test the mettle of anyone. Pot Hole Wall is a marvel of route finding through the upper overhangs of the crag.

The Dove and Manifold valleys offer climbing in pleasant surroundings. Ilam Rock is famous for the "White Edge", a pure peg route, but has a route of Severe standard up the back. Pickering Tor is a worthy summit, again peg routes predominate, but there is once more an "original" route traversing right from the col and up the grassy ridge to the summit. Tissington Spires and the Twelve Apostles all are climbed upon and there is the possibility of further routes on these crags. However, the first real cliff of the dale is Raven Tor near Milldale. Two free routes, a hard crack on the right buttress and a pleasant 'Longlands' type route crossing the L.H. Buttress are the best 'free' lines. The other routes are more for the peg man. The other development in the Dove Valley is in Wolfescote Dale on Drabber Tor and the Celestial Towers which look worthy of a visit.

The Manifold holds both Beeston Tor and Thors Cave, and offers the hardest and most sensational limestone climbing. Thors Cave, or rather the crag, towers above the valley and the climbs all start from the "West Window" of the Cave. The obvious line is the chimney and groove leading upwards from the 'window' to the summit; this gives very sensational straddling and bridging before more normal techniques can be utilized in the final groove. On the right wall of the "Window" is an interesting peg route whilst further left there is a deceptively hard and exposed crack.

LIMESTONE CLIMBING IN DERBYSHIRE - Ctd.

Beeston Tor is known more for the cave at its foot rather than the climbing, but this will surely change as more people hear of, and climb, "The Thorn". This route leads by a 60ft. slab pitch to a stance in the huge cave, a traverse left soon dispels the secure footing created by the cave and the continuation upwards over a small roof and up the wall to the finishing rake is tremendously exposed. Three pitons are inserted in the roof and should be left in by future parties. The cave can be vacated rightwards on pitons. The only other line is the 'Eliminate' which crosses the crag from left to right. This is mainly free with one pitch on pegs and gives an exposed 300ft. route crossing The Thorn at mid height.

Alderley Cliff at Earl Sterndale is worth a short visit when walking in the Upper Dove en route through the Peak. A quarried slaby crag that dries quickly now that the trees have been ruthlessly cleared it offers routes of a reasonable standard although the climbing is not typical of other limestone crags.

The above is a brief account of the limestone potential of Derbyshire for the climber and it is hoped it will be of use visiting the areas mentioned. It only remains to say that there is loose rock, so a fair degree of competence is required and the best training ground is still on the gritstone outcrops.

I was stopping at Whitehall a few weeks ago and on the Saturday evening a group went down to the Goyt Valley to have a look at the site of the new Upper Reservoir. The Old Road which was completely unsuitable for cars has been given a good coating of asphalt and all the heavy earth moving machines are now in place close to the suspension footbridge. A start has been made on foundations for the new Dam wall and footpaths alongside the existing reservoir closed to the public.

The Sunday morning was fine and sunny and as the programme for the day was climbing on Wingather I decided to start off early and walk down to Goyt's Bridge to get some final photographs before the waters rise. Above the bridge all was peaceful and the valley was looking at it's best, little realising the impending doom that would shortly descend. The river Goyt lay crystal clear in the morning light and all was peace, even the inevitable "Tea Truck" and the resulting crowds of trippers had not arrived!

I took my photographs and was just about to leave for Errwood Hall and Wingather when the first car of the day arrived. I was just thinking how it was that the powers that be could obtain permission to submerge such a delightful area of the Peak District, when a man got out of the car; Without so much as one glance at the view he proceeded to take duster and leather from the boot and start to polish his proud possession; Perhaps that was my answer.

HUT NEWS AND BOOKINGS

MAY 1/3rd Welsh Walk Club Hut, Bookings to the meet leader.
MAY 8/10th Tower and Spire M/C 12 Beds. Small Group 6 Beds. 18 beds booked.
MAY 15/18th Whitsuntide (Bank holiday hut reserved for members)
JUNE 12/14th Leicester Ass. Mountaineers (Block Booking)
JUNE 19/21st Working Party
JULY 3/5th Club Meet. Bookings to Meet Leader
JULY 17/19th London Mountaineering Club (Block Booking)
Aug 1/3rd Bank Holiday (Hut reserved for members)
OCT 16/18th Working Party.

Please make a note of the above dates in your diary.

Hut Key

Mr and Mrs. Rooksby our neighbours in Wales no longer possess a key to the Hut. In the past they have had a key to allow tradesmen access, somehow this has got round and members have been bothering them asking for a key. This has got to stop. I have withdrawn the key. Members must understand that they must take a key with them, they can loan one from me if they haven't got one or better still have a key on permanent loan for a 10/- deposit. In the case of anyone breaking into the hut, this will be dealt with by the Committee.

C. Hooley.
Hut Warden.

RECENT AND FUTURE MEETS

At the time of writing the first meet of the new list has just been held. Skin Flint the leader decided the best place for the campers would be home in bed but later he changed his mind and a delightfully secluded spot was found for the tents, (all three of them) close to Burbage Brook. So close in fact that the occupants became slightly worried during the nights deluge. This anxiety was further enlarged when the party realised that Gadsby was also there and remembering his love of getting wet and an infantile joy of getting into streams that are at least waist high, this fear was well founded. However the night passed without incident really but did not pass quick enough for me. I had chosen to grace the meet leader with my presence (I heard all about his tea mashing talents from Janes). This was a bad move on my part for Skin has never heard of a fly sheet, and as we all know 'Blacks Tents' are made of the best blotting paper available. (Do they in fact attract rain?) The result of all this was the undisputed fact that it was wetter inside the "Good Companions" than outside on the moor. Skin seemed unperturbed by all this despite a sleeping bag containing enough water for a fair size bath. He seemed to sleep throughout the night and even my frantic signals with a torch as the water level rose did not disturb him. But this is not a tale of all water. It was very pleasant for climbing on Burbage edge on Saturday evening, and we did manage to get up a few routes. They seemed as hard as ever of course but the gallant six were when all said and done quite pleased with their climbing abilities.

RECENT AND FUTURE MEETS CONTINUED.....

This could not last of course as we were to find out on the following day on the big crag - Laurencefield. After such a night it was understandable that we did not depart from that pleasant, if wet spot, until late in the day.

A further surprise awaited us at Laurencefield. We thought no one would turn out on such a day and that being the case we might just walk past (to say later that we were the only ones there) and then go for a cuppa. No such luck. Members were out in force. Doug Cooke as fit as ever just waiting to get at it, The Welbournes, The Cookes, Chris Martin, and Colin Hobday were all there to make sure that we at least did a climb! So it was not until late afternoon that we were able to depart to the flesh spots of Hathersage. (That girl in the Cafe' has grown in more ways than one.) By the way the other two overnight campers were Mick and Celia Berry. They were out on Friday night and also spent a good morning on Saturday climbing on Stanage before the clouds arrived.

THE WELSH WALK 1964.

I do hope that there will be an official meets report from the two leaders in the next issue of the Newsletter. If ever a meet deserved a write up this was the one! The nine members who turned up in the wilds of Mid North Wales and eventually arrived at the hut (by car) had a week end to remember. It started well with us all under Pretty's Fly Sheet (well almost all), continued with the battle in the wind and rain over the big Arenig, followed by the discovery of a fantastic area of moorland wetter, more desolate and bigger than Bleaklow included a wonderful night in a deserted farm with the biggest fire in the grate to dry us out, and the entertainment of Pretty and Janes of course, and ended with a grand days walk to the Gwynant by way of an amazing route through a rarely visited mountain area.

WHITSUN 'MEETS

Elsewhere in this Newsletter you will read about the Arran Meet, there was also another Meet in the Lakes (Details later?) and also a gathering in Wales from All accounts. I'm just recovering from Arran (You will only read half the story) but I hope to have heard a little about other Oread activities in time for the next edition.

LIMESTONE MEET.

After reading Burgess's fine article on Limestone climbing I'm sure there will be a good turn out from the club to support him on his meet on June 13th. Quite a few Oreads have yet to sample the joys of limestone and this will be a good opportunity to have a "bash".

WORKING PARTY AT THE CLUB HUT JUNE 20th

As yet details of the first working party of this year have not been circularised. The Hut Sub Committee who are arranging the details hope to see a few fresh faces on June 20th - note the date.

HUT BOOKINGS.

FOR YOUR DIARY

The Hut Warden has just notified the following bookings. May 30th to June 5th Block Booking. Aug 21/23 Block Booking

THE ARRAN MEET - WHITSUN 1964

Once again the Isle of Arran proved very popular and 29 Oreads and friends gathered in Glen Rosa. Saturday was fine and sunny and a good start to the holiday at 12.30pm was a grand football match. Sutton-in-Ashfield versus Notts and Derby, the final result being a win for the Notts and Derby by 5 goals to 4, new member Bill Kirk from Sutton saving a penalty. After the match a group of us walked up the Lower slopes of Beinn A Chialbhain to see the fine waterfalls in Coire Beag and climb one or two of the bolder problems. The evening saw most people in Brodick for a drink and then on to the local dance, where by all accounts Wally P. Smith was in great demand by the few eligible females present. The return to camp after midnight was an epic: 3 bikes had been stolen from outside the dance and the unfortunate owners on crossbars of the remaining bikes, this resulted in a big pile up with Paul Craddock and Chris Culley making a mess of a barbed wire fence and ending 10 feet down in a cess pit! - a bit off!

Sunday was hot and most of us were away bright and early into the hills. Wally, Chris and Lloyd and Mary Caris traversed the ridges from Beinn Nuis over Beinn Tarsuinn and A'Chir to Chir Mhor. John Welbourne, Colin Hobday, Paul Craddock and I climbed Sou West Slabs and Old East Route on Chir Mhor, Geoff Hayes and Doreen Gadsby climbed South Ridge Original (S) and the Rosetta Stone. Guy Lee and Terry Staley (Prospective Member) climbed South Ridge Direct (V.S) Conditions were superb and the sun really hot, the fine pools in the Rosa Burn attracted many of us in for a dip on the way back to the camp site. In the evening many Oreads just soaked up the sun whilst the rest played football again. Paul Gardiner showing us some of his old touches. Bill Kirk and Lennie (Female) the Lion returned after cycling round the northern part of the island (sun-burnt and sore!) Geoff and Lloyd made a huge bonfire and we brewed and sang around it until 1.30am, a fine ending to a superb day.

The Least said about Monday morning the better, except that Laurie Burns went walking in heavy rain. whilst the rest of us festered in the tents. The Welbourns, the Hobday Seniors and Doreens parents went by bus to Lamlash, where John spent 4½ hours in a beach shelter brewing up!

Back at Glen Rosa and after drying out from a cycle trip to Lamlash, the hard core of youth (and Geoff) were back to Brodick for another dance, the star attraction by all accounts being Guy Lee. The non dancers played football until dark, this match was enhanced by the appearance of left winger Lol Burns, just back from Lamlash, also hard shooting Ruth Welbourne and Twinkle Toes Betty Gardner played a good game!

Early Tuesday morning the skies cleared and sunshine filled the Glen, the jagged Arran peaks slowly re-appeared whilst gently swirling mists filled the high corries. With regret we said Au Revoir to the Welbourns and Gardiners (who were staying the rest of the week) and set off down Glen to Brodick and the steamer, hoping for a last sunbathe on the boat deck before the drive home.

There is much more to tell ie. the bikini girl in the next camp site who caused a lot of excitement among our lads (ask Hayes) The peg hammer which fell 200ft down Rosa Slabs (ask Welbourne)

Arran meet continued.....

The encounter with the Adder in Glen Rosa, that police patrol car which caused an anxious moment when we were doing 65mph in the van (ask the driver - Doreen), the Girl with the Cleopatra look from Belton (ask Guy Lee). The sight of the Landlord of the Brodick Inn filling 32 glasses with froth to get 4 pints of beer Etc., - What a weekend and to cap it all Lol Burns missed the boat back and had to stay on Arran another 8 hours (lucky Man), his passengers weren't so happy sitting on the pier at Fairlie, they made it!

For Oreads who may come on the next Arran Meet, just a few facts - camping was 1/- per tent per night, Bicycles 8/- for 4 days, Boat Fare (It takes just over an hour's delightful journey to cross) 11/- return. Ponies can be hired (and were) from a farm 5 mins walk from the camp site. Binoculars can be hired with special Bi-kini lens, write to W.P. Smith, Rippon Road, Nottingham.

Thank you all for coming, see you there next Whitsun.

G.J. Gadsby meet leader.

You can tell what climbing was done on Arran at Whit' - Guy Lee now carries a photograph of a certain Lancashire female in the Back of his rock climbing guide to the area!

COMMITTEE NOTES

MINIMUM AGE FOR CLUB MEMBERSHIP

Your committee have decided to apply a minimum age limit of 16 years until the next A.G.M. when a new club rule on this subject will be discussed.

NEW HANDBOOK.

A new club Handbook is in the course of preparation. Suggestions for amendments and additions should be forwarded to the Secretary as soon as possible. And of course any change of address or Phone number should also be notified immediately.

HUT RULES.

A questionnaire regarding hut rules is to be circulated shortly.

PHOTO MEET.

Better accommodation has been secured for this meet which is to be lead by Ray Handley. It seems likely that a safe bet would be to prepare for your entries with a Milner appealing slant this year!

PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION CUPS.

One of the photo cups has been inscribed "The Cyril Machin Memorial Cup" and the other "The Norman Cochrane Memorial cup".

NEW MEMBER.

BILL KIRK, The Fox and Crown, Skegby, Sutton in Ashfield, Notts.

PROPOSED. Geoff Hayes SECCONDED. Gordon Gadsby.

Quote at a committee meeting. Ashcroft - "I an talking Brian Cooke into doing the main ridge of Skye " - "What, and meet him with the car at the other end?!"

Handley - " One of these days I'm going to go through all my slides and put them in a box". Ashcroft - "What a match box ?".

CAMPING AT NORTH LEES FARM.

The farmer has been complaining about the number of people camping on his land and also the non payment of the camping charge of 1/- per person per night. The Oread have always maintained good relations with the Farmer at North Lees (Welbournes name works wonders). If you decide to camp on the farm and there will be quite a crowd, the farmer has asked that you ring and tell him if there are only a couple of members wishing to camp do ask permission first and pay him in advance. Mention the club by name. This is one of the few remaining camp sites on the Edges and is therefore most important that we are welcomed. It's up to you!

PEAK COMMITTEE B.M.C.

Roger Turner Reports - WILLERSLEY.

The Methodist Guild have kindly agreed to allow climbing at Willersley to members of Clubs affiliated to the B.M.C. and members of the Oread and all other clubs are asked to observe strictly two points.

(1) Not to walk in the main grounds (ie., to use the Cromford entrance near to the rocks only)

(2) Not to climb before 1pm Sundays.

Peak district Mountain Rescue.

This is to be organised to combine all teams under one clearly defined command. Proper communications to be established.

NEW GUIDE

The new guide book to the Sheffield Area (Stannage Etc.,) is now on sale Price 15/- . This is a very fine looking job designed on the same lines as the Cloggy guide. It contains over 450 climbs on Stannage alone and is the first guide to give full details of the routes on Bamford Edge. The other Gritstone Guides in the series will follow at various times during the next year or so.

YELLOWSLACKS.

The minister has been approached to amend the Act in order to prevent a recurrence of incidents similar to the "blowing up" of Yellowslacks.

SAFETY HELMETS.

A note recommending the use of these is to be inserted in the next issue of "Mountaineering".

HIATT KARABINERS

A note regarding these is in the current "Mountaineering" and the attention of all members is drawn to this.

"MOUNTAINEERING"

If you have not obtained a copy of the latest issue of this magazine the Secretary has a few left for sale at the reduced price of 2/-. Apply to

Roger Turner, 18, Holkham Ave Chilwell, Notts.