

**OREAD MOUNTAINEERING
CLUB**

NEWS LETTER

Volume 18

Number 3

DECEMBER, 1971

FORWARD

PAUL GARDINER

I am sure that members and friends of our club will understand the mixed feelings with which I put pen to paper in an endeavour to write some appropriate comment on the Oread events of the past five months.

The feelings range from pleasure in the clubs Alpine achievements to the heartfelt regret at the loss of two members to whom the Oread owes so much.

My intention in late August was to write a newsletter 'foreword', call it what you will, recognising the outstanding performances put up by Chris. and Pete, Ray College and others during the Alpine holiday. I know I express the congratulations of all members upon their successes.

However, the events of September 1971, the loss of Geoff Hayes and Alf Bridge, the injury to Lloyd Caris, transcend all other thoughts and their numbing effect is felt by all.

These paragraphs are not intended as an obituary - Mick Berry has undertaken to contribute in a fitting manner. I would however extend to the relatives of Geoff and Alf the sympathy of the Oread Mountaineering Club and wish a successful and speedy recovery to Lloyd.

Let us give thanks therefore for the lives of Geoff Hayes and Alf Bridge, recognise their many achievements and be strong in our resolve that from these tragedies should stem a more united and thriving Oread - for this would have surely been their most fervent wish.

EDITORIAL NOTE

The cover that appears on this edition of the Newsletter is essentially an experiment and the cost will prohibit its use in future if the publication remains in its present form. However, this might be a convenient time to consider an alternative format since increasing scarcity of quarto duplicating paper will in any case mean an imminent change to the metric based A4 size.

One possibility is to consider publishing an annual journal. This would probably be an unwise step. Not only would it mean a mammoth effort on the part of the editor, but it would involve financing on a scale that our budget, already fully committed with two huts, could scarcely bear. The Yorkshire Ramblers Club with a membership similar to our own are probably the smallest club to produce a 'quality' journal. They also have the doubtful distinction of being the most expensive mountaineering club in the country. A more modest style, such as that of the Journal of the North London M.C., could be considered, but it would still involve a large financial outlay.

An alternative would be to produce a 'thicker' version of the present Newsletter using the same duplicating techniques, but with a printed cover and a few pages of photographs financed by a small advertising revenue. This could appear twice a year and be called the Oread Mountaineering Club Bulletin.

Any comments or suggestions on this subject would be welcomed.

Research by Jack Ashcroft has shown that this is the 112th edition of the Newsletter since it was first published in June 1953. Altogether seven editors have been involved in its production. Referencing ceased in January 1959, but this edition would be Volume 18, No.3.

GEOFF HAYES

It was with profound shock and sorrow that the Club heard of Geoff's death at the age of 33 on Dow Crag on 11th September, 1971. He will be greatly missed by his family and his many friends. Each one of us will have his own memories of Geoff but all of us will remember him as a tireless and enthusiastic mountaineer who was generous, almost to the point of fault. In his home and business life, as well as in his mountaineering, Geoff showed the qualities of integrity and dedication.

The first Oread meet which Geoff and I attended was at the Roaches, some time in 1955. That meet saw the genesis in the Club in the person who was to become, without doubt, the "Compleat Oread". Except for short periods during his National Service and when family requirements prevailed, Geoff was almost always to be seen on Club meets, however distant or frequent. I will remember that on one occasion during his service with the Royal Signals at Chester barracks, he attended a Welsh Walk meet whilst under the M.O. for bad legs and feet. For some time during this service his father was seriously incapacitated by chest trouble and Geoff was usually given weekend leave. Luckily, he found that on some occasions it was possible to pull-in a local meet after rising early on Sunday morning to deal with the papers. Late in the evening he would travel back to Chester on his motor-cycle. The same B.S.A. Bantam travelled regularly between Beeston and North Wales and a hump-fronted Hayes would get off together with some poor frozen hump-backed unfortunate. I remember that before setting off it used to be necessary to adjust his 'bra' as he called it, tying the straps together over his back so that his rucksack would stay on his chest. On one occasion he even travelled in this way to the Isle of Skye. Geoff's fondness for Scotland undoubtedly stemmed from our early Christmas holidays in the "Kingshouse" in Glencoe and more than any other Oread he championed the cause of the Winter Scottish meet.

In all aspects of his mountaineering activities Geoff exhibited a high level of competence although it was typical of the man that he did not always set his sights so high that this standard was required. One felt that whatever the occasion Geoff would always have something in reserve. It was unlike Geoff to train seriously for long walks or Alpine meets. We all know that he did not need to and that on a given occasion he could have walked probably any of us into the ground although that would have been the last thing he would have wished. The walk that gave Geoff the greatest retrospective pleasure was when he and Bob Pettigrew were the only non-stop finishers of an epic trip from Penmaenmawr to Bryn-y-Wern, our old club hut in the Pennant valley. This walk included Drum, Yr Arran and Moel Hebog as well as the 14 Threethousanders. Their time was around 19 hours and I remember Geoff saying that this was the only time he had been really tired. It has been voiced by many experienced Club members that Geoff seldom seemed extended on rock, indeed he was proud of the fact that he had never peeled either when leading or on a rope, when anything above jumping off distance from the ground. There is no doubt that in his rock and Alpine climbing his family responsibility had an inhibitory affect upon his performance. It was only in recent years that Geoff began to realise his potential on rock and was well known for climbing in boots quite hard routes in inclement weather.

Geoff was above all a safe climber and a very good man to climb with. In his skiing, he found it impossible to put in the hours of practice necessary for a high standard of performance but for a self-taught ski-mountaineer his ability was very creditable.

Due to his overall competence and ability to make the correct decision, Geoff often became, by general consent a leader of small groups in the hills. It was fitting that he chose to communicate his knowledge to a multitude of beginners both on Oread meets and through the medium of his Ilkeston College night school classes. That these classes were effective can be vouched for by a number of the younger Oreads. It can scarcely be doubted that Geoff introduced more people into the Club than any other member and willingly spent very many days in the mountains, helping beginners when he could have been doing harder and perhaps to him, more interesting things.

From soon after his election as an Oread member in 1956, Geoff showed his willingness to perform any official duties asked of him and served on the Committee for many years, as well as in the offices of Meets Secretary and Indoor Meets Secretary. He is best remembered in this context however, for the ten years he spent as Newsletter Editor. I am sure that those who have performed this office will appreciate the enthusiasm necessary for so many years of hard labour. There is no doubt in the minds of many members that Geoff would have eventually become President of the Oread Mountaineering Club, perhaps in the near future.

It is perhaps not widely known that Geoff was very fond of music and drama but like many of us was unable to find the time to fulfil himself in this respect. Geoff was not a womaniser and required a sympathetic understanding of his love for the outdoor life as well as someone who like himself, also loved the arts. When Geoff asked Gordon Gadsby to lead his Glencoe Easter meet of 1963 so that he could go to Aachen to climb in the Ardennes, his friends became very suspicious. One year later he married Anne-Marie Kall, who was already a member of the Aachen M.C. From then until his death, Anne gave Geoff her full support in all his activities and it was noticeable that even with time and the birth of their two children Michael and Peter, there was no diminution in his enthusiasm for mountaineering. Those of us who knew him well, will I am sure, agree that despite his love for the hills, Geoff put his family and business responsibilities first. It is quite likely knowing Geoff's tremendous energy, that as his father said, the shop would need 3 more people to replace him.

We will never forget Geoff and I think it is important that we all attempt to measure up to the qualities which we associated with him. This I am sure would be our greatest tribute to Geoff, and the one which I think Anne would appreciate the most.

MIKE BERRY.

IN MEMORIAM

Stricken with grief,
Tears run down the gully of my cheeks
Shattering my world of calm,

Why?

Snatched from the joy of living,
A life so glorious as the mountain air
Of a September day.

Why?

The chance to live, seized by the crags
He loved so dear.

Why?

He gave so much to many,
Expected nothing in return,
But only the freedom of the hills.

Why?

We shall never know.
Farewell loved Mountaineer,
Your memory will linger on.

JOHN CROSSE,
13th September, 1971.

MEMORIAL TO GEOFF HAYES

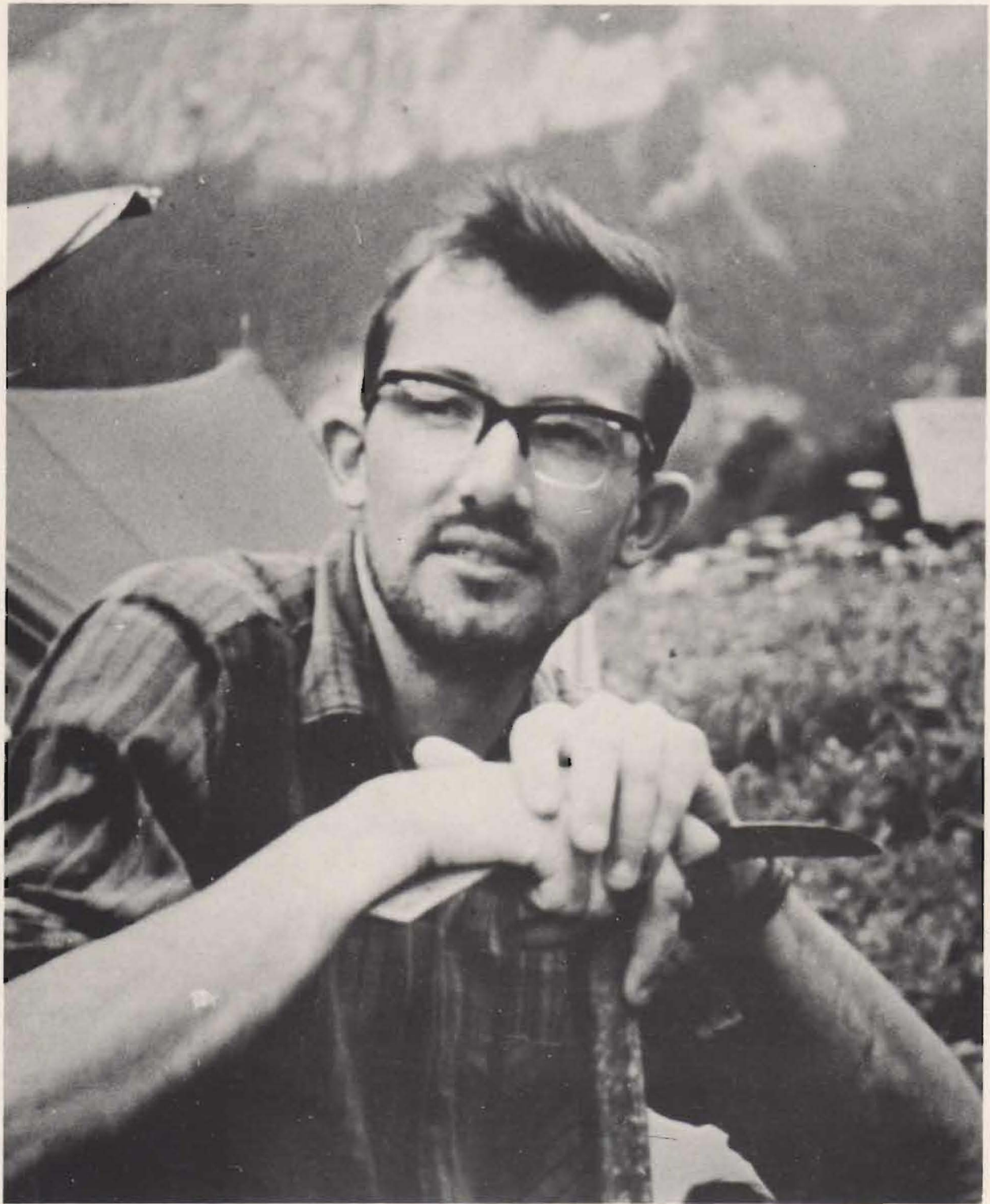
The possibility of a memorial to Geoff was raised at recent meetings of the Committee and Mick Berry, Gordon Gadsby and myself were invited to join in the discussion. It was strongly felt that it would be inappropriate to collect any money until a definite objective had been decided upon. Three ideas were discussed - the writing of a book or dedication of an Oread Journal, the inauguration of a perpetual trophy for a long distance trial of some nature and the erection of some permanent and useful memorial such as a stretcher box or footbridge in a climbing area.

The idea of a book or journal received most discussion but it was pointed out that a privately printed book would be expensive even beyond the range of an appeal fund and that an honest biography would lack the sensational character which would be likely to interest a publisher on a commercial basis. Both a book and a journal would involve a huge effort which may not come to fruition for a long time and a dedicated editor would be required. It was agreed, however, that these obstacles are not insurmountable. The trophy idea was not adopted because of Geoff's known antipathy to competition on mountains and it was feared that a stretcher or a footbridge would be a target for vandalism.

In view of the delicacy of the matter and the obvious desire of the club to remember this well loved climber, it was decided to invite members to formulate suggestions and write to me so that I can summarise everyones views and report to the Committee at their next meeting on 6th January.

I shall be glad if anyone with views on the subject will contact me:

C. Russell,
Rookery House,
Parwich,
ASHBOURNE.



GEOFF. HAYES

THE ALPS 1971

The Club Meet this year was held in the Zermatt valley from 24th July to 7th August, with about 25 members, friends and children camping at Zermatt and a further 10 camping at Tasch. The weather was generally excellent, although the late snow that had accumulated during a poor June was very much in evidence on the mountains, often making the snow plod routes very tedious. Some routes were totally out of condition; for instance, the Younggrat on the Breithorn had received only one ascent by mid-August (Austrian) and this had proved an epic. Several members were also active in other areas of the Alps, notably the Bernese Oberland and the Silvretta Alps.

Most of our contributions in this edition of the Newsletter cover our activities in the Alps - the successes, the failures and the humour of it all. Below we give a survey of the routes climbed.

<u>Mountain/Route</u>	<u>Climbers</u>	<u>Comment</u>
<u>PENNINE ALPS</u>		
<u>Mischabel Chain</u>		
SPITZE FLUH, 3260m.	Janet Ashcroft Brian Cooke Anne Hayes	
ALPHUBEL, 4206m.	Jack Ashcroft Pete Badcock Gordon Gadsby Geoff Hayes	Took the right hand bank (true left hand side) of the couloir on the S. flank of the ridge. This was very loose and it is probably better to go up the left hand bank which is steeper, but much better rock. This alternative was taken by Burgess and Cowan.
	Derrick Burgess Don Cowan	Excellent conditions, descent by N. ridge to Mischabeljock Bivvy (one of the highest in the area at 3860m. - they rated it definitely 5 star.) This was part of a 3 day trip taking in the Taschhorn & Dom.
TASCHHORN, 4490m. S.E. Ridge (Mischabelgrat) - DOM, 4545m. Traverse by the Domgrat.	Derrick Burgess Don Cowan	"The traverse was a great expedition, with superb positions & very remote. We even had a brew on top of the Dom before racing down to the hut & valley. Conditions were good & the traverse took slightly under guide book time, although I remember we took longer than the time given to descend to the Domjock. In verglassed or snowy conditions the whole thing would become very time consuming."
LEITERSPITZEN, 3409m.	Doris Andrew Tony Hutchinson Frank Yeoman	

<u>Mountain/Route</u>	<u>Climbers</u>	<u>Comment</u>
NADELGRAT:- (LENSPITZE, 4294m. NADELHORN, 4327m. STECKNADELHORN, 4242m. HOBERGHORN, 4219m.)	Pete Badcock Geoff Hayes	A mixed route, traversing at well over 4000m. Usually done in the other direction.
<u>Monte Rosa-Breithorn Group</u>		
DUFOURSPITZE, 4634m.	Derek Carnell Les Peel	
LYSKAMM, 4480m.(W) North-West Spur	Nat Allen Derrick Burgess Don Cowan	A somewhat epic first route of the season. 14 ¹ / ₂ hours for the complete expedition from Monte Rosa hut. "The Zwillinge glacier was in an unpleasant state. The route meandered up a glacier spur and a small rock buttress to an arete of the most rotten snow imaginable. Don, going like clockwork, floundered up this relieved occasionally by Nat & I." Descent via Felikjoch.
BREITHORN, 4165m. S.S.W. Flank	Derek Carnell Dave Guyler Les Peel	From the Gandeg hut, dodging skiers in ascent & taking in the Kleine Matterhorn (3883m.) in descent.
<u>Matterhorn-Dent d'Herens Group</u>		
MATTERHORN, 4478m. N.E. (Hornli) Ridge	Tony Hutchinson Frank Yeomans	The usual fight for breathing space with guides and clients.
DENT D'HERENS, 4171m. North Face	Ray Colledge Dennis Davis	16hrs. from the Schonbiel hut finishing in a severe storm, forcing a bivouac on the descent. "The first half of the climb lacked the true north face atmosphere due to the terraces separated by ice walls. The upper half, lacking snow, was quite serious due to the almost non-existent protection. The ice was too thin on the slabs for ice screws and the rock, when it showed, had no cracks." Descent by W.N.W. face.
(Benedetti Bivouac, 3469m.)	Derrick Burgess Don Cowan	This is the starting point for the E. ridge - the most formidable "grand arete" in the Zermatt district. Situated just below Col Tourmanche, overlooking Breuill. 9 hours from Schonbiel hut. "The ascent is a route in itself, culminating in a fine snow arete. A tremendous storm broke before we reached the col and spirits sank as wet and cold we searched in the white out for the hut. When found it seemed a palace although as the hut creaked and groaned we prayed the chains would hold. A suspicious dawn held us back and our decision to retreat was a good one as the storm broke when we reached easy ground.

<u>Mountain/Route</u>	<u>Climbers</u>	<u>Comment</u>
<u>Zermatt West</u>		
POINT DE ZINAL, 3791m. N.E. Ridge	Gordon and Margaret Gadsby	
OBERGABELHORN, 4063m. E.N.E. Ridge (over WELLENKUPPE 3903m.)	Pete Badcock Geoff Hayes	Descent by W.S.W. Ridge (Arbengrat) continuing over the Arbenhorn and Mount Durand, 3713m.
ZINAL ROTHORN, 4221m. S.E. Ridge (via Gabel Notch)	Jack Ashcroft Pete Badcock Brian Cooke Geoff Hayes	
- Kanzelgrat Variation	Ron Chambers Andy Oakden Pete Scott	
(East Face)	Doris Andrew Chris Radcliffe Frank Yeoman Ray Colledge Denis Davis	This attempt failed when they were unable to gain the upper part of the face because of extremely loose rock. The appalling rock conditions made it impracticable to abseil and the descent became a serious undertaking.
TRIFTHORN, 3728m. South Ridge.	Ron Chambers Andy Oakden Terry Lowe Mervyn Sarsen	
WEISSHORN, 4505m. S.W. Ridge (Schaligrat)	Chris Radcliffe Pete Scott	Climbed from the Schali joch bivouac, 3790m. This is problematical of access & took 7hrs. from the Weisshorn hut, the main difficult- ies being loose rock on the barrier between the upper & middle levels of the Schali glacier and poor snow conditions beyond. Some objective danger after sunrise from the Schaligrat flank. The ridge is excell- ent with reasonable rock and fine situat- ions. 5½ hrs. from hut. Descent by E. ridge in 4 hours.
<u>BERNESE OBERLAND</u>		
ALETSCHHORN, 4195m. S.E. Ridge	Ray Colledge Dennis Davis	A fine route which is stated in the English guide to be the normal route from the Oberaletsch hut, whereas in fact everybody uses the S.W. ridge as the normal route from that hut.

<u>Mountain/Route</u>	<u>Climbers</u>	<u>Comment</u>
EIGER, 3970m. Eigerwand (North Face)	Chris Radcliffe Pete Scott	Despite much meltwater and a brief storm in the exit cracks, conditions were generally good with little snow on the rock sections & minimal stonefall. Bivouacs at Swallows Nest, Ramp & on the descent. Approx. 27hours from the foot of the face. (See article).

SILVERETTA ALPS

DRIELANDERSPITZE, 3197m.	Gordon and Margaret Gadsby)
SILVRETTAHORN, 3244m.	Colin and Uschi Hobday)
South Ridge) Climbed during four days spent at the
OCHSENKOPF, 3057m.) Wierbadner hut.
SIGNAALHORN, 3210m.)
Traverse S.W./N.E. Ridges)
PIZ BUIN, 3312m.)
Wiesbadnergrat)

GERMAN ALPS

ZUGSPITZE, 2964m.	Colin and Uschi Hobday	Trade route with many fixed ropes, etc.
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GRAIAN ALPS

GRAN PARADISO, 4061m.	Nat Allen Don Cowan	From Victor Emmanuel hut
LA TRESSENTA, 3700m.	Dave Guyler Les Peel	Pleasant training scramble

MONT BLANC MASSIF

GRAND FLAMBEAU, 3559m.	Nat Allen Dave Guyler Les Peel	Traversed as part of the Frontier Ridge during an attempt on the Tour Ronde.
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ARDENNES - FREYR

Nat Allen, Derek Carnell, Ray Colledge, Dave Guyler, Andy Oakden and Les Peel, climbing in various combinations did 3 routes here on their way back to the U.K. The buvette at the top of the climbs seems to have been the main attraction, but the climbing is good although very polished.

BREGALIA/BERNINA

John Fisher and Len Hatchett are known to have been shambling around this region, but are totally reticent about routes actually climbed.

Everyday for nearly two years now the Eiger had presented itself to my mind, a question mark forming the centre of my ambitions as a mountaineer. Now lying in my tent at Grindlewald, even though not visible, the Eiger presence was overwhelming. In a few days, or even hours, I would probably be climbing its North Wall.

Ten years of reading and looking at images and now the real mountain. What is the North Wall of the Eiger?

"... the highest, most famous, and most deadly mountain face in the whole Alps."

"... hollowed like a sick man's chest, often veiled in mist or blotted out by clouds."

"... a heaving, vomiting mass of rock and ice."

The adventure, agony, success or failure. What was to be my lot? Success was likely to be praised, failure to be damned and condemned as inexperience. Was I experienced enough, how hard was it really, was I strong enough to survive the cold and wet if the weather broke? I almost felt embarrassed at my presumption.

The train jerked into motion and whined powerfully up the gradient to Alpighlen. A cheerful wave from Sue, then Chris and I were on our way.

"... Come back safely, my friends."

It began to hail as we set foot on the avalanche cone at the foot of the wall so we donned anoraks and over trousers. It was essential to keep as dry as possible. We did not bother to rope up initially, as the climbing consisted of snow patches and scree ledges intersperced with low walls of compact limestone. We meandered slowly upwards to the foot of the Difficult Crack. Out came the ropes and Chris made a fine lead of the streaming-wet crack. The protection was poor and with sacs the climbing strenuous. Four relatively easy pitches to the left under the vast walls of the Rote Fluh led to the start of the Hinterstoisser Traverse.

A bulging tent-sac on a tiny ledge over to the right under the 800 vertical feet of fixed rope on the Japanese route marked the bivouac of four Jugoslavs. Shouts of laughter and singing indicated that they were content - their gaiety was not to last.

Sheets of water were pouring over the Rote Fluh from the second ice-field, so having donned rubber gloves I traversed easily across the hundred feet of the traverse, pausing briefly for the classic photo, and then brought Chris across. He climbed steeply up the crack above and I followed to land suddenly on the Swallows Nest.

Bernard and Jean-Pierre gave welcoming grins; we were going to have a crowded bivouac. Suddenly the presence of these two friendly Frenchmen gave a boost to our morale. In the gathering gloom Chris traversed out to the edge of the First Icefield to collect water and we speedily cooked a meal. The bedroom was cramped, but we managed to lash three of us lying down to one ledge the size of a table-top, while Chris slumped in an ice-filled groove a few feet away.

The weather seemed to be clearing and at nine o'clock we flashed our head torches at the camp-site. An answering point of light crossed the void, but human warmth and life only served to increase the effect of the hostility of our surroundings. Several stones whirred and crashed down the first icefield only a few feet away. Eventually we slept.

At half-past three Bernard's alarm rang and we rose stiffly to cook a breakfast of tea and moesli. The morning was cold, the sky was clear.

"... The die was cast, we must win through or die."

Shortly before dawn Bernard and Jean-Pierre climbed out of the Swallows Nest up a short vertical wall down which hung a fixed rope. Five or so controlled arm-pulls, crampons grating furiously on the smooth rock and they disappeared over the bulge onto the First Icefield. We soon followed and climbed 300 feet straight up the ice to the rock band separating the First and Second icefields. The wall started very steeply but soon the angle eased, the difficulties, if anything, increased. The Ice Hose had disappeared for now it was August and many rainstorms had swept a lot of ice and snow off the face. Instead we climbed slabs on the left. Slabs? A series of smooth black overlapping tiles for the most part covered in verglas. Bernard always took the lead of the French rope and he was good, climbing unhesitatingly up this 400 foot wall. Eggshell tiptoes in crampons for 300 feet and very little protection, we were glad to reach the Second Icefield.

Not a trace of snow, only a sheet of pure ice stretching fifteen-hundred feet to the Flat Iron; there was no question of a diagonal traverse, the way was obvious, straight up in four rope lengths to the upper rim. Bernard being in front cut any necessary steps, but for the most part the ice was reasonable and we moved methodically up on front points. Occasional rocks at 150 foot intervals provided shaky belays.

The first five ropelengths across the top of the icefield provided some very absorbing climbing. The rim was very undulating and unsuitable as a hand rail. Whilst I was sharing a stance with Jean-Pierre, Bernard cut across 150 feet of ice in a large bay, half way across he dropped his axe. We all watched mesmerised as the axe cartwheeled down the slope to disappear in seconds over the lower edge. It was sobering to reflect on the rapidity with which the axe had fled down the ice. Bernard completed the last 70 feet of the pitch with the aid of his peg hammer. The climbing now became little more than a hand traverse along the rim, front points thrashing for rope length after rope length, ten in all. At last we reached the Flat Iron.

The grade V pitch was ridiculously loose and being last man I had to withstand a barrage of boulders dislodged by the other three struggling in the constrictions of the chimney. We climbed directly up to Death Bivouac instead of traversing left onto the crest of the Flat Iron. This was a mistake and I soon found myself with 100 feet of rope out and no protection in the mostly deadly part of the face. The rock was dreadfully loose and purism being for the valleys I gratefully made use of a rope dropped by Jean-Pierre from Death Bivouac.

Death Bivouac!

"... and they went out like a match in the rain. The seasons with their storms passed over, the ropes turned to straw, and one day the rock was bare again as in the beginning of the world."

The ledge was a depressing place this day, banked up with snow, and with water pouring from the bulging rock above. After having eaten we roped up as a foursome for the crossing of the Third Icefield. Speed was essential here but I knew from an earlier survey of the face through binoculars that there was a line good steps already cut. Bernard placed a couple of screws on the way across, a slightly rising traverse, to a good stance. Jean-Pierre and then Chris followed. Finally it was my turn, the steps were good and I was climbing with frenzied haste; it was now mid-afternoon and stones were beginning to fall. Chris whipped out his Rollei 35 and proceeded to take photographs. I wasn't overjoyed at having to pose in the middle of the traverse but it was Chris who swore violently when a large rock hit him on the head. I reached the stance and belayed under a waterfall while Chris descended a chimney to join the others on the traverse into the Ramp. Bernard was finding the going difficult and Chris belayed dangling from a temporary piton. Suddenly there was a loud yell. Bernard had fallen off whilst trying to gain the Ramp. Jean Pierre fielded well but Bernard's confidence was shaken and it was a long time before there was any further movement. Chris hung from his peg and front points and I stamped up and down my ledge endeavouring to avoid the ever-increasing barrage of water and ice falling from above. At last Bernard made it and we all moved up the Ramp to a large wet ledge, our bivouac for the night.

It was only 5 p.m. but the ledge was big enough to seat four of us and quite well protected. The overhang above dribbled water sufficient to make life uncomfortable but inadequate for collecting water for cooking. Five minutes standing precariously on tiptoe resulted in one pint of water from a drip; the operation was repeated four times before it grew dark. Securing ourselves and our equipment and cooking a big meal took several hours but we had time to savour our position.

We were in the very heart of the Eigerwand and a break in the weather now was mindbending to contemplate. The decision would be whether it was easier to retreat down twenty-five rope lengths to the Swallows Nest and then climb down fifteen-hundred feet to the foot of the face, or make a bid for the summit. (We calculated later that from our bivouac on the Ramp we ran out thirty one full ropelengths to the Mittelegi Ridge!)

The evening, however, seemed calm and from our perch on the edge of the Ramp we could see both Kleine Scheidegg and Grindlewald. After exchanging signals with the campsite in Grindlewald, Chris and I pulled the tent sac over our heads and fell asleep. Bernard and Jean-Pierre preferred to descend a few feet and hack a platform out of the snow and ice in the gully, thinking it better to be cold than wet.

It was still dark when we were awakened by Bernard and Jean-Pierre climbing back up to the ledge. Still heavy with sleep I began to prepare breakfast while Chris struggled into his boots and prepared the equipment ready for the days climbing. We then noticed that Jean-Pierre and Bernard had apparently fallen asleep again and then discovered it was only 2 o'clock in the morning! They had decided that our ledge was better than freezing in the gully. After the cursing had slowly subsided we decided to continue with cooking and ate a huge breakfast of Moesli, cheese, chocolate, biscuits and tea. Another hours sleep and we were away by 4.30, this time in the lead, as our friends were still brewing-up.

The first three pitches to the foot of the famous waterfall were at a reasonable standard but verglassed; crampons were deemed unnecessary. Chris led the waterfall pitch which was steep and very wet but liberally supplied with jugs and pitons; seconding, I merely swung up from sling to sling desperately but unsuccessfully trying to avoid the water.

The waterfall not being frozen indicated that the morning was warmer than it should have been. Looking back down the face we spotted the Yugoslavs climbing the Second Icefield. At that moment a loud detonation high amongst the summit cliffs froze our gaze on the tiny specks below. Seconds passed as the stones sighed downwards before racking the icefield. The inevitable happened and one of the tiny figures shot silently down the ice and then miraculously pendulumed to one side held by the rope; but the Eiger climb was over for the Yugoslavs.

The ramp now steepened and another pitch found the four of us hanging from various pitons struggling into crampons for the ice-bulge. Chris led up to the left, scratching at the verglass, clipped into a couple of pegs and then with much twittering about verglass, mantleshelves and no holds, very slowly teetered up onto a crampon point, then another and finally grovelled onto the ice of the upper ramp icefield. I followed and went through the same motions; quite a pitch.

Chris dangled a loop of rope to a gripped Bernard, while I ploughed on up the ice-field. Impressive country this and the ice became steeper and harder. After a hundred feet I put in a screw and cut steps until I finally reached an old ring peg just short of the Brittle Ledge with the rope at full stretch. Chris came storming up and we agreed that of the icefields this had seemed the steepest.

The Brittle Ledge was a heap of "tot". Crampons were removed and as we climbed the Grade V pitch it began to snow. The Traverse of the Gods was a wilderness of black scree covered ledges disappearing over a sickening drop, technically easy but with virtually no protection a slip was awful to contemplate. Four ropelengths and we again cramponed - up on a good bivouac ledge at the foot of the White Spider.

"And there the Spider waits"

A few rocks crashed past on their way to the valley, but Chris undeterred front pointed out onto the Spider. Soon we were both suspended from its icy back.

This is what we had come for, The White Spider, a grey icy slide surrounded on all sides by wild vertical screens of rock streaming upwards to the sky. The view downwards almost made me giddy, Chris 150 feet below and our two friends climbing out from the Traverse of the Gods on the edge of nothing silhouetted against the meadows of Alpiglen. We steadily made progress and after four ropelengths I entered the black and gloomy confines of the Exit Cracks. The others were still down on the ice and Chris dropped a rope to Bernard who was finding the lack of steps a little trying. An icepeg suddenly came out and Bernard with a yell of fright hurtled down the Spider only to be held in a second by Chris. He was lucky that time as he was full rope-length above Jean-Pierre.

The ascent of the Exit Cracks was relatively uneventful, but what places of climbing history we trod. It would have been pleasant to linger at the bivouac of Rebuffat and Buhl, the epic Quartz Crack and the Corti Bivouac, but the traditional Eiger storm was brewing. The rock was nearly free of ice and snow but nevertheless the ascent was completed in crampons. After the abseil pitch four steep ropelengths followed up smooth black wet grooves. Pitons appeared at about hundred foot intervals but further protection was impossible. Water showered down numbing fingers and slowing progress. Just as we exited from the grooves the storm burst. Thunder echoed in the crags and snow whirled into our faces. A wave of snow and rocks from the summit slopes hissed past and rattled down the cracks up which we had just climbed. Four more rope lengths over 'tiles' and gravel and suddenly it was there - the summit ice field, now bathed in evening sunlight, the storm having passed as suddenly as it had arrived. We cramponed up the gleaming slopes and along the ridge to the summit. An icy wind was blowing as evening approached.

The dream had been translated into reality.

References:- "The White Spider" by Heinrich Harrer.

"The road goes up to Randa now". With this information in mind we nurse the cars' creaking back end up the sweeping curves of the new road.

Horror of horrors; a sea of shimmering, parked cars surrounds the village, and the railway station is submerged in a welter of humanity and its attendant rubbish ... what chance have we two with our twelve packing cases of necessities required for a two week stay in Zermatt?!!

Accordingly we retrace our steps down the valley, and at the little deserted station of Herbriggen, we offload the car and onload the train, obtain seats and make the delightful journey to Zermatt once again. On arrival, and only having a fortnights' holiday this year, the trendsetters swing into instant action, driving to the campsite in a horse and landau with the luggage while the wife follows demurely behind on foot. The time is late afternoon on the Saturday of 24th July, almost everyone has arrived, with the exception of the Eigerwanderers past and future and the Handleys. After a couple of false starts, we eventually pitch the tent in a large breach in the Oreads' outer perimeter, thus preventing the ingress of the guitar toting, pot smoking, bra-less Americans who, true to form, are attempting to overrun everything by sheer weight of numbers.

On Sunday, unable to withstand the assault on our National language any longer, a party of us leave for the Monte Rosa hut, our objectives being the Lyskamm and Monte Rosa peaks. Needless to say we take the train ... all that is but the president of vice, sorry Vice-President, who wants to cripple himself for the next day!

At 2.00 a.m. the sky is unfortunately clear and we are soon slurping 'teewasser' sprinkled with dried milk and sugar prior to starting out. Nat, Burge, and Don Cowan are for the N E ridge of the Lyskamm, while Les Peel and myself are heading for the Dufourspitze.

Five hours later Les and I are lying, wheezing heavily, on the summit ridge some 300 feet from the actual summit cairn. We have our hundredth look around ... those tiny dots on the Lyskamm opposite could be our friends, the snow must be poor over there because they've still got a long way to go yet. We bask in the sun, happy to be static, although we've been that often enough on the way up! A guide strides past - "Greuss Gott", "Bon Jour" we reply. His client trips over his own feet while gazing curiously at my orange hat ... probably thought it said 'erotic' ...! We move to the descent, a 60 degree snow slope ... don't slip here. Down the crenellate rock ridge add the following snow arete. Happiness is going down!! Stop on the col and fill mouth with raisons ... Pee in snow and left trouser leg. Continue down; Les falls in crevasse (one leg) as snow bridge collapses. Keep rope tight ... I fall in (both legs) ... must lose some weight! Snow getting slushy ... eat some boiled sweets, spit in snow ... all red. Try to kid Les that I'm haemorrhaging, he suggests I let him die quietly as his is purple!

Reach the hut; the rope and my feet are wet through and weigh twice as much. Guardian gives us 'teewasser' and we brew. Tastes a million dollars. Take off boots and paddle wet footmarks all over the floor. Go outside to toilet - (all that tea?) - and gaze down through the hole at the stream far below. Happiness is what shape? Change socks and order some more 'teewasser'. Sit in the sun and, with muscles pleasantly tired, plan the next expedition. My thirst is building up again - what price the beer this time? The Lyskamm team appears on the glacier and we go out and meet them. We spend the night in the hut - booze up - and return to Zermatt next morning.

The holiday progresses, a kaleidoscope of events. Les and I, assisted by a contingent of North Staffs, drag a protesting bird up the Breithorn, our cameras freeze up, and she refuses to do the Kleine Matterhorn, so we leave her in the snow for a time. Walk back down the ski-piste - funny how your attitude changes depending on which sport you are indulging in at the moment - and so back to the Gandeg Hut.

The weather breaks. Parties return from the Matterhorn in a stupendous electric storm, rain like glass rods, hailstones big as marbles. We sit in campsite - boozing - until it passes (2 days). We fail to get up the Weisshorn when half the party's legs develop punctures. We return, and the social life takes yet another pasting. Dennis Davis, the suave and debonair member of the Karabiner Mountaineering Club throws himself wholeheartedly into the social whirl and the net covered pool at the Theodule, his dripping moustache more eloquent than his French as the manageress makes off with his clothes. Ray Colledge, getting more dances than peaks this year, has the party in hysterics telling jokes in a high, wine-cracked voice. Pete Scott threatens to take on the whole might of the American hippies before leaving for Grindlewald, but they are finally destroyed and overwhelmed by the insidious little men from the other side of the world - the Japs!

We sit and remember climbing ropes with minds of their own. Frozen fingers and the sweating armpits. The snoring German in the next bunk in the hut. The early morning search for the elusive sock. Candles flickering, forming pools of light, their weak rays swallowed up by the dark pine interior of the hut. Tousled heads bent over bowls of steaming liquid, and the pinch of the frost in your nostrils as you step outside the hut. The head torch that fails and the ever-present stars that compensate. The toiling up the darkened slopes, the agony of placing one foot in front of the other, again and again and again. The sunrise striking the summits with its' attendant warmth. Watching the light spill over into the dark, still, sleeping valleys thousands of feet below, softening the outlines and promising a glorious day. The exultation of the summit ridge, all the masochistic effort forgotten as Happiness is paramount

We pack the tent, and leave for Belgium; here is rock climbing on a massive escarpment 300 feet high. A bit like limestone at home, but higher, and the holds are smoother worn. The orange hat turns another shade paler under the scorching sun, while its owner turns three shades getting over the crux in the upper part of the face! The Buvet at the top provides an inexhaustable supply of beer and the climbs that follow appear much easier

Memories are intangible things, of necessity from the past, but what a wealth of pleasure they can give us in the future; without them how would we last from weekend to weekend?

The N.W. Spur of Lyskam

Before leaving England Derrick Burgess and I had agreed that our first route would be the N.W. Spur of Lyskam. However our first task on arriving at Zermatt was to get ourselves and our families established on the camp site and it was not until the following day that, together with Nat Allen, Derek Carnell and Les Peel, we set out for the Monte Rosa hut. Nat had decided to climb the N.W. spur with us whilst Derek and Les aimed to climb Monte Rosa.

Being the proud possessor of a reduced rate travel voucher I declared my intention of taking the easy way out of the valley - by rail to Boden-Boden. Derrick, not so fortunate as I and obviously anxious to get to grips with things - either that or he was tight - decided to do it the hard way. Nat, Les and Derek Carnell opted to accompany me on the train. In due course we all assembled at Boden-Boden and then set off along the Monte Rosa track. After a fairly leisurely walk we arrived at the hut and then spent the rest of the afternoon lounging about and looking at tomorrow's route. In fact I spent so much time looking that it provoked derogatory remarks from Derrick - I think he half expected me to say I wasn't going. I must admit that I had doubted the wisdom of climbing Lyskam's 14 800 feet for a first route, and although I have never really suffered from altitude I'd always put this down to the fact that I'd made a point of doing relatively low routes first in order to achieve some degree of acclimatisation before tackling high routes. Derrick's attitude was obviously different from mine.

In its upper reaches the route looked pretty obvious, running up the edge of a triangular shaped buttress and then following a snow arete which finally merged into the summit snow cone. The same could not be said of the lower part, however, as this followed a tortuous path through the broken seracs of the Zwillings glacier.

An early start was made next day, our route taking us across the crevassed glacier in front of and a little below the hut. Fortunately the crevasses were open but nevertheless they still had the effect of slowing down the party. Eventually we reached the junction of the Grenz and Zwillings glaciers and it was just about this point that we first encountered the soft pink tinged snow which was to plague us on this route. We were plodding along unroped when suddenly Nat, who was just ahead of me, plunged waist deep into a hidden crevasse. I am not sure whether it was the size of his back-side or the size of his rucksack which prevented him from dropping right in. Once Nat was out we certainly didn't stop to analyse the situation. This incident was sufficient to remind us that we'd be safer tied on to the rope. Progress was slow as the route through the seracs was rather indefinite and we were never quite sure whether we were taking a blind alley.

By now dawn was beginning to break and the ice cliff under which we had to pass before gaining the triangular shaped buttress began to take a more ominous look. I thought that we were moving too slowly but the snow conditions were bad and we were obviously suffering from lack of acclimatisation. Eventually we reached the shoulder of Lyskam which forms the right bank of the

Zwillings glacier. We were now free of the damned glacier and the line we had to take could be seen quite clearly. Moving as quickly as possible we passed under the ice cliff and once clear of this paused for a drink, took one or two photographs and then headed towards the bergschrund, which from below looked as if it might be the crux of the route. It did not, however, present much difficulty. Above the 'schrund the snow began to get harder, then turned to ice for a couple of pitches below the buttress.

When the foot of the buttress was reached we removed our crampons and pushed Derrick into the lead. For most of the time we were climbing in the shadow, with the sunlit edge of the face above and to the left of us. How tempting the sunshine looked! The Buttress itself presented no technical difficulties; progress up it being limited only by our physical capacity. I must say it gave me great pleasure to see my companions blowing almost as much as I was.

We reached the top of the buttress after about an hours climbing and then paused for breakfast in the sunshine. From the top of the buttress ran a snow arete and having reached this point we mistakenly presumed that we had cracked the route. What a mistake! The arete started at a very moderate angle and then swept up more sharply. The good snow conditions, which we had expected at this point, failed to materialise with the result that we were floundering knee deep in snow the consistency of granulated sugar. Up we struggled making painfully slow progress. The arete merged into a snow slope which shimmered in the brilliant sunshine. Our progress was now even slower than when we were on the arete, for now the snow conditions were not consistent. One minute we were on hard snow and pleased to be wearing crampons and the next we were plunging through up above our knees. Our heads bent lower and lower as we flogged up the slope and I remember thinking "Hell, how long will this continue?" - when a curt instruction from the back instructed me to "Bloody well stop". Only too pleased to oblige I looked back at my equally buggered companions, who leaning over their ice axes and gasping for breath, were at the same time expressing some doubts as to the legitimacy of the snow. A brief counsel and it was decided that until we reached better ground the order of the day would be 50 steps then stop for a breather. It was in this manner that we drew nearer to the summit ridge and all the time we were being cooked by the sun on one side and frozen by the wind on the other. We did not realise it at the time but we were also being subjected to severe ultra violet radiation. Eventually we reached the ridge and to reach the summit we had to traverse this ridge; the sharpness of it, however, dictated that we traverse its flank, the Swiss side that is - I do not think we ever managed to see the Italian side of the ridge because of the cornices. In places the flanks became so steep as to warrant moving one at a time. We reached the summit at about midday and there we stayed for half an hour, partly to savour the view but mainly to recuperate. The views over Switzerland were magnificent but the views over Italy were obscured by a rapid build up of cloud. It looked as if we might be in for an afternoons storm.

One look along the ridge to the other summit was enough to let us know that traversing this was out of the question. Neither did we want to go down the way we had come up, so the only alternative seemed to be to descend into the snow basin at the head of the Zwillings glacier and then descend the glacier. Having sampled the delights of the glacier earlier in the day we had no illusions about the route being easy. Our main problem was going to be

finding a route through the crevasses and seracs. We retraced our steps along the ridge for some way but instead of heading down the slope towards the N.W. spur we kept to the ridge and headed towards the Felixjoch. By now the snow had softened even further causing it to ball in our crampons, to the extent that we could hardly lift our feet. There was nothing for it but to remove our crampons and hope we did not meet any more pitches of ice.

Progress into the basin was good whilst gravity was assisting us but when ever any slight rise had to be negotiated we literally staggered over the ground as the snow continually broke beneath our feet. Once on the upper slopes of the glacier it became difficult to see where the best line lay, but having spied out the land from higher up we had a reasonable idea where we stood the best chance of negotiating the huge crevasses which cut across this section of the glacier. Luck was with us and apart from the odd occasion where our legs broke through into a crevasse we reached the middle section of the glacier without too much trouble. We were now level with the point where earlier in the day we had traversed off the glacier, so all we had to do was to find our tracks and follow these down. In actual fact this was harder than we expected for, in spite of the fact that we seemed to have been plunging through soft snow all the way up the glacier, our tracks were now conspicuous by their absence. It was at this point that we had a minor diversion which could quite easily have turned into a major one.

On the way up in the morning, on leaving the glacier and gaining the snow shoulder above some steep cliffs, Derrick saw what he thought was an abseil point. The thought of abseiling down the cliffs appealed to him, so at his insistence we once again turned off the glacier and headed for the top of the cliffs. Having got there we found that the belay point was in fact only a marker point and a close look at the cliffs quickly convinced me that, even if we were not quicker going through the seracs, we would certainly be safer. The weather had deteriorated to the point of snowing slightly but we continued to debate whether the abseil over the cliffs might not be a better bet than negotiating the glacier. Eventually we decided that we would be better off going through the seracs.

Upon reaching the Grenz glacier in the late afternoon we then honed on the Monte Rosa hut which we reached sometime around 6 p.m. Our progress down out of the snow basin had been watched with interest by Derek Carnell and Les Peel, who by now had returned from their route on Monte Rosa. They said afterwards that our excursion to the top of the rock cliff had puzzled them, for being in a better position than we were to view the cliffs, it was apparent to them that the way down the cliffs would have been far from easy and might have led us into difficulties. However, here we were at the hut safe and sound - or so it seemed.

Unfortunately this was not quite the case for next morning Nat complained that his lips felt swollen and indeed they were. His lips continued to swell through the next day until they had reached such proportions that his top lip almost touched his nose. Lyskam certainly left its mark on Nat! It is said that one learns by one mistakes and if there is one lesson to be learned by our route on Lyskam, it is that when climbing high snow peaks in bright sunlight, don't spare the Labisan!

Tasch - Dom Traverse

Our next route was to be the Tasch - Dom traverse and as we intended to use the Mischabeljoch bivouac hut we decided to combine this route with a traverse of the Alphubel.

Leaving Zermatt in the late afternoon Derrick and I, having left Nat nursing his swollen lips, plodded up towards Tasch Alp. Upon reaching a small restaurant on Tasch Alp all hot and sweaty, we decided that a glass of cold milk might make a change from beer. Having placed our order and then waited an inordinate length of time, I jokingly remarked "I suppose she's milking the cow". In point of fact she was and we finished up drinking warm milk - not exactly the refreshing drink we expected.

We arrived at the Tasch hut in the early evening with banks of low cloud swirling around the Oberrothorn across the other side of the valley. As we turned in for the night the weather looked as if it could turn either way, and when we left the hut in the early hours next morning, we were enveloped in thick mist. As we pressed on through the mist it was impossible to tell whether it was fine-weather mist or whether we were in thick cloud. However, as it was not precipitating we pressed on. The path up to the foot of the Rotgrat was fairly well defined and we made good progress in spite of the mist. Suddenly it began to thin and there above us were stars shining in a cloudless sky. Immediately my spirits rose - the weather looked good. We were now drawing close to the foot of the Rotgrat with the sky to the east beginning to show the first signs of dawn. The drop in temperature was most noticeable now that we had left the mist behind. The ridge itself started off at a moderate angle, but then swept up sharply almost into a buttress. Whilst at first glance this looked intimidating, climbing it presented no difficulty. It was, however, very cold and my fingers soon turned numb under these conditions.

The buttress was followed by a broad snow ridge, then another rocky buttress and then the final snow plod to the summit, which was broad and relatively flat topped. A bit like Ben Nevis on a larger scale. The weather and the views were fantastic. Looking back our route on Lyskam could be seen quite clearly and unlike the view from the Monte Rosa hut it could be seen in proper perspective. We could now see why the upper slope had taken so long to negotiate. It was big! Obviously the view from the hut had had a foreshortening effect.

We reached the summit at about 9 a.m. and not being pressed for time dug ourselves in behind a snow wall in order to get some shelter from the bitterly cold wind. Looking towards the Dom we could see our route quite well defined and one could quite see why the route was considered to be a serious one. Once on the route you were committed either to finish it or return back along it. There was no easy way off if the weather turned nasty.

After a leisurely breakfast and a chat with two Germans who had come up from the Saas valley, we made our way in the direction of the Mischabeljoch. Once over the summit we were able to see the bivouac hut, which was perched on the rocks above the col. Our way to the hut lay down a pleasant snow and rock ridge which was descended at a good pace. Arriving at the hut about 11 a.m. we found it occupied by three Swiss who had spent the previous night there. The rocks around the hut were littered with wet gear drying in the warm sunshine.

The Swiss later explained that they were doing a high level traverse and that on the night prior to their arrival at the hut they'd had to bivouac in the snow. Our situation was most pleasant with nothing to do all day but bask in the sun - we were well sheltered from the cold wind - admire the view and make water - melt snow I mean! This was achieved by what the Swiss called water machines, which were constructed by setting slabs of rock at such an angle that snow melted in the sunshine and then dripped into conveniently placed billy cans. Every available billy was pressed into service and from then on until the shadows fell across the rocks the silence of the mountains was punctuated by the ping of water dripping into numerous billy cans. Our combined efforts produced three quarters of a bucketful of water - not much, but it represented a considerable saving in precious fuel. The Mischabeljock hut is without doubt the most luxurious bivouac hut I have ever slept in. The bunks were most comfortable and the blankets warm and dry. You are however expected to pay for this privilege and a money box is provided.

The day drew to a close and as the shadows fell across the hut the temperature dropped rapidly and all vestige of cloud cleared from the sky. The weather appeared set fair. With one last look at the sky we battened down the door and retired to our bunks. We'd agreed that an early start was neither necessary nor desirable as we would be climbing rocks straight from the start. The agreed hour was 5.0 a.m. An hour earlier we were up and anxiously opened the door. The weather was perfect and there was not a cloud in the sky, but the valleys below were streaked with mist. Conditions could not have been better. From the hut we took a direct line straight up to the crest of the ridge. The Swiss tried to persuade us of a better route to the left of the hut. However Derrick had reconnoitered the route the previous day and pronounced it feasible so we were not deflected. There was absolutely nothing wrong with the route we took and we soon gained the crest of the ridge. The first section of the ridge comprised of alternating sections of rock and corniced snow, although the cornices were never of sufficient magnitude to cause us trouble. The middle section was a steep snow arete which could well have been a laborious flog, if not tricky, had conditions not been right. As it turned out conditions could not have been better and this section was climbed much faster than I had anticipated. After our Lyskam experience we could hardly believe it. Leaving the snow we experienced more rocks which finally bought us to the summit of the Tasch. We were feeling quite pleased with ourselves as we were well within guide book time and the Swiss party were only half way up the ridge. Mind you having seen the packs they were carrying, we were not really surprised.

A short halt for food and then off once again down the ridge heading for the col between the Dom and the Tasch. It was on this section that we lost time. Why I'll never know for we were moving quite fast and the rock on this part of the route was probably better than anywhere else. We did, however, have to put crampons on and off once or twice but even so I would still query the guide book time of one hour for this section of the route, since we took something like two hours. Nevertheless we were now well past the half way point and the weather showed no sign of breaking. Ahead of us stretched the ridge running up to the Dom. This ridge was mainly of rock, so rotten that the only safe route lay on its crest. It was like traversing a dry stone wall in places. Occasionally we were forced off the crest but we soon found out that it paid to get back on to it as soon as possible, otherwise one was in great danger of bringing the whole lot down on top of oneself. Ahead of us the ridge became less

well defined and appeared to merge into the face of the mountain, and just above that there appeared to be a large buttress. As we drew nearer to this buttress I realised that it was in fact smaller than I had first thought and that we were now only a couple of hundred feet from the summit. It is surprising how under such circumstances one can lose all sense of scale - and this in fine weather conditions.

We reached the summit in the early afternoon and having all the necessary equipment with us, we decided that we would celebrate the occasion with a cup of tea. We lazed around on the summit for some considerable length of time before heading down the relatively easy snow slopes to the Hohberg glacier. Once again we were in a huge sun trap but our spirits were high as we forged our way down through the soft snow. As we drew nearer to the glacier we saw two parties of two. Tiny black dots on a white background and cutting across the glacier from the direction of the Nadelhorn. Our paths were converging and it was interesting to see the dots growing larger then turning into figures as we continued our descent into the snowy basin. It was not, however till we reached the Festijoch, a col on the rocky ridge separating the Hohberg and the Festi glaciers that we caught up with the rearmost party. It was Geoff Hayes and Pete Badcock who had just completed the traverse of the Nadelhorn. We pressed on down the glacier and by 3.30 p.m. we were at the Dom hut swigging beer, having completed one of the most enjoyable routes I have ever done.

The East Ridge of the Dent d'Herrens

Having successfully knocked off Lyskam and the Domgrat traverse, our attention was now focused on the East ridge of the Dent d'Herrens. I well remember how fascinated I was with the mountain when I first saw it from the Schönbiel hut some twenty years ago and when Derrick first mentioned that he would like to have a go at the East ridge I must say I was quite interested, but a little apprehensive regarding my ability to do it. However with two routes under my belt and feeling quite fit it was almost a foregone conclusion that our next route was to be the East ridge. Our plan was to traverse the ridge from east to west starting from the small Benedetti bivouac hut at the East end of the ridge.

The weather was looking decidedly dodgy when we left Zermatt staggering under our well filled rucksacks. We had hardly left Zermatt when who should come down the track but Ray Colledge, Dennis Davis, Chris Radcliffe, Pete Scott and Sue, accompanied, of course, by another bird. Colledge had obviously been up to his tricks again. They were looking rather dejected, the weather having cheated them out of their route on the North Face of the Dent d'Herrens. The usual pleasantries were exchanged and whilst doubts were expressed as to whether the weather was going to be fit or not, noone attempted to dissuade us from pressing on. They probably realised that we were sufficiently bloody minded not to have taken notice anyway. As we pressed on up the Schönbiel track the cloud base dropped lower and lower. Our route then left the track and we cut across the Zmutt glacier. The next stage was to gain access to the Tiefmatten glacier and this we achieved by means of a broad snow couloir terminating in a snow slope beneath a rocky rib. We paused on the rib for refreshment and took stock of the situation. We now had to cross the snow covered Tiefmatten glacier to the foot of a rocky ridge which would enable us to gain the snow rib which in turn would take us to the crest of the ridge upon which the bivouac hut

stood. We flogged along through the mushy snow and gradually drew neared to the rocky rib. I must say that the sight of the huge boulders lying all over the snow in the vicinity of where we wanted to go did not exactly fill me with joy, but there was nothing for it but to get to grips with the rock. This was easier said than done as a bergschrund did its best to bar our progress. However, we managed to gain a foothold on the rock and then with my intrepid leading machine in front once again we gingerly climbed up the tottering mass. We finally made the snow rib without setting off a major stonefall, but I think it was more by luck than judgement.

Having reached the snow we were in it up to our knees - if not our necks! What a flog! The snow was even softer and wetter than it had been on Lyskam. It also kept sliding away in quite large sheets causing minor avalanches down each side of the rib. However, there was nothing for it but to press on upwards. We were probably about two-thirds of the way up when the not too distant rumble of thunder reminded us that the weather was getting worse. Then crash - the lightening struck the ridge above our heads and down came the precipitation. Cowen you are in for it once again, I thought.

Our position was not the best one to be in if we were to be involved in a storm. Ahead of us the snow arete terminated below a large bergschrund and as we donned our waterproofs I informed Derrick that I was not going any higher than that until I was sure the lightening was not going to strike the ridge again. In fact the bergschrund appeared to be the best bet if the weather turned really nasty. However, by the time we arrived there the storm seemed to have moved away from our vicinity.

Nevertheless thick cloud was swirling above our heads. As we panted our way up the final slope towards the ridge the mist closed in on us. On gaining the crest of the ridge we were met by an icy blast. By God it was cold! Particularly as we were wet through with sweat from our exertions lower down, but where was the hut? What an inhospitable place! Some fifty feet or so below the crest of the snow ridge was a rocky outcrop which we took shelter behind whilst we re-read the guidebook. I shuddered at the thought of a night wedged up at the back of these rocks, but other than finding the hut, this seemed to be the best place. We peered anxiously over the edge of the rocks looking for the hut since this was certainly no place for one. Darkness would soon be upon us and we would have to find the hut within the next half hour if we were going to find it at all that night. The guidebook said something about traversing over a snow boss and the hut being on a rocky rib. The question was which snow boss, since there appeared to be one on either side of us. Was it the one near the Matterhorn or the one neared the Dent d'Herrens? We decided to try the Matterhorn side and we struggled once more on to the snow ridge. So anxious were we to get sight of the hut before darkness fell that we pushed ourselves to the limit up to the top of the snow boss. Over the top we went and there a few hundred yards on the ridge and a little below the crest stood the tiny bivouac hut half buried in snow. What a relief!

The hut was perched on a slabby platform and secured to the side of the ridge by wire ropes. Its position was to say the least exciting. The platform terminated just about three feet in front of the doorway from where one could

look almost straight down into Italy. Through occasional breaks in the cloud we could see the twinkling lights of Breuil far below. Once in the hut, our clothes wet through from the combined effects of snow and sweat, began to steam. As we were strictly limited in so far as spare clothes were concerned we allowed ourselves the luxury of dry socks, but the rest had to dry out beneath our duvets. The next few hours were spent consuming large quantities of liquid in the form of Oxo-tea and soup followed by plenty of more solid grub. We certainly stoked up the boilers that night.

Officially the Benedetti bivouac has places for four but we were pleased that there were only two of us, since one of the bunks had no base in it and another was required for cooking on. Furthermore only two air mattresses could be found. Conditions generally were not too good inside the hut - the blankets felt damp, but as we were reasonably well protected in our duvets and our trousers were damp anyway, we felt it was a luxury compared with the conditions outside. The storm returned later that night and continued on and off throughout the night. However, we were snug and secure in the knowledge that although the hut was not far below the crest of the ridge it bore no evidence of having been struck by lightning. Maybe this was a false sense of security - nevertheless it was enough to keep me happy. We spent a reasonably comfortable night in spite of our damp clothing and the fact that having consumed so much liquid earlier in the evening, it was necessary to make one or two excursions outside the hut - a dodgy business indeed - one false step in the darkness and we'd have been well in to Italy.

We reviewed the situation at about 4.00 a.m. and decided that in view of the heavy clouds over Italy, which were being continually lit up by lightning, we would give it till 7.00 a.m. and then make a final decision. At 7.00 a.m., although the weather looked better, it was still far from settled. We both realised that conditions on the ridge must have deteriorated during the night and even under good conditions we had anticipated taking some ten hours to traverse the ridge, after which we would have to find our way off the summit of a mountain neither of us had been on before. We made our decision - we'd get the hell out of it and make for the valley.

As we retraced our steps in the morning sunshine, I could not help but wonder whether we'd made the right decision. We were both very disappointed, anyhow the die was cast and there was now nothing for it but to press on downwards. We made good progress down the arete and were soon on to the rocks bordering the Teifmatten Glacier. Progress over the rocks was tedious as great care had to be taken not to start a stonefall. Crossing the Teifmatten Glacier we looked back at the ridge we had left a few hours earlier - it was fast becoming enveloped in cloud once again. Before we reached the Zmutt Glacier thunder boomed across the valley once again. We'd obviously made the right decision for had we decided to attempt the ridge we would probably have been somewhere near the middle of it by now. The thought of another soaking gave fresh impetus to our progress down the Glacier and it was not long before we were scurrying down the track to Zermatt - disappointed at not doing the route, but satisfied that we'd made the right decision to come down.

We are grateful to the Secretary of the Midland Association of Mountaineers for permission to re-print this article which first appeared in the M.A.M. Journal of 1953.

Of the characters, 'The Beard' is still very active (although he now wears a moustache) and is well known to many Oreads.

TRES JOLIE CARAVANE

CLIVE BRAMFITT

The Senior Mountaineer was now safe. He had dined well and wine even better; he was reasserting himself. "Repentance", he muttered, drowning his conscience with another glass of vin rouge, "is a virtue of weak minds." He would not apologise for his climbing. "We are as God made us", he argued, shifting the responsibility. The Prosecution did not take so charitable a view. "We were his children", they mourned, "and he led us astray." Exhibit A for the Defence was a Guide Book of historical value but 46 years out of date. The Senior Mountaineer had it with him when, having nothing else to do, he left the hut to reconnoitre the route.

In 1896 Monsieur A. Regnier and his four followers climbed the South Face of Les Bans for the first time. He sent a "mariner's" account to the Rev. W.A.B. Coolidge who, in 1905, gave it to the world in English. Not having used a compass for years, the Senior Mountaineer passed over the orientation, preferring an instruction that what he had to aim at was a horizontal band of snow. Something must have been lost in the translation, however, for in 1896 it was over the right-hand branch of the glacier; in 1951 it had unaccountably moved over to the left branch. The Senior Mountaineer was puzzled but unconcerned; he did not believe in Guide Books, anyway. The Long One, who did, was peering over his shoulder. "Steep," he read, "and very rotten." He was concerned, but knew that it was useless to argue. There was an Ordinary Route up this thing, but they had to traverse their mountains; it was part of The Creed.

The rest of the Faction was even more ignorant of the wrath to come than the Long One. The Beard was being versatile over the kitchen stove; the Blasphemer was dealing roughly with a primus that had been subject to poetic licence for a week; while its owner was dashing off a canto somewhere. The Red-Haired Lass was "combing it out" and gazing vacantly through the window; the Jeune Fille was bouncing up and down on a mattress.

Out on the moraine the Senior Mountaineer had shut his book, for the sun was going down, and for all men it was the time, if not for prayer, for at least a stocktaking of the soul. You know the sort of evening; the splashes of tired sunlight, a darkening mountain, a stray zephyr in the hair. It had that heart-searching quality that gets down into a man's inner consciousness and stirs it up with a pole. He thought vaguely about Life and What Might Have Been, and after contemplating his own unprofitable existence took comfort, as all climbers do on these occasions, from the fact

he could not have everything; he had his mountains; he must take the consequences. Filled with a pleasant melancholy he pottered off to the hut to enjoy that most ancient symbol of equality and trust; he went in to eat with his friends.

It was the Beard who insisted upon an early start on the grounds that he was never happy after midnight; he wanted to get at it. The Senior Mountaineer nodded sympathetically (he was just never happy himself), set his alarm clock for 1.30 a.m., counted the blanketed bodies and slept like a child. When the alarm went off three hours later he woke up feeling about ninety and went out to Inspect The Weather. Finding it good, he lit the candles and the stove and sat down with his head in his hands to watch the water boil. All this was routine, it no longer excited him. The Beard, on the other hand, came down fully charged, wearing a headlight like the Moving Finger, and began to fill his rucksack full of the heaviest things. "Come and get it!" cried the Senior Mountaineer, concentrating hard on the breakfast. Tall and short, round and cadaverous, they trickled in, mingling with the shadows, the steaming tea, and the jingle of crampons. Conversation was not brilliant, for the pressure of night lay heavily upon them. They were indeed among the Great Essentials.

The longest-ever-to-be-recorded traverse of Les Bans began under a full moon and a blaze of stars. If ever a man should have felt that "strange warming of the heart" it was the Poet. Reared upon English rocks and Beudy Mwyd breakfasts, he had come to the Alps to justify his faith in The Mountain Way and Sibelius. But his heart did not warm. His mind was not inclined to measure life from death. There would be blue skies but no heavenly choirs. At 2.30 a.m. he was earthbound. He had sore feet and the backache; the divine spark was quenched. He was becoming, as the Blasphemer put it, "like one of us - a bit on the bleary side with a weakness for letting other people do the leading." You can never rouse the Blasphemer; he never weeps, he knows not why, but he had climbed many mountains; he had suffered for years.

When the Senior Mountaineer reached the ice he no longer felt tired. The Calm Before Action was upon him and he always enjoyed getting into harness. "The Tools of the Trade," he thought, happily pulling at a crampon strap; and looked round to see who he could organise. The Long One preceded the Blasphemer and the Poet in loose order up the ice. It was not necessary to rope up, but on a glacier the Senior Mountaineer had a tidy mind. "Let's have rhythm," he said, offering the Jeune Fille a rope's end. She accepted without comment; one cannot argue with destiny.

Les Bans (11 978 ft.) is not considered a high mountain, but makes up for it by having a hut at 6 000 feet and a bone-dry glacier at a back-breaking angle. The Senior Mountaineer was soon glowing with sweat and protective instinct, for the Jeune Fille was a first-timer. That is to say, she saw nothing irreverent in starting a zig when the Senior Mountaineer was majestically zagging. Nor was she surprised at his lack of irritation after hauling him to a standstill for a mutual pant and a chat. He was surprised;

a sure sign, he thought, of the advancing years; and immediately put on speed. They caught up the trio on the edge of the first crevasse, heard the Blasphemer remark prophetically that they had plenty of time, paused for a barley-sugar and passed over. It was getting light now and there was only one objective: the hut on the other side. The Beard, having corrected his crampon trouble, was coming up fast on the left. Increasing his stroke, the Senior Mountaineer entered the left branch of the glacier first, had no reason to feel suspicious, climbed in and out of the bergschrund and gained the rocks. "Good crampon practice", grinned the Beard, taking them off. The Spearhead said nothing. He could feel the heat of the sun now; the thing was getting serious.

At this stage of the offensive their timber was strong, their morale as high as one can expect in the Alps; but in the slow movement that followed, up the initial ridge covered in what appeared to be three inches of cinders, the "fate motif" was heard for the first time. When the smoke had cleared away the Senior Mountaineer and charge could be seen trundling unconcernedly up a lofty spur with the Faction licking its wounds underneath. "Steep," whispered the Long One in a minor key, "and very rotten," He was going to be right again. Down at Number 7 the Blasphemer's variations were of a more strident character. He never repressed himself among mountains. "Let it all come out," he would say cheerfully to a deeply-wounded friend back at the hut. The Poet, of course, reacted differently. He was struggling not only against falling bodies but also against those beastly self-assertive instincts which he knew were so unbecoming amongst mountains. Only the Red-Haired Lass remained inscrutable. She had found an Edelweiss; she was happy.

At the head of the spur was a horizontal band of snow, and above that a wide choice of rotting buttresses. "This is it," thought the Long One, suspiciously watching the other two leaders go into a huddle. "What's wrong with that?" cried the Beard, waving a hand at an obvious gully directly above him. "Too steep," replied the Senior Mountaineer, and traversed over to look for a depression he had seen from below. He found it sure enough, but with two hundred feet of the best barring the way. He decided to try it with the Jeune Fille. Would the Beard make his own decision? The Trio had already made theirs; they would wait and see which way was the easiest.

For the Senior Mountaineer and Jeune Fille the pitches were difficult, the animation suspended. They climbed a wall before it could fall down, backed up a crack without a "runner," and treading lightly worked out on to a rib which led to the depression. They were now a good two rope's-lengths off the deck; pulses returned to normal and they at once looked across to the gully. The Beard was already in it with the Red-Haired Lass pawing at its foot. The Trio (*ITALICS*) were sitting down smoking and enjoying the sun. (*END OF ITALICS.*)

What the Senior Mountaineer should have done was to hold on, count ten, and in a level voice tell his men that his route was rather difficult, really quite dangerous, would they please follow the Beard and they would all meet on the top, chaps! Monsieur A. Regnier would have endorsed the procedure and so, probably, would the four followers: not the Senior Mountaineer! Think of his trade motto - "Get up 'em and get off 'em" - and a struggle with the cosmos on the wrong end of the rope: add a hot sun, a thick sweater and perfect

acoustics; take away the self-control; and what have you got? The original trooper in person. In the painful silence that followed his broadside the Separation became complete.

Physically the progress of the vanguard up the depression was almost literally a walk in the sun. They sat down in turn, let the rope run through idling fingers, and stopped for "elevenses." Spiritually it was a funeral procession; for the Jeune Fille's blood was thicker than the Senior Mountaineer's. Five of her friends were on the other side of that tottering buttress and she was taking a pessimistic view. When the Senior Mountaineer broke the skyline he walked along the top and looked down the gully. He saw nothing. He shouted, and heard nothing. "Aren't we going to look for them?" said a small voice at his side. "No," he said, gazing into the middle distance. He could not, dare not, go down that rubbish. He looked at his alarm-clock gloomily; it was 11.30 a.m. They were late!

Half-an-hour went by as the Senior Mountaineer put the case; they were either coming up very slowly; hopelessly stuck; in full retreat; or dead. He decided to go on, and using his nylon as a drag-rope arrived on the summit an hour later. "And this," thought the Senior Mountaineer bitterly upon seeing nothing in his rear, "is what comes of belonging to the Romantic School!" As he Looked Down The Other Side he knew at once why Les Bans hadn't been climbed for weeks. The Ordinary Route lay on the North face; it was "plastered".

He could see where the Col was; he could see the Gendarme, but no way of reaching it. He looked for "lines"; they all ran the wrong way. He looked for a "weakness"; there wasn't one. In a flutter he looked down an evil-looking couloir and hastily searched for a buttress. "Down here," he said firmly to the Jeune Fille. An hour later they were back on the summit empty-handed. He looked back, not expecting to see anyone; he didn't see anyone and it was 1.30 p.m. "Of course, we could crampon down there," he said to the Jeune Fille, pointing down the couloir and half hoping she would refuse. "Yes, lets," she replied, evidently feeling more chirpy now that she was going downhill. He didn't feel chirpy. He had to go down last and he could feel the cold breath of a bivouac on the back of his neck.

His first axe-belay was a full six inches deep, with the Jeune Fille having trouble with an ice step. "I'll lower you down there if necessary," he called out obligingly. "Okay," she said, and promptly fell off. Acutely conscious that even crampons slip sometimes, he lowered her into a pile of soft snow, where she beamed happily and said "Thank you." "That's all right," he replied, feeling sick but trying to look as though he faced death every day. When he reached the step himself he decided that, though when in his early twenties he might have cut his way gloriously down it, the blood had since cooled and he now had responsibilities. He looked for another way and climbed delicately down the rocks on the far side.

While the Jeune Fille was again kicking cheerfully downhill the Senior Mountaineer was airing the most powerful of climbing instincts; looking for a running belay. He called this practice "keeping the party safe." After all, Shakespeare wrote his noblest work under pressure of a bailiff; he could do the same. He was not quite sure of the simile but it would do for the moment. On the side of the couloir a large boulder the size of a pillar-box lay dormant. A small hook accommodated a karabiner sling that practically walked out of his bosom. He could not put much weight on it - no. But the party would be safer - yes! The Jeune Fille let the slack out and they met with mutual relief; but they failed to flick the sling off. Regretfully they drew the line through and carried on, the Jeune Fille doing all the work, the Senior Mountaineer distributing his largesse of slings, lines, and bootlaces. They reached a place where the couloir met the glacier in a step so ferocious that the Senior Mountaineer decided not to bother with it. He urged the Jeune Fille down and out in long traversing lines, and when they reached the easy ridge that led to the Gendarme they knew that they were safe and began to talk naturally again. It was now early evening and the Senior Mountaineer's turn to take a pessimistic view. They discussed the situation. They would go down to the Col, wait for the moonlight, and then go back to the hut to see if the others had returned. Even as they spoke the Senior Mountaineer felt his ears waggle. He looked up. A figure passed the summit. It was the Faction!

* * * * *

Authorities differ as to the exact time the Beard led his party to the summit but there is no doubt that the sun was hull down and sinking fast. For the Poet the sunset was triumphant brass. He had been told that success meant nothing here; it was all wrong. He felt like a million dollars. The Red-Haired Lass, drooping slightly, had been told that in the Alps one got to the summit early in the morning. She began to put awkward questions to the Beard, who was hardly in the mood to answer them. The Long One gazing groggily at his watch had just completed fourteen privileged hours of leading with no hope of respite. To the Blasphemer it meant a night out - and that his chances of survival were slight.

Ever since the Separation it had seemed to the Blasphemer that the Beard and the Long One had got together the night before and decided to kill him. At No. 5 he was beginning to appreciate the feelings of a nucleus about to be split by a high-speed particle. "Only I was negatively charged," he moaned pitifully to the Poet, who was not the least bit sympathetic. That climber was reluctantly working himself up into a fighting mood. The gully had grown steeper. The Beard sent down a continuous trickle of stones onto the party and kept nagging the Red-Haired Lass to stop doing it. The Long One watched the soles of her feet and listened to her remarking that it wasn't very serious. Then the Beard got one away the size of a football. It bounced once, cannoned off the Blasphemer, removed half his ice-axe and left him to draw in his breath sharply from force of habit.

They had climbed for three hours from the hut to the gully, spending the next twelve hours in the gully and getting to know each other very well.

When the Beard topped the ridge at sun-down he saw two pairs of crampon tracks. "Been through early," he remarked grimly, and tore on to the summit, the Blasphemer bent double over half an ice-axe. They too looked down the other side; they too were baffled. "And where", said the Beard savagely, "are the instructions?" The instructions were 700 feet lower down, heading rapidly north for bed and blankets. Then the Beard saw the tracks; their tracks; they were like a devastated area. "Is this couloir in bad condition?" he screeched, "Yes!" came back faintly the voice of the Jeune Fille. "Stay the night on the summit!" yelled the Senior Mountaineer, trying to be helpful, and at the same time eyeing a large and protective-looking Gendarme five yards away from him. Whether or not the Beard heard them will never be known; but he was in a hurry. He drove in his axe, redeployed his troops, and urged them down the couloir.

Unknown to the Faction, the Pair Fortunate were preparing for their first unintentional bivouac. Searching for spare clothing, they discovered they were wearing it. They then found a rocky seat upholstered with snow, and put down the rope as a primary insulation and the Senior Mountaineer's "sawn-off" for further comfort. Then they removed soaking boots; pulled the dry part of their socks over their feet; plunged the result into well-ventilated rucksacks; and tied up the tops of the rucksacks. They were ready for the night.

Recollecting L'Affaire Bivouac in tranquillity, weighing so to speak the aesthetic pros against the geographical cons, the Senior Mountaineer decided somewhat bitterly that while at sea-level he might have done himself justice, at 11 000 feet the cons had it. They were alone - yes. There was undoubtedly a moon. But no chivalry, however deeply rooted in 14th Century prose, can survive the phenomenon of gooseflesh gathering at an air temperature of 45 degrees F, or the sight of a half-empty tin of corned beef not looking its best. They had a decor Tristan and Isolde would have been proud of; yet they spent the night punching each other in the back.

The scene higher up was of a less wistful character. The Blasphemer had gone down first as he had now lost the other half of his ice-axe. By the time he had reached the ice step it was twilight; by the time three other flagging nervous-systems had gone down it was dark and there was a traffic-jam in the pit below. At the top of the step the Beard swept the area with his headlight and discovered the karabiner sling. To five souls hungry for the horizontal it must have looked like the Holy Grail. They did not examine the "pillar-box" on which it was draped. Their only thought was that "they" had abseiled; "they" were safe. Get the rope out, chaps! The Blasphemer arranged the line, waded so to speak into midstream, and threw his weight on it.

It was the Blasphemer's rucksack that saved his life. He keeps that rucksack now (or what is left of it) and on the long winter evenings when the hut is blue with cigarette-smoke and the boys are shooting lines about the pitch they nearly fell off, he gets it out and shows it around and the stirring tale is told anew. The Blasphemer himself got off with a bruise.

Some time elapsed before the Red-Haired Lass realised that the black shape bounding down the couloir was not the Blasphemer but the "pillar-box". Unable to produce hysterics and with silence fairly buzzing round her, she observed faintly that they were all going to die. No one contradicted her. It was true, then - in her first season, too. She was sitting there, shrouded in an anorak and waiting for the last enemy, when she was hit in the eye. Shakespeare has a good one about not shooting the pianist when he is doing his best. The Beard had decided that the situation below needed his immediate personal attention. He was doing in the dark what the Senior Mountaineer had thought better of in daylight - cutting his way gloriously down. He was obviously doing his best, but the Red-Haired Lass did not see it that way. She would go to pieces; she would make a scene. In a rising soprano she asked him what he thought he was doing. The Beard was not in a position to make a statement. But the Blasphemer was, felt like it, and did. He had now got the snow out of his ears. He told her to shut up.

It needed all the Poet's new-found Kipling qualities to hold the berserk Beard when he arrived with dripping axe and a cry of "Down to the Gendarme!" In a quiet voice, the Poet explained (somewhat unnecessarily) that at two o'clock in the morning man's vitality was at its lowest ebb; that they must cut a ledge and stay there for the night; and that the Red-Haired Lass had had enough. (By now she had shut her eyes, on the Ostrich principle.) After all, he had not read his Froissart for nothing.

He cut his ledge wide and he cut it alone. The Long One, who had not read Froissart anyway, had been quietly sick after drinking cognac on an empty stomach; now, unbelayed, he was drawing windproof trousers over cramponed feet with one hand while he steadied himself with the other. The Blasphemer had just lost his gloves; he was also losing interest. The Beard was hanging on to half-a-dozen ropes, contemplating the shambles and wondering if all this was really happening to him. When the ledge was finished they sat on their packs, dug cramponed feet into holds, and sat there till dawn, chunks of frozen misery.

Down at the Gendarme, the Senior Mountaineer woke up for the nth time to tell the Jeune Fille that on no account must she go to sleep; and found that it was unnecessary. There was a light in the east; the shivering session was over. After a routine work-out they finished the corned beef, "got up," and peered at the cliff through red rims. When the sun rose the sky was clear. At eight o'clock heavy clouds gathered and it became colder. "They must have started by now," murmured the Senior Mountaineer despairingly, thinking of inquests and more bivouacs. At exactly 9.27 a.m. someone emerged from the now swirling mists and screamed at them. There would be no inquests, apparently. They had sat there for thirteen hours, but the next two were by far the longest. To watch the limping procession coming down, watch the shrinking visibility, and at the same time remain immobile, impassive and tactfully silent, was for the Senior Mountaineer the hardest pitch of all.

At about midday he could see the bloodshot of their eyes. He saw the stoop of the Long One, the white socks of the Blasphemer. He swallowed a lump or two and felt silly - for were they not his friends? Like St. Paul, they had fought the good fight; they had finished the course. What noble sentiments would now pass between them?

"Been cursing your name all night!" said the Blasphemer without heat (he had lost even that). After a thirty-foot interval the Poet appeared, sunk in a final abstraction; the spirit had taken over at last. Relieving him of a cigarette, the Senior Mountaineer rallied and looked hopefully up at the next arrival; but it was no use. The Long One is a man whose silences are indeed eloquent. A trussed-up bundle of scarves and windproofs was led by, shielded violently, and passed on lamenting. It had once been the Red-Haired Lass. The Beard, of course, brought up the rear. He carried his coils of office with more than his usual nonchalance. On his face was that look of impersonal satisfaction of a man who has given of his best and knows that his work has been good.

In their forty-first hour the proceedings drew mercifully to a close. There was a steady tempo of rain and a lively coda of thunder. If there was music in the storm, it was a Dead March, for the Senior Mountaineer was on his way into exile. There is always a tight rope for a Petulant Private; a discredited General gets the block. But they make these climbers of resilient stuff. He wrung out the legs of his trousers and brooded. After all, he had his mountains - were not these the consequences? The hotel came in sight and his revs picked up. They were his mountains! Others might keep them from him, might spoil them; he might be crippled, grow old, or lose his nerve. But the line of the mountain would still be there, and the noise of the torrent dashing among the stones. There would always be cold and great winds on the ridges. But there would also be the sweetness of relief, and the warmth of the sun would also be there waiting. Whatever happened, they would be his mountains still. And in the last analysis he would get his own back. "Pardoned in heaven" - that's what the man said - "the first by the throne."

A USEFUL WINDBREAK FOR BIVOUAC COOKING

RAY COLLEDGE

The strength of the wind during our Dent d'Herrens bivouac was such that the use of the Bluet gas stove would have been impossible without a windbreak. Details of our windbreak are as follows.

Take a roll of kitchen foil twelve inches wide and cut off a piece 5' 3" in length. Fold it once lengthways so that it is now double thickness and put in a half inch fold top and bottom to give it strength. All that remains to be done is to fold it concertina style from end to end so that it will stand round the stove. Otherwise fold it up for carrying.

The saving in fuel must be remarkable as even on the Dent d' Herrens the water boiled very quickly.

FOR SALE

- One pair R.D.'s - Size 6½/7 £3.00
- One camp toaster 15p

Apply to: - Chris Radcliffe,
21, Avondale Road,
CHESTERFIELD.

TEAM ALPHA NEWS

Chuck Hooley has recently received the following letters:

From the Glossop Mountain Rescue Team.

18th September.

Dear Chuck,

We have been informed that your Team Leader was fatally injured and a Team Member seriously injured in a recent tragic climbing accident.

The Members of the Glossop Mountain Rescue Team extend their deepest sympathy to your Team and the relatives concerned.

Yours Sincerely,
Staff. Fairhurst.
(Hon. Secretary)

From The Chief Constables Office,
Cheshire Constabulary.

26th November.

Dear Mr. Hooley,

My officers at Stalybidge have now submitted to me a full report of the circumstances surrounding the rescue of a group of Scouts from Manchester who were separated from the main party during an exercise on Longendale Moors.

I am informed that the Oread Mountain Rescue Team, of which you are Secretary, was called out with other units of the Peak District Mountain Rescue organisation, and I would like to thank you very sincerely for your help and support on that occasion. My officers speak most highly of the zeal and ability of all those who turned out in such adverse weather conditions, and they tell me that the expertise of the Rescue Teams was of the utmost value.

We are extremely grateful for all the able assistance and delighted that the boys were found and rescued.

Yours Sincerely,
H. Watson.
Chief Constable.

From The County Commissioner,
City of Manchester Scouts.

29th November.

Dear Mr. Hooley,

I am indebted to the Chief Sperintendant of the Cheshire County Police at Mottram for your name and address as the Secretary of the Oread Mountain Rescue Team.

On behalf of the County Scout Council and the Scouts of Manchester I would express grateful thanks for the part your team played in the recent search on the Pennine Moors for the Scouts of the 23rd Manchester (Birch) Group.

Will you please convey to all members of your team our appreciation for their efforts.

Yours Sincerely,
Norman F. Salisbury.
County Commissioner.

NEWS FROM ABROAD

ROGER KINGSHOTT, now living in Benoni, Transvaal, S.A., writes :-

"I have at last been out with MC of S.A., only two meets as yet, but their programme is on a fortnightly basis, so I hope to get out much more in the future. Initially, two points which surprised me about the club were the number of English and German immigrants who are members, and the fact that virtually no Afrikaans South African seem to be amongst the members.

My first meet was to the "local" crag, the Magaliesburg about 50 mls North of Johannesburg. This "minor" crag is about 40 mls long and up to 350 ft. high, rather like a massive gritstone escarpment. The rock is reasonably sound and similar to British limestone to climb on, but the rock itself is similar to quartz. The crag faces south, which means that it is always in the shade (quite a useful asset here in summer - we've just had the first two days of rain since my arrival in May). Climbs are graded A to G-, D equals V.Diff, E severe, F = VS, G = XS approx. Vegetation met with on the climbs is thorn bushes or cactii.

I have also been on a long weekend in the Drakensberg, to Mweni. This involved 40 mls drive along dirt roads, 10 mls drive along a rutted cart track and 4 mls across veld to a Bantu store where the cars were parked. Then came the interesting part of the expedition - a 12 mls "carry in", with a 40 to 50 lbs. sack, along native tracks and over two small passes to the "bivvy" site where we had a base for the weekend. Because of the climate no tents were taken - one just spread out ones sleeping bag on the ground near a camp fire (stoves are not used - just wood fires for cooking). Darkness occurs at 6.15pm, so people are up early in the morning to make full use of the available daylight - breakfasted and away by 8.00am next day. Climbed to the top of the escarpment (about 4,500 ft. of ascent) in 6 hrs. Still patches of snow and ice on top. Rock architecture fantastic, a bit like Stac Polly, but rock itself absolutely rotten (15 ft. slabs fell away whilst investigating on easy route to a bivvy cave) - a type of sandstone to look at - I was informed that it was Basalt. Maximum height reached was 10,200 ft. on the top. Plateau behind 'Bergs looked a bit like the Cairngorms. Descended by a gully and followed the only track back to camp, namely boulder hopping down the stream bed (too much vegetation elsewhere)."

It was during a short walk in the lower British hills, that interest in The Steel Tree Game, and the wish to investigate it further came to my mind, stimulated, no doubt by the sight of the inevitable march of transmission towers across the semi-wild landscape.

"Electricity is basic to the whole existence of this country in the 20th century, and therefore to the preservation of any amenities at all."

Lord Holford 1968.

"Energy, and energy distribution are as firmly part of our contemporary way of life as, say, telecommunications and air transport; indeed it is fundamental to their very existence. Each of them has however developed as a 'system', and each generates problems on its boundaries - where the 'system' meets its environment."

Dr. A.D. Hall 1966.

The various public enquiries which accompany any and every extension to the Grid 'system' demonstrate the laudible and increasing concern which the population are beginning to attach to both the rural and urban landscape. The reactions of the two sides fall into stereo-types; on the one side the 'system' must be accepted with its existing hardware, versus, on the other side, the environment must not be changed by the 'system'.

It is worth considering the comprehensive specialised definitions offered by Van Nostrand in "A Methodology of Systems Engineering."

The System. A set of objects with relationships between the objects and their attributes."

The Environment. The set of objects outside the system, a change in whose attributes affects the system, and whose attributes are changed by the behaviour of the system."

The airport, with its noise and pollution problems is a familiar example of the environment changed by the behaviour of the system; the high tension line with its supporting juggernauts is another. The onus is firmly on the system to adapt when and where it can. I would like to suggest that the controversy over system versus environment could gain from a fresh appraisal of the system environment relationship, by

admitting openly the scope for two-way interaction. What is unchangeable about the system, what exactly is unacceptable in the TOTAL environment?

I do not suggest for a moment that the environment should surrender. Diversion or undergrounding must still be the only acceptable solution in cases where the erection of a branch of the system will materially affect the character or environmental content of an area or position. In cases where the environment must necessarily admit the system, I contend that it can and should be flexible enough to reach a greater level of acceptance.

Let us therefore examine that part of the Grid System that most affects the environment - the transmission tower and the aerial conductor. The basic premise is that an efficient and economical way of transporting electrical energy is by metal cable, suspended in mid air with only localised supports. The practicalities of insulation, heat dissipation and conductor-metallurgy support this. Each cable must be maintained within limits of position such that it is not near any earthed object (about 30 feet for 400kV), nor too near any other cable (sometimes only 20 feet, depending on the support of the other cable). Apart from the static effects due to the cables own weight, the "envelope" of the cable (which determines the position of the supports), is determined by the dynamic effects of the wind and of icing. Icing is not directly proportional to the severity of the climatic zone; indeed, in some areas of France, allowance is made for 8 lbs. of ice per foot run of cable, whereas in Finland about $1\frac{3}{4}$ lbs. is sufficient. Again, icing is not a static problem, for the formation of an ice sheath around a conductor reduces the heat dissipation, causing the core temperature to rise and the ice to suddenly drop off, imparting erratic vertical sway to the cable.

Wind causes vibration and lateral swing to the cables. Swing is fairly predictable and likely to be synchronised for a set of cables in a given location, so that in general the cables do not have to be separated by distances of double the swing; indeed in one case, French cables spanning a mountain gorge have a sag of about 1,300 ft., and the distance between the cables was increased to only 35-40 ft. No cross shorting has been observed.

Conductor materials govern the distances between supports. European spans lie between France at 1,600 ft. and Finland at 1,000 ft., with Great Britain at 1,200 ft.

Due to the advantages of 3 phase electrical generation cables are used in multiples of 3, with one or two earth wires as lightning deflectors. The arrangement of the conductors is

largely a matter of choice, and it is in this field that I feel that improvements can be made in this country. In most continental countries, the conductors are set out in horizontal arrays (see diagram 2), factors relevant to this decision being experience with greater icing problems, and the availability of wider easements which to some extent is traditional. In England, vertical arrangements seem to be preferred, presumably due to the lesser incidence of icing and more general restrictions on easements.

On the continent it is considered more economical to put up the circuits as and when they are required. In England the opposite view is taken and calculations are produced to show the advantages of establishing the full capability of two 3-phase circuits even if one is only initially required.

These factors, about which there is considerable choice of approach, influence more than any other individual pylon design thus when chosen parameters are similar, engineers can produce different solutions each being a more or less elegant answer to the problems posed. Safety margins adopted in the different areas of Europe also fundamentally affect the finished pylon. At one end of the scale, the British pylons are independent, like so many little Eiffel towers, whilst at the other end of the scale, the Finnish guyed portico types rely to a great extent on the strength of the conductors themselves.

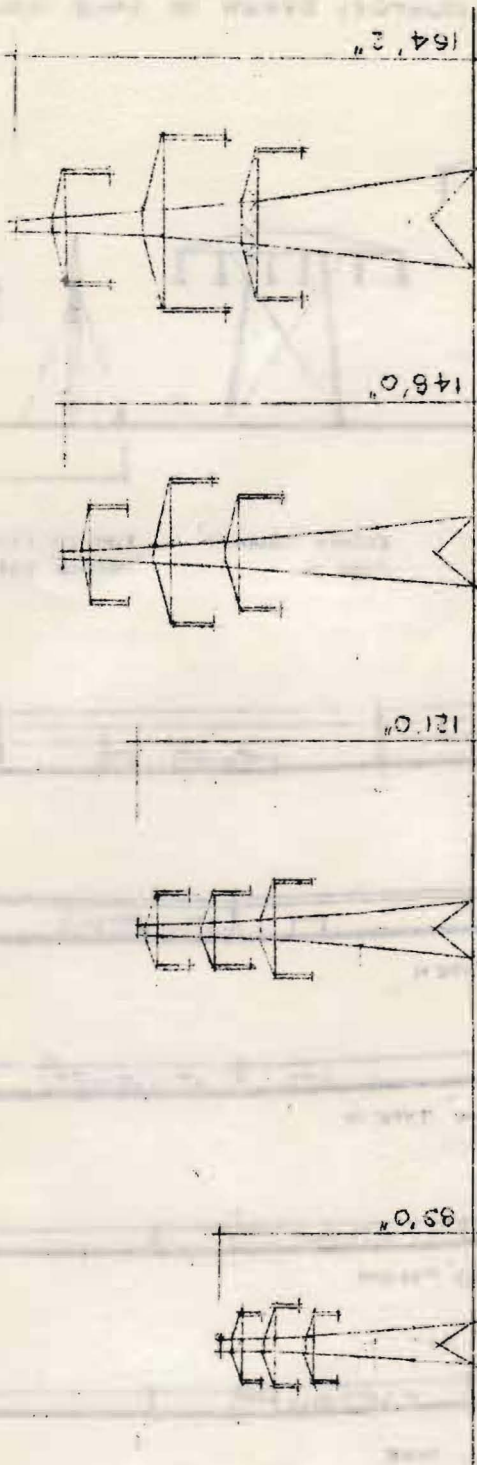
Where does the illustrated study of a few selected pylons and cable arrays lead us? I have tried to show that the FORM of a pylon has nothing inevitable about it. Undoubtedly some of the arrangements have a different impact upon the environment than others; is it possible that these arrangements would in a great number of cases be more acceptable in a given environment? The CEGB have a long term programme of pylon design involving geodesics and tetrahedral geometry, but how wide are their terms of reference? In the meantime the standard pylons are being erected, with a few notable trial stretches, particularly in the Humber area and Yorkshire Wolds, to the general detriment to the environment. Whilst the claims of continuing standardisation as a factor is economy are very real, a threshold is soon reached at which production economies are already attained, and diversification is not accompanied by significantly escalating cost.

A more flexible approach in just such a situation as it exists today could save an awful lot of English, Welsh and Scottish countryside.

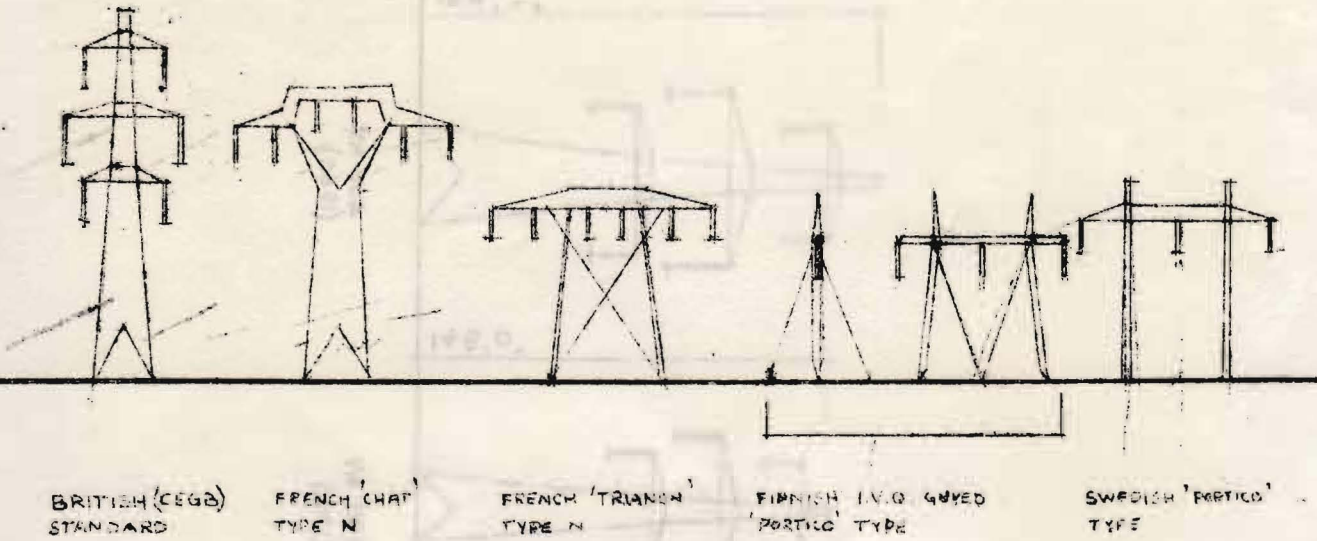
Sources :- Central Electricity Generating Board, Council for the Preservation of Rural England, Colin Davidson "Pylons", A.D. Hall various papers, Van Nostrand "A Methodology of Systems Engineering" and Electricite Distribution Francaise.

My Eyes!

RANGE OF RECENT CEGB PYLONS TO SAME SCALE -



PYLONS FROM DIFFERENT COUNTRIES DRAWN TO SAME SCALE -



BRITISH CEGB PYLON



FRENCH E.D.F. PYLON 'CHAT' TYPE N



FRENCH E.D.F. PYLON 'TRIANG' TYPE N



FINNISH I.V.O. GUYED 'PORTICO' PYLON



FINNISH AND SWEDISH 'PORTICO' TYPE

PYLONS FROM DIFFERENT COUNTRIES TO SAME SCALE AND AT STANDARD SPACINGS IN OPEN COUNTRY.

November 19th/21st was the joint MAM/Oread meet, but unfortunately no MAM members turned up except, of course, Colledge, Ashcroft and Handley, who are joint members anyway. The meet started unfavourably when in the Wilmot, Handley sidled up to the meet leader (Colledge) as if to sell him dirty postcards and hissed "What are you doing this weekend, I am thinking of going to the hut". His name was patiently added to the meet list.

On Saturday T.Green, D.Guyler and Marjorie Graham attempted Snowdon only to be driven back by the weather. The remainder including D.Burgess, D.Cowen, P.Bingham, J.Ashcroft, G. and J. Reynolds, K. and D. Hodge and R.Colledge decided to go to Cwm Pennant, returning via Cwm Silin and a possible rock climb. R.Handley went bird watching.

The walk through the snow sprinkled forest was pleasant, as was the meander down through old mine workings to the floor of Cwm Pennant. Here the trap was laid - the decision was taken to continue down the valley, instead of retreating nearer home in the face of threatening clouds. When it finally rained we sought shelter in a cosy barn whilst we ate lunch. Don, Ken and Doreen were perched high up on hay bales like barn owls and as we listened to their conversation we heard Doreen say she could see something long and thin with a tuft on the end. Hearing this Burgess warned Cowan to be careful.

Having eaten and rested, we found the rain had stopped. Wiser heads hinted at a retreat back the way we had come, but to no avail, for with the apparent improvement in the weather we found ourselves heading uphill towards Cwm Silin. The trap had closed.

All went well for a while as we headed into the mist. Even when the wind driven rain arrived it was at our backs and not immediately wetting. By the time we fully appreciated our position, as the rain intensified, we were well up and retreat impracticable. Furious at being led into such a trap, the leader, who doesn't like wet clothes on a Saturday, rounded on Burgess and gave him a few chosen words in a manner he normally associates with Handley. Doreen Hodge, who doesn't like wet clothes anytime, just mildly objected.

The last few hundred feet were difficult as we fought to stay on our feet on snow covered boulders. On the summit at last, we struggled along towards Y Garn and Rhyd Ddu in blinding driven sleet and snow, but at the first saddle, the

intensity of the wind was such that we thought it wiser to allow ourselves to be blown down towards the Nantlle valley, slipping and sliding on the slush covered grass. It was a long squelchy march across the bogs with the rain increasing in intensity, and so through Tal-Y-Mignedd farm to the road. Everyone was impressed by the way Janet and Doreen never faltered or complained, but kept slogging away.

Once on the road we relaxed, but then a mini traveller stopped to offer three of us a lift. Janet and Doreen climbed in the back seats and the meet leader was immediately concerned for their safety, knowing that women should not accept lifts alone with strange men. He therefore volunteered to accompany them in the car. As we thanked the driver in Rhyd Ddu, Doreen drew his attention to the pools of water on the car seats and said she was sorry she had nothing dry with which to wipe them.

The remainder arrived about thirty minutes later and dived en masse into a hot bath. Next day we could report that the drying room is surprisingly efficient for drying masses of very wet clothing.

Ashcroft, Bingham, Cowan and Colledge walked up Snowdon on Sunday in gale force winds but surrounded by distant views and wild cloud scenes.

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NOTICE!NOTICE!NOTICE!

THE SOCIAL MENTIONED IN THE LAST
CIRCULAR TO TAKE PLACE ON 4TH JANUARY IS
NOW CANCELLED.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Sir,

Reference the Gungey, it is time the truth was revealed!!

In fact it was a large bag of wind which I subsequently sold to Tricouni who is, apparently, still using it.

P.W. Gardiner

Dear Paul,

I see from the July edition of the Newsletter that we now have reciprocal rights within huts belonging to the Mountain Club and the Climbers Club. Rule 7 sub-para (6) states that the Hut Sub-committee is responsible to the Committee for negotiations for reciprocal rights with other club huts. Rule 17 clarifies the position regarding alterations to the rules.

The Hut Sub-committee in the members interest (male and female) have always tried to obtain reciprocal rights with clubs whose facilities are equal or better than those of Tan-Yr-Wyddfa in an area away from the Oreads normal Welsh and Derbyshire activities.

I can only quote one discussion on this subject at a Hut Sub-committee meeting and only the Climbers Club Huts were mentioned. The Hut Sub-committee found no case for having reciprocal rights with the Climbers Club because of their (men only) rule in some of their huts and the matter was left in abeyance.

Would the committee please explain to the members and myself, who the person was who took these decisions over the Hut Sub-committee's head and how long has this been going on. Perhaps the faceless ones who are taking decisions outside the rules would be winkled out and the rod of power taken from their grasp. If the Hut Sub-committee are not required would the Committee care to administer the hut, working parties and all?

A copy of this letter has been passed to the Editor as well as the Secretary to prevent it becoming another remanent.

C. Hooley

Dear Sir,

In reply to C. Hooley's letter of the 5th August, addressed personally, copy to you, I do not see it as my function, nor is it my intention to state personal views on the subject of reciprocal rights. Rather it is preferable, in the interest of the Oread, to make an impartial statement of the facts, (although in this case my views do accord with the members of the committee).

Dealing with the various points raised :-

- 1) It is true that the hut sub-committee is responsible to the committee for the negotiation of reciprocal rights. The words 'responsible to' are the key here, and there can be no doubt that the committee must make the final decision which it did in this case after considering reasons for and against and taking into account the Hut Wardens report.
- 2) The committee could not understand the relevance of rule 17 in this context.
- 3) That the sub-committee have always tried to obtain reciprocal facilities equal to or better than our own is disputed. Wood cottage and Grandys Knowe are examples of huts the Oread has been pleased to use but which do not compare in standard with our accommodation.
- 4) The unanimous decision of the committee meeting of 12th July, re-affirmed on the 23rd August, was that the Oread had everything to gain by taking up reciprocal rights with the Climbers Club and the statement that the sub-committee could find no case for them is puzzling to say the least. Bosigran Count House is now available to us, providing accommodation in an area where we have previously had none. Ynws Ettws, whilst at present closed to women, straightaway gives the Oread a virtually private and idyllic camp site in the richest climbing area in North Wales - yet an area where accommodation for campers becomes increasingly difficult and therefore "matters cannot be left in abeyance" lest the opportunity be lost. It is not necessary here to catalogue the attractions further.
- 5) No one person has taken any decision over the sub-committee, neither have decisions been taken outside the constitution of the Club.

If the, so called, rod of power is to be removed then it must be taken from the whole committee since it has been unanimous in its decision to be outward looking and take up reciprocal arrangements in the interest of the Oread Mountaineering Club.

P.W. Gardiner

Dear Sir,

The editorial and letters in the March 1971 Newsletter prompt me to add further to your "useless statistics". I have no doubt they will be of general interest to members to browse or brood over during the long winter evenings.

	Founder Members	1959	1971
Male Membership	5	80	93
Female Membership	1	21	41
Total	6	101	134
Married Members	2	70	102

Are the trends ominous, favourable or exciting?
Where will it end? Do we want it to end?

To attempt an analysis of the ages and degrees of activity for 1959 as has been done for 1971 would obviously prove inaccurate but casting a glance through the respective years membership lists it can truthfully be said that the proportion of active - hard and moderately hard climbers is equally as high now as in 1959. I might add that the active female percentage has certainly increased. For the record I note 56 members have remained on the Club list since 1959 and 5 of the founder members are still listed.

As to the general gloom and despondency expressed in your editorial and the letters I cannot see the Club "doomed to obscurity in not too many years time". It must be agreed that a regular intake of the young is essential to the virility of the Club but the totally rational approach of the nucleus outlined by Trevor Bridges does not quite work out in practice. To take as an example, the great alpine routes in Rebuffat's 'Starlight and Storm'. In recent years the record of Oreads in this context is equal I'm sure to any club of similar nature. The age spread of the climbers is the significant point, 27 to 47 (at a guess). Admittedly the climbers involved have joined the Club by various routes but this only serves to reinforce the point. Might I be so bold as to suggest the 'faded heroes' image and 'withering on about passes' image is not yet on our doorstep. The reference to a club composed of faded heroes, a joke among more virile clubs of the day is rather a joke in itself. The most virile clubs of the day are notorious for only surviving the day. The A.C.G. have acknowledged this basic fact and deny club status.

In relation to Club administration, the present committee is now composed of approximately 45% members aged 30 and under. It may still be considered not sufficient and may be the pendulum could swing a little further. But surely a little maturity and experience is desirable in the Clubs administration? The answer to recruitment is difficult - it always has been - but no doubt the clubs new secretariat has ideas. Virility seems to be there. I believe that a ginger group is in evidence, something on which the Oread has flourished on in the past and will continue to flourish on in the future and it is refreshing to see the plea for a friendly welcome to novices. This certainly was an original ideal of the club and one which must be preserved.

Regarding the club and mountaineering in general. We know pace setters are needed in all spheres of life. If mountaineering were to follow the trends in other sports we could end up with transfer fees on the heads of star club performers and turnstiles to the crags. So much for the spirit of the hills. To the majority of Oread members mountaineering simply means what I think of as the ABC of Mountaineering: the adventure, beauty and contact experienced in mountains; to explore and enjoy in fellowship with others, activity on mountain, crag and hill safely within ones mental and physical capabilities. What more could one wish for in ones chosen recreation? If the Oread can maintain a group of active mountain lovers with this attitude it will not sink into obscurity. The earliest constitution of the club stated the object as Mountaineering Regardless. It was soon changed to Mountaineering in every aspect. A subtle difference but very significant.

It does occur to me, reverting to statistics, that your analysis of activity in your March editorial would provide a presentable normal distribution curve of activity. I think you would find at least 75% of the members would be in the 'out occasionally' to 'active hard' range. This I suggest is fully consistent with the clubs objects. As to the other 25% there are all kinds of aspects necessary to the well being of the club.

In conclusion more useless statistics on
Geographical distribution :-

	1949 (For the record)	1959	1971
Notts/Derby	6	69	86
North and Scotland	-	3	13
Sheffield Area	-	5	12
Birmingham Area	-	8	11
Cheshire	-	5	7
South	-	8	3
Abroad	-	3	2

A trend to the North. Where will it end?

Yours, a witterer,
Triple Hob.

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