

H. Clew
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THE CRAG MAG

WOLVERHAMPTON MOUNTAINEERING CLUB

JOURNAL

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Cover photographs Gordon Caine on the "Spider" Chee Dale.

CLUB NEWS

The snow came and went this year without much excitement. Even so some gully climbs were done in Wales, the Lakes and Scotland. Bad weather put a stop to most outings, and was predominant on routes which were done.

Now the white slippy stuffs gone everyone's been back on the hill burning the routes off. With quite a few new faces in the club it is hoped that the new members will be as keen as the old ones!*! With the memories of last summer's exploits in the Alps and Wales still lingering on our minds, some have taken up sensible activities like, Swimming, Skin-diving Hunting, and Cricket ! But the tigers will be reaping their performances and going all out for better things.

Notable Ascents so far:-

Central Trinity	<u>Malham Cove</u>
Left-hand Trinity	Central Wall Direct
Parsley Fern Gully	Super Direct
Yellow Stone Gully	Main Overhang
Little Gully (Pavey Ark)	
? Gully (Hellvellyn)	<u>Derbyshire</u>
? Gully (Great End)	The Spider
Grey Knotts Face (Gillercombe)	The Bat
(1st Winter)	Nemesis

Several members of the club have been making numerous first ascents at Llanymynech quarry.

A message from Llanberis, Tiger Mick now wishes to be known as Captain Marvell.

Dinner

Held for the first time at the hornless 'Royal Goat', and probably the last. Once again an excellent attendance with a fantastic meal, although some people went thirsty due to 'drinking up time'. Still next time will be different.

STOP PRESS: Big Overhang, (Fourth ascent) 18 hrs.
G.Caine, D.Cuthbertsone and Wink.

AN APPEAL

I am a new member of the Wolverhampton Mountaineering Club. When I started coming to the club, the first thing which struck me was that there are, in practice, two clubs. One is the regular Llanberis Clientele, a close knit body of good rock climbers, who climb regularly in the Pass, but are seldom seen on club meets.

The other is rather more nebulous, but is composed of walkers, walkers who sometimes climb, beginners, and retired boy scouts. This group are less devoted to climbing than the Llanberis group, many manage to get out only about once a month, but nevertheless, these are the only people who go on club meets.

Not only do these two groups of people never go into the hills together, they hardly seem even to talk to each other in the Pub!

Perhaps I am exaggerating, and I shouldn't be too critical of either group, this difference of interest is natural in so wide an activity as Mountaineering, and a certain amount of clique formation is inevitable in any club, but it shouldn't end there.

Perhaps the club is failing in it's purpose if people have to cater for their interests separately. The meets programme should provide something for everyone and bring the different factions together; but they are your meets and as club members you should support them. If there is nothing in the meets programme to interest you, then you must twist the meets secretary's arm about it. He can't read your minds to find out what you want!

Well, after less than a year with the club, I've been lumbered with the job of meets Sec. My predecessor Jim James took on the job with all his heart, but was too often foiled by lack of enthusiasm from members. I don't have any magic formula; all I can do is appeal to you for your interest and support.

But enough Philosophy, down to practicality. When it appears, the meets programme will show several changes from recent years.

In response to suggestions from several members, there will be more meets in the Lake District. As a major climbing centre within reach for weekends this seems to have been neglected by many in the past.

Also neglected is Scotland. There will be a meet in Whit, for a full week for those who can make it, in Skye. The Cuillin are the finest range of mountains in Britain, and also have some recent hard rock-climbing.

If there is enough interest, it may also be possible to arrange a snow and ice meet in Glencoe or Nevis at Easter (there is, anyway, a party going to the Glencoe area in February).

Of course, the official meets programme isn't all. If you can't make it to the meets, others can be arranged at short notice on other dates.

Four types spring to mind;

- (1) Llanberis Pass (Smiler tells me the 'Birdcage' isn't solely for use by its present devotees).
- (2) The Club hut Tyn-y-Ffordd in Mid-Wales, a place where you can avoid the crowds on Bank Holidays.
- (3) Camping meets can be arranged anywhere at a moments notice.
- (4) Single day and summer evening meets at the Roches, Pontesford, Kinver Edge, etc.

So, come on you armchair occasional climbers, leave your lawns to grow long at weekends and flee to the hills; come on you Llanberis first team regulars, try playing a few away matches for a change; come on you long distance fell-walkers, try a bit of rock-climbing as well; come on you fair weather summer only climbers, there's snow and ice as well in Winter.

* Come on also you founder members who are so seldom seen at all except for the Dinner and the A.G.M., Trevor Peck was still climbing when he was much older than you are.

Dave Wilkinson.

THE 60's SET

In the 1960's climbing techniques and aids have developed more rapidly than in any other decade. This has led in turn to an increase in harder routes. These routes were all the product of improved footwear, the development of 'cloggs', 'crackers' and pecks and climbers willing to go for the difficult lines rather than the obvious. This type of development took place all over England, Scotland and Wales and some climbs originally thought/possible 'went' very rapidly.

At the time is Yosemite Valley, U.S.A. the Americans improved existing equipment and began developing their own specialised gear - things such as Rurps, bongs and Skyhooks, enabled routes to be forced up the sheer often overhanging faces of the valley. These routes, of the highest free and artificial grades, have only had a few ascents to this day.

In the mid-60's the Americans hit the European climbing scene here, using Yosemite techniques they put up spectacular new routes, such as S. face of the Fon (July '63), Hidden Pillar of Freney (1963) and The Direct Route on the West face of the Petite Dru. The most noticeable achievement of these American specialists was the Harlin route on the Eiger. A route which took many weeks to complete and involved extremely high standards of free and artificial climbing at temperatures of -30 C. Harlin, expected to make an Alpine style ascent but this proved inadequate as the face was out of condition for long periods. Thus to protect the ascent ropes were fixed up most of the face and it was when one of these ropes broke Harlin was killed, nearing what was perhaps the greatest achievement of the decade.

Another great achievement is the second solo ascent of the Bonatti Pillar by Eric Jones. This ascent, along with solo ascents of the Gervassutti Pillar by Phillips and Jones, illustrates how popular this field of mountaineering is becoming. This trend towards fast solo ascents of big climbs is bound to increase in the next ten years - who knows someone may even solo Everest !

But what of the 70's what will, be the outstanding feature of the next ten years? Maybe Bonnington's Anglo-American teams attempt at the South Face of the Annapurna, one of the Himalayan giants. Or maybe the Japanese' attempt on the S.W. Face of Everest. Who knows!!

An Observer

I TOO WAS GRIPPED (part 1)

Way back in March, the ideas were only dreams, for I was the last person to think that I, a mere mortal, could follow the powerhouse express and smash the Alps! The express I'm on about is, of course, the Mighty Minks!

Still, I had a dream, and it came true, let me tell you about it!!

All packed and ready to go, that was me, one Friday night in July. So off I went to Wales, thinking that Minks and I would be in Chamonix by Monday. I found Pete as drunk as a lord in the smoky back room of the Padarn Lake. My excitement quickly dropped a notch as I slowly realised that to get drunk these days, you need a couple of quid at least! There goes some of his holiday cash, I thought, but he must have had a send off party with a few of the lads. No such luck.

"There must be some mistake" He said, offering me some of his Guinness, which I finished off in one gulp.

"I thought we weren't off till next weekend. I've got no ready cash"!

A week later, Pete's wallet full and mine half empty, we were off. We bought two 'singles' to Chamonix, which knocked us back thirteen quid a piece, and then boarded the train at Victoria, bound for the coast.

"IT'S OH SO NICE TO GO TRAVELLING"

We arrived at the Gare de Nore Station in Paris with a couple of hundred pounds between us, so realising what the metro might do to us, the first taxi we hailed dropped us off at the Gare de Lyon Station, there we caught the train to Chamonix. Pete had bought a bottle of Whisky on the boat, but could not touch it, as we had a bet with Jim O'Neil that the Whisky would be gone in two days and we'd be back in five! So all night we brewed coffee and tea, smoking fags and gazing out into the blackness as it rolled passed us. Everytime I got to sleep, he'd wake me and ask if I wanted a brew.

"Night passes quickly but tomorrow never comes"!

It was eight o'clock in the morning when Pete said, "hang on here while I take my sack and when I come back we'll both carry the kitchen sink". I thought this was unfair so as soon as he was out of the station, I nonchalantly flicked the kitchen sink over my shoulder and marched for the Biolay. TWANG, the straps on my rucksac had survived six-hundred miles and had snapped a mile from the Camp.

I decided to wait, and sure enough back came Pete, bringing the Sherpa, Eric Jones, who, fresh from exciting ascents in the Dollies and Lauterbrenrian, was delighted to see us.

Camp was established, and after chatting to Cliff, and The Kiwis, Murray and Grayham, the latter pair departed for the Bonhatti Pillar. The weather was glorious and had been, so it had been said, for a week. Up jumped Pete and said, "Pack sacks, Smiler, this weather too good to miss".

"Ours is not to reason why"

A little after dark (eleven o'clock) we stumbled onto the Rognon and set up the bivvy under the Dru. No signs of The Kiwis but we knew they were somewhere around. We woke at six and were in the bottom of the coulair by seven o'clock. There were two dots high up the coulair and we therefore shouted the normal foul abuse that mates shout to each other. We climbed together at astonishing speed and were somewhat taken aback when we breathlessly passed the blokes. There were some Spaniards off to do the West Face. It was a good job their English wasn't so hot.

Up the coulair we went, pausing only to belay in the narrowings. So far so good and with the coulair in good nick we traversed onto the foot of the Bonnatti Pillar at nine o'clock.

What a relief to escape from such an enclosed place.

"And Now the Winter of our Discontent

Made Summer"

Pete announced that he felt great and raring to go, so off he went, up cracks and steep slabs, corners and round overhangs. I found it tiring but at the end of each pitch Pete was quietly enjoying a fag (nearly 90 fags he got through on the Pillar - who says smoking is no good for you?)

We climbed all day up that fantastic piece of rock, without much incident, except for one where I found I had been climbing with the Gas cylinder turned on. On reaching round a corner I found Pete busily chatting to Grayham, with Murray only 100ft above. By now it was getting late and we had reached the so called 135 metre walls. So called because in fact they are nearly two hundred feet. We'd done great and had taken five hours off the Kiwis (they had set off at 2 o'clock and cut the steps we'd run up). It was time to bivvy. The weather perfect. So Murray abseiled back down to the ledge and we each prepared our little spots, not very roomy but sufficient.

As I dozed, I thought back, of the Powerhouse Minks, of those cracks, and of Eric, who, having once before been so close to being on this route with me, had wished us luck and a good climb, and he'd meant it.

"Land of the Shadow and haunted Spire
land of the Silvery Glacier Fire"

With the break of dawn, we were off again, our decision to stick together was more for fun and a laugh, than anything. Murray, Grayham, Pete and I, that was the order for the final battle against Bonnatti's Pillar. On we climbed up those walls without mishap, except when a wedge split on me and as the talons of Minks closed round the rope, my crash hat went clanking down into the depths (now you know where I got the name Tin-hat from).

As we neared the top, the pitches got stiffer, and wetter with the melting snow. An easy traverse round the top and the ropes were snaking downwards from the first abseil point. No handshakes or ceremonies, there would be enough time in the 'Nash' for that.

"Treasure of Dawn and a Crown of Stars
His who can shatter the frozen bars"

Abseil followed abseil, tedious work but now the col on the flames di Piere seemed very close. It was about half-past seven when we reached it and there wasn't much light left. Had we come so far to be crushed in the dark? Another bivvy but we didn't mind at all. Next morning at eleven o'clock we entered the Charpoua hut and had a quick brew. Then off to Chamonix. We were home at last.

Arriving at the Biolay, we found a delighted Eric and Cliff, who said that Mollyneux and Dickerson had set off for the Bonnatti not two hours ago and Eric was off at that moment. We now wished him luck, for if he succeeded, he would be the first man since Bonnatti's epic first ascent, to solo the Pillar.

Pete's boots had took a hammering so he had to get them repaired, and this took nearly four days. I had therefore time for a rest. The conditions were pretty grim for Eric in the Coulair and he had wisely turned back. With the gang together and Tiger Mick singing his heart out, we had a great couple of days.

So we thought that anything after the Bonnatti would be an anti climax but we were wrong.

The thrills, tragedy and excitement was yet to come !!

Part Two in next issue.

D.Cuthbertson

A REFLECTION OF A WEEK-END IN THE LAKES

Alan and I arrived at the previously arranged rendezvous at a farm, very late on a wet Friday night hoping to walk up the "Well worn path" to Ruthwaite lodge, situated halfway up Grise Dale Pass, but decided to bunk down in the back of the van as it was raining 'cats and dogs' outside. As we got nicely settled (throwing all the gear into the front seat³ and laying our sleeping bags in the back of the van) Hillary, Jane (Chatty) and Margaret Chittleborough arrived. Of course with the arrival of Hillary we were soon talked out of sleeping in the van when there was a well equipped hut waiting for us half a mile away. So off we all bet' to find the hut (except Margaret C. who was expecting her boyfriend arriving from Scotland around 5.30 a.m.) After about 3 hours of walking, crossing a river and climbing over 2 or 3 walls, we all decided we were lost, so the decision was we should just sit and wait for the dawn. By this time we were all soaked to the skin and the rain was seeping in our rucsacs wetting our dry clothes and sleeping bags.

When at last the sky cleared around 5.00 a.m. and it eventually stopped "pouring", we could see our position, we were half-way up a mountain on the other side of the valley to the hut!! Wearily we plodded to the refuge and found some lovely comfortable bunks. After searching our rucsacs for some relatively dry clothes we crawled into our bags and had some hot soup made by Hillary, this went down well as we were all feeling rather chilled to say the least. Eventually, we started to feel comfortable and sleepy when Margaret C. and her boyfriend burst in full of life after having a good night's sleep in the car (of course she did not realise that we in fact had just ourselves walked in after "wandering in the wilderness" all night).

We rose at the crack of noon Saturday not feeling too good, except Hillary who went for a walk and to find a nice cold lake for a swim. Alan and myself were even too tired to walk back to the pub Saturday night! Chatty went to the pub around 10.0 p.m. intending to meet her boyfriend Tony, coming down from Glasgow. She had another long wait ahead of her as she didn't know that he had had a break down on the way and he eventually arrived around 3.00 a.m.

Sunday dawned a promising day. But still more happenings were in store for us, as we collected our climbing gear together a request was made by a young fellow outside the hut to help with a rescue as his friend had broken his ankle on some scree coming off Dollywagon Pike. The rescue team in the valley was alerted and we all helped in one way or

another with the operation of carrying the injured lad on a stretcher down the mountain.

As we drove back to Wolverhampton Sunday evening, I think there was one thought on each of our minds, that we had none of us done anything at all that we had set out to do originally.

B.Phillips

SNOW FEAVER

Winter is coming and we're off to Langdale. "Where's all the snow, then?" says Smiler as we drive through the rain. We soon found out the next day, as we floundered around in it up to our waists, cold and wet, and I caught a cold.

Down to Wales next week-end "Where's all the snow then?" - all gone, or nearly all, or never fell here. After a careful search we managed to find enough snow in the gullies to wet but not to satisfy our appetites.

So its up to the Lakes again next week-end. "Where's all the snow this week-end then?" We roar as we drive up the motorway, minute flakes in the air, ice on the ground and the temperature well below freezing. The whole district is plastered with snow, and it's frozen hard, early start, up to the east side of Helvellyn, and crampons on and up our gully. Snow in superb condition (in November!) an easy pitch more cramponing, and a steep exit onto the summit ridge, then a ridge walk to finish the day. Next day another gully, even better, 1,000 ft. of cramponing and a piton found where someone had retreated the previous day. But coming down in the afternoon it's already thawing in the valley, too great to last.

Next week-end it's almost completely thawed away in Wastdale, winter is over and spring has come, and it's only just into December.

Still winter may return again, and as I look out of my window I see it's snowing again and it's still before Christmas. It's going to be a long hard winter get the axes and crampons sharpened, we may not have the Alps to climb in every week-end, but in Winter we're no worse off for that. The crags are cold and cheerless, so off to the gullies where there's snow.

Dave Wilkinson

MALHAM COVE

We arrived at Malham one Saturday dinnertime, where we intended to do some of these Big Limestone routes. After a quick pint we got our gear out of the van and started to trogg across the fields to the foot of the cove.

By this time it was 3 o'clock so we knew it would have to be a quick route if any. There was a party on the Super Direct so we decided to do Malham Main which took the largest roof in the cove, about 30ft. Wink led off up a line of bolts until he came to a stance 10ft below the roof. Belaying on a couple on monkey bolts, he brought me up. Above, water dripped in an endless stream from a black mossy crack. This and the time factor soon got me cracking and I was out over the void with as clean a drop for 200 ft as you would get anywhere. I was soon out of sight from Wink and on the usual thin bit near the top, then the belay. Bringing Wink up I noticed Smiler at the foot of the crag, seems like he was making sure we didn't do the Super Direct without him. That's another epic.

CONGA.

THE FIRST NORTH FACE

After several weeks of travelling across France and Italy, either by train or hitching. Wink and I finally met as arranged in Cortina which for those who don't know, is situated in the Dolomites. He had already met Clive and Dave, with whom he had intended to travel back to Chamonix, as I had arrived several days late. After too much sun and several days without decent food I immediately gorged on a large stew followed by several bottles of Vino. Thus, explaining why the following day was spent sitting in the shade munching ant-diarrhea pills.

Wink had already attempted a route in the Dollies. The Comici route on the N. Face of the Cime Grande. Fed up with waiting he had gone to the Lavaredo hut with Clive and Dave. There he met a drunken paddy who happened to want a leader for his attempt at the Comici route. Wink, seeking fame and fortune without his mates, volunteered. The attempt looked as if it might succeed until Wink produced his trump card. It started to get dark. There the attempt ended and the pair roped off to the comforts of the hut.

We decided to try the route again as it should be easier the second time around. We packed sufficient food for one week, leaving the remainder of our six weeks supply with Clive. It was late afternoon before we were ready to leave. I was fortunate as I got a lift straight to the Tre Cime. Wink was less fortunate as he had to walk most of the way, not arriving until the following morning. We pitched the tent and cooked a good meal. It was now midday and as we were camped below the Cime Piccolo we could not help but be fascinated by the fly like movement of a party climbing the Yellow Edge. We then decided to do a short route called the Punta di Lrida S face. We packed a sack and set off in haste. We completed the route and was back down for five. We cooked, re-packed the sacks, and was in bed for nine intent on waking at four to attempt the Comici Route.

We were awake by the sound of voices at about 5.30 a.m. We already knew that several other parties, including four English lads, had intended to attempt the climb that day. We prepared a rush breakfast and after a brisk walk was at the bottom of the climb. Here we met two of the English lads. They had decided not to attempt the climb as there were already two German teams climbing. One of them was about four or five pitches up and moving very fast, whilst the others were stuck, about $1\frac{1}{2}$ pitches up' in a tanglement of ropes' pegs, etriers and cow tails. This did not dismay us and after a quick sorting of the gear, we were ready to start.

Two Frenchmen then appeared with very little equipment, several crabs and a rope. They immediately enquired if we were fast climbers, to which Wink retorted that they'd never catch us.

Wink decided to lead out, not only because he knew the route but also as he can't climb with a sack. The first pitch or two consists of fairly easy free climbing. This is followed by a leftwards traverse which is well supplied with pegs. It was here that the Germans were stuck. The leader had gone up, but the second was having great difficulty using only one etrier. Wink climbed over both of them without use of etriars. It was at this point that they roped off. I struggled along behind cursing Wink, sack and all..... foriegners. The Frenchmen followed us closely, rarely more than two moves behind. The leader's English was somewhat limited, all he could manage was, Bonnatti Pillar (and then pointing at his boots) Sassoire (the make of his boots which were the same as Winks).

Their technique was perfect for the climb. All of the pegs were in, so they did not carry any. They used etriers only once and where there was any great difficulty relied on tension from one another. Pitch after pitch Wink led out up the never ending wall. Always vertical or overhanging, pulling up on pegs, good sharp holds perfect for the boots. Etriers often in use to save time and energy both of which were limited. The belays, always small ledges, often no more than a foothold and a peg in the wall, from which we hung like spiders over the screes below, but always the wall swept up and around us, 800 - 1000 ft. of vertical rock without a break. Stones whistled past falling a long way clear of the bottom of the cliff.

The time flew past, the Frenchmen encouraged us to hurry as time passed. As pitch succeeded pitch I could feel my arms beginning to ache. Often stepping from etrier to rock I wouldn't be able to reach back for the etrier. Then the sack would have to be fastened to the peg above and I'd then be able to recover the etrier. Once more the Frenchmen were right behind us somewhat worried by the time. Then another delay as Winks etriers and fifi-hooks became tangled in slings and rope. Resulting in frayed tempers and the cutting of the cords from Wink's etriers to his harness.

The Frenchmen continued to press and after several delays decided to climb past us with only a 50 ft. pitch of the vertical section remaining. I was a pitch below Wink when the leader climbed passed me. Wink complained as the Frenchman used his crabs in the situated pegs. In broken French we warned him that Wink had placed a peg loosely in a

hole and that he should avoid pulling out on it. This he did. Then his second came up and without realising pulled out on the peg. For a few minutes we relaxed laughing at the Frenchman as he swung on the rope, screaming for tension and scratching at the rock. In all we lost nearly an hour as we sat waiting for the Frenchmen to climb past us. We climbed the remaining 50 ft, to arrive at last on a terrace some 10-20 ft. wide. Here we had a short rest and a drink

There was about 4 hours of daylight left in which to do 800-1000ft of S.V.S. climbing through chimneys and grooves. We had a choice of lines to take either, straight up and then a 100 ft. traverse to the centre of the face, and then up again to the summit, or, to continue straight up through wet chimneys to the summit ridge. The Frenchmen had continued and we could see them moving along the traverse. As prearranged

I led out leaving the sack for Wink to bring up. I enjoyed the new freedom without the sack, especially when Wink struggled up to the belays.

We climbed several pitches passing several wide ledges which would have comfortable bivvys. Up we climbed through the cold, wet chimneys never a thought for a bivvy, except on the summit. The sun had by now gone down as we climbed into a wet cave, formed by the chimney and a large roof about 18-20 ft. wide. I led out, through the top of the cave and onto the slab above the roof. A few moves up the slab then back into the corner. Wink was now directly below me. I reached for a large jug, so obvious I immediately tested it. It seemed good so I pulled across on it. Inevitably it came off leaving me swinging on a runner placed only a few feet away. I still had the large jug in my hand. It was about 18 inches across and weighed a fair few pounds. I warned Wink and attempted to throw it clear, instead of flying outwards it twisted from my hand and dropped into the cave, narrowly missing Wink but cutting the rope in two far better than a razor blade. Fortunately, we were climbing on a double rope, but in the fading light it was impossible to see if the other roped had been damaged.

It was now obvious that we should have to bivvy. Wink climbed cautiously up to me and onto a ledge about 5 ft long and 8" x 10" wide. After placing several pegs we tied ourselves securely on and sat down. With our feet dangling we hung on the rope for support, as we sat in the puddles of water which ran down the rocks behind us. We pulled our wet duvets and anoraks on over the already wet, shirts and jumpers. In the situation we couldn't undo the roped and re-fasten them over our duvets, we had instead to roll our duvets up to our harness. There we sat for

the night. Water had seeped into the torch, shorting the battery, therefore we had no light. In the gathering darkness we shared a tin of sardines, a bread roll and a mouthfull of lemon juice. Somehow most of the lemon juice had managed to leak away being absorbed by the duvets whilst they were in the sack. As the hours passed, sleep was impossible Wink tried in vain to roll a cigarette whilst I munched on a bar of Horlicks chocolate. We talked for hours, breaking off now and then to massage our legs and feet as the night wore on. We wondered if the face might freeze up as it so often does.

At last it was light enough to climb. After approximately 8 hours on the bivvy I led out up the groove returning after a few moves with numbed hands and shivering body. Wink decided to have a go (anything to avoid carrying the sack). He led onto the next belay where I led through onto another wide terrace from where we could see the summit some 70-100 ft above. We climbed the last of the chimneys leaving only a scramble through some chimneys onto the summit and the welcomed sunshine.

We sat in the sun stripping off wet clothes as several parties of truggers passed us. One of them kicked a rock down which hit Wink in the middle of the back providing a perfect excuse for me to carry the sack down the never ending decent gullies. At last an open scree ran and we dropped down to the path and the luxury oh the tent.

Bunce.

OVER THE RHINOGS

An excellent expedition, if you want something different, is to traverse the Rhinogs from end to end. Mike Hill and I set off from Tyn-y-ffordd to do this at the beginning of September. David Brierley had kindly agreed, or was coaxed, into taking us from our car, parked near Trawsfynydd, to Cym Mynach, north of Penmeanpool. We climbed Diffwys together by a broken, typically Rhinog, hillside, but the top and the ridge to Y Lethr was grassy.

A steep grass slope leads down to Llyn Hywel, a deep black lake on a desolate rocky pass, where David and his friend left us - alas, we could not spare the time for a swim. Then up a path to Rhinog Fach and down to Bwlch Drws Ardudwy. Here I think that we took an ill-advised route, scrambling up much wet vegetation and over boulders to Rhinog Fawr (2362 feet). It was a heavy, thirsty afternoon, and spirits flagged as we went up. But much of the Rhinogs is like this with vegetated rocky little lumps and hollows strewn with boulders. The other side, where we descended to the next pass, was the same, steep with boggy ledges, leading to slimy rocky bluffs. It is the sort of place where you hopefully pick your way, sometimes dropping over a ledge, sometimes traversing around for a safer way off.

At last we reached Bwlch Tyddiad above the Roman Steps and set off over the little hills to the north. Our objective was the last 2,000 footer, Moel Ysgyfarnogod, but it was tedious going, up and down, back and forth round little crags, now on the path, now on the heather, to Llyn Pryfed, a charming little lake between two craggy hills. Here we stopped for a rest and a swim - cold and clean in the last of the evening sunshine. We doubted whether we would make it before dark, and it was decided that we would have to call it a day and leave out the last ridges, over Clip and Craig Ddrwg - I like the names of the Rhinogs. So we made straight down to the stream that runs to the east. It was dark and lonely there and we hopefully set off by the compass to find the track to the north, that should have led to the car.

I am not clear where we went, but we wandered for some hours, to and fro and around a forest, before we found the road. Perhaps it served us right for leaving the car at the end of a metalled road, and for thinking that we could hit this point exactly as we came off the mountain. Anyway, it was midnight when Mike pushed the reluctant car into action, and it was the early hours before two well-satisfied members returned to the cottage. Perhaps we will try again to do the whole ridge next summer - from north to south next time.

December 1969

Hilary Clark

SOME USELESS FACTS ABOUT MOUNTAINS

Mountains are "Islands in the Sky", accessible to some but remote to most people. Hordes of day trippers and coach parties tour the mountain ranges of Britain but few realise what happens above 1,000 ft for that is where a mountain begins.

Those mountains above 1,000 ft are too numerous to mention. Only the giants can be easily identified:-

575 exceed 3,000 ft. (547 in Scotland)

12 exceed 4,000 ft. (All in Scotland)

14 peaks in Wales exceed 3,000 ft. and all come within the county of Caernarvon.

7 English peaks exceed 3,000 ft. the highest being Scafell Pike 3,210 ft in the lake District.

The Lake District boasts 96 peaks all above 2,000 ft. Wales also has high peaks outside Caernarvonshire Cader Idris 2,927 ft. and Aran Fawddwy 2,970 ft. form magnificent mountain ranges. The Black Mountains and Brecon Beacon in South Wales also form ramparts to the sky.

The backbone of England has its share of High Peaks. Kinder Scout 2,088 ft., Whernside 2,419 ft., The Cheviot 2,676 ft., Cross Fell 2,930 ft.

Shropshire boasts six peaks above 1,000 ft., Brown Clee, Titteretone Clee, Stiperstones, Long Mynd, Caer Caradoc, and The Wrekin.

Mountain Races have increased in popularity since the war. The Welsh 3,000's, 25 miles, 9,000 ft. of climbing in under 6 hours, The Lyke Wake Walk in Yorkshire, the peaks of South Wales and the traverse of the Lakeland peaks above 3,000 ft.

People seem to regard Britain as a country with few mountains but if one travels eastwards from the summit of Scafell Pike there is no land above 3,000 ft. until you reach the Pamirs in Afghanistan.

On a Summer's day a mountain can look harmless but conditions in Winter above 3,000 ft. in Scotland are Arctic, far worse than conditions in the European Alps.

John Lyons

PONTESFORD

I have been asked many times about my early days at Pontesford which got a mention in Walt Unsworth's guide to this outcrop so here it is by request.

In 1947 at the age of 20 when demobilisation threw me into the maelstrom of civilian life the first few months were taken up with finding some way of earning a living, learning to live with my family again and somehow finding friends, all this may sound easy but when I tell you that six months later I was on the verge of grabbing a civvy post in the Far East you may understand.

Part of my own repatriation treatment was to get back to climbing again and 10 days in the Lakes with one of my service mates Brian got the senses all tuned up and in gear but Brian was not a convert and naturally opted out of further vertical gymnastics so my searches for new mates started, during which someone mentioned the word Pontesford and soon I was finding this on the map and working out how to get there.

This was in the post war days of no private motoring due to petrol rationing so the main problem was getting there, fortunately the old G.W.R. (now B.R.) ran excursion trains on Sundays to Shrewsbury, and the bus left there for Pontesbury every hour. So having decided this was the only way the next Sunday was taken up with trying the transport arrangements and at least having a look around. Having left Wolverhampton at 10.00 a.m. my arrival at Pontesford at 1.00 p.m. made me stop and think again, 3 hours and maybe another 3 hours back, the return train left Shrewsbury at 6.50 p.m. so there was no time to waste, so up the track to the rocks, my first impression when the rocks came into view was "hell how green and slimy they look" so I made some attempt to get a full face view which proved almost impossible because of the trees so on up to the face itself and a close up yes it was green and slimy with an extensive 5 o'clock shadow of lichen on the Oak Tree Wall and Oak trees growing from the face at unlikely angles. being young and impetuous I spent the next couple of hours soloing likely looking lines, but when it was time to leave to catch the bus I left willingly and a bit depressed.

My return to Wolverhampton and the daily grind must have been depressing because my thoughts continually returned to Pontesford and the thought that I could at least get some climbing at a weekend whilst looking forward to the main holiday in Wales or the Lakes so the following Sunday I was there again soloing my own routes and cleaning them out

at the same time, having to drag myself away for the bus running down the track in an extremely filthy state.

At about this time I was put in touch with Denis Grosvenor who listened to my chat about Pontesford and he suggested that he might have a guide to the cliff and if he could find it he'd let me have it. I must have put a lot of pressure on him for by the following weekend I'd got 3 or 4 copies of a line drawing complete with dotted lines and names this I believe was produced by the Birmingham University M.C. in about 1938, naturally I was bursting to get back to Pontesford and took the bull by the horns, raided the pantry and with a sack full of tent and billies paid the full weekend rail fare and committed myself to sorting out the mysteries of this strange piece of paper. Yes still solo, a state I was not particularly happy about but was certainly not going to let it stop me.

The weekend saw much frantic activity finding where the routes started and following them with as little deviation as possible, meant gardening and prying of loose rock. To this end I had collected a slaters pick which I had taken to work and improved on the grinder (alas this later got borrowed). My first assaults centred on the Oak Tree Wall and whilst climbing always trailing my rope behind me so that a speedy abseil would have me at the foot ready for the next battle but at times the ropes had me a bit worried in'case a boulder or tree root tangled with it and pulled me off, but apart from one or two uncontrolled slides off the first 10ft due to the "green slime" all went well and about seven routes could be recognised and followed at the end of the weekend.

The story continued like that for 6 months or so and during this period only twice can I remember any other visiting climber and they both turned up solo and wanting to know the way round, being by this time reasonably acquainted, I took a great delight in leading a few of what I considered my party pieces culminating in Varsity Buttress which was still far from clean but with a first pitch that can still grip me today.

This brings me to the memorable meeting with Wilf Hammond and what was known as the Tech Rambling Club. Wilf was the proud possessor of a rather speedy motorbike and in getting to know each other we made various forays to N.Wales and Derbyshire, and Pontesford was given a miss except when Wilf was tied up elsewhere, which thankfully wasn't often. Eventually National Service took Wilf off the scene but fortunately the formation of the W.M.C. was just around the corner and this brought quite a gang together and being elected

Meet Sec. or something similar tried to spread my own enthusiasm, and soon could get six Or seven members down to Pontesford and catching up on the gardening. It was on one of these meets that the late Norman Adams on Varsity put his fingers in two cracks to pull himself up and found that the 1/2 ton block only wanted that bit of assistance to leave the face, it did look for a moment as if Norman was hanging on for the ride but a bit of help from the rope changed his mind.

Other members to get infected with the Pontesford bug at about his time were Pete Guggenheim, Geoff Dunn, John Selby and Stan Wintrip. Day meets and weekends were cleaning the routes up even further and when Walt Unsworth and Roy Barlow came along bringing the boys from Wednesfield M.C. we could show the way up about 25 routes. The bug took hold of Walt and his boys and while we were exploring the delights of N.Wales they worked through all the routes and started on a string of new ones. Walt's photographic adventures during these ascents almost came to a sticky end one day when he fell from above the Nose on Varsity 90 ft. and landed in a Hawthorne Bush on the scree below. His injuries were quite severe and when I visited him in hospital to commiserate, found him still so wrapped up in Pontesford and getting back to climbing, that I was taken aback, and when I next saw him he was doing the article for Mountaincraft in which I made a very minor contribution. Well from there its really Walt's story, his excellent recovery and return to greater things, even his move to Manchester didn't stop his visits and the much needed guide book.

Well it's only a small cliff but it has given many of us hours of fun some of us our epics and very few fortunately a little pain. I suppose the story of other cliffs would be similar. Since the production of the guide book, I cannot remember visiting the cliff and finding at least 2 other climbers there, and at times it can be very busy, but at least I don't have to remove the loose rock and grass as I climb.

Chas.

THE LONELINESS

I am sure most of us have seen Eric Beard's impossible looking times for the Welsh 3,000's and the Cuillin ridge on the notice board at The Towers. Some of us have even tried them and really appreciated why they seem impossible, though I must say we've had some memorable days in the attempt. I wonder if you know of his attempt last year on the three highest peaks in Scotland, England and Wales. Nothing to it you say; well not if you have an estate car with a bed in the back driven by a budding Fangio and a cook to provide the necessary. It then becomes *no* more than a romp up three 'easy' mountains in a day. Eric however did the lot by himself on foot, covering 430 miles in 10 days.

With what can be only described as an inadequate training for such an attempt, he chose Sunday 18th May for the start. Setting off from the Glen Nevis Youth Hostel in climbing gear he went up the Ben in 1 ½ hours. The descent was made by glissading down an easy gulley 1,000 ft. to meet the tourist route at the Red Rurn. The time for descent was 1 hour. Lunch, then 21 miles before spending the first night in a climbing hut in Glencoe. On Monday he ran over the pass of Glencoe to Tarbet and on to loch Lomond a distance of 47 miles before camping the night on the Loch side.

On Tuesday 54 miles, Wednesday 49 miles and arriving at Beattoch with an ache in his left leg which had reduced him to a hobble. Thursday he covered 52 miles to Carlisle with traffic screaming by at 70 m.p.h. his biggest worry.

Friday was a better day, the Lakes being like the old friend, he made the Old Dungeon Ghyll via Scafell and tasted luxury for the first time by staying at the O.P.G. Saturday was a rest day and who could blame him at the O.P.G. The weather had turned foul but he still managed 26 miles before nightfall. Wishing to make up a little of the time lost on the previous day he walked and trotted 53 miles to Chorley with his right leg giving him trouble. On Monday he managed 56 miles to Ruthin leaving only 33 miles plus Snowdon which he did by the Grib-Coch ridge on Tuesday finishing at Llanberis.

Afterwards he said "The run was started to see how fit I was, and to test out my right knee from which the cartlidge had been removed two years previously".

Eric was 38 when he did this, I've no doubt he could have done it in much less than 10 days if he had been fitter and more prepared psychologically for ultra-long distances.

Writing shortly afterwards he said "I finished in good form and hadn't killed myself. I had broken personally a new barrier, and found it exciting and interesting, and had learnt quite a lot about ultra-distance runs. Obey the body, it will tell you when it requires certain things i.e. salt, or to slow to a walk.

A thought which told me I was in good form, was that during my last few days, I began to think about doing a 24 hours track run for charity".

Eric was killed on the M6 in a car accident whilst travelling to a 24 hour charity run a Liverpool,

Wilf Hammond

LANGDALE '69

The drizzle dimmed the lamps, four anoraked figures struggled and cursed to change the rear wheel of the Land Rover, when a cry split the air "COFFEE", so we all tramped into Chris's kitchen, Chris could not come on the meet, unfortunately, owing to a sever bout of Mountain Sickness through living on the summit of Tettenhall Rock, the front door was suddenly battered from it's hinges, revealing three other members of the party, who I can only say, closely resembled Blackbeard, the Cheshire Cat, and Eric Morecambe, Soon we had loaded up and were away, to pick up Mike-o-the-Mountains and we were off !! Having crossed the M6 Desert (if that's anything to GOBI) Most of the party reinforced themselves with Fish and Chips and a rash promise from one Hairy Beastie that he knew where there was a boozier open somewhere up the road, (he has managed to walk back by the way).

We arrived at the Fylde Hut in the Little Langdale sometime around midnight, and behold, the lights were on (and the kettle). Petes MK I and II had arrived, we dumped our gear, and so to bed, only to be rudely awakened by someone yelling "Hey it's bloody snowin!", as if by magic nine intrepid mountaineers leaped from their beds, and descended ravensusly to the kitchen. Breakfast over, we loaded up and Kevin headed up 'Wrynose', (why? no one knows), then wheels spun and that was that, a hair-raising turn was made, nearly knocking a bespectacled grey haired twit to a sticky end (so they all hoped). The Rover headed down via Ambleside, to langdale leaving behind the instigators of the Wrynose episode to walk.

We left the pub about 1.00 p.m. and split up for various tigerish ascents, on which :

Petes Mark I and II	Bugged off
Dave, Mike Kevin and Dick	-
Sailer and Tony	-
John and Jim	-

and so a grand afternoon was had by all, followed by Hot Sand and Water in the O.D.G. then back to the hut for grub and so off to the Skelwith Bridge from which I would say the birds had emigrated to warmer climes. Closing time, and we trailed back to our bunks.

Sunday dawned, conditions seemed a little better and we all set off for Pavey Ark, all that is except for Dave, who had a rotten cold (through using a sub-zero sleeping bag).

Most of us just mucked about all day enjoying the air and drift plugging, except for as usual; Smiler, Tony and Pete MK I, who decided on a fearsome climb known to all as 'Jack's Rake' (P.S. it's different in Winter) Having had one or two mild epics, Smiler was at last seen (or heard) just below the stone shoot, wallowing in four feet of talcum powder, John hailed him lustily, and the reply, though partically distorted by the wind, seemed to imply that we were all suffering from a severe attack of what Doctors call ORCHITIS , anyway everyone returned, in one piece to the Rover, and back to the hut, where Dave, kind soul that he is, had done all the housework. So after having inserted the hut fees in the safe with the aid of a peg hammer and a felling axe, we loaded, locked up and were away, with axes stuck out of the windows, Dick, strumming his instrument and all of us lustily ringing Irish Rebel Songs. We passed through Ambleside, with the natives thronging the streets praying that we would never return.

But we will !!!

JIM.

BIG OVERHANG - ANGLESEY

After stopping at the 'Vaynol' and 'Wendy's' for bacon butties, we arrived at North Stack, Holyhead. The tents were slung up over something that felt like a building site which was mistaken for a field in the dark. Jel spent the night determined to keep us awake sneezing with 'Hay Fever'. We were woken at 7.30 a.m. by a bleary eyed Conga, after houghing soss, bacon and eggs we set off to North Stacks 'Big Overhang'.

Andy Barrett from the "Express and Star" had come with us to photograph the route. On reaching the Coast Guard Station we slung a rope over the edge, which hung clear of the rock for 140 feet until it reached the sea. One by one we abseiled into the cave. For the first time I saw the immense length of the roof, it's fangs jutting out for 120 feet until they reached the lip.

After sorting out the ropes Conga led off on the roof while we stood around taking snaps, as he hung like a 'human spider'. Having climed 60 feet out without any trouble Conga came down, and Smiler prussicked up for a crack at the roof. Smiler climbed out for another 40 feet before being stopped by a large gap in between pegs. He slid down the rope explaining that it would need a thin peg to crack it. I prussicked up to the high point armed with bundles of knife blades. When I reached the roof I realised that I was now 100 feet out and 100 feet above the sea and was wishing that I was back on the ground.

Standing in the top rungs of my etries I found that the next peg was 18 inches out of reach. One of Jel's 'Chrome Mollys' went half in, and pulling up on it I could just reach the peg above. The next 15 feet went easily then another gap, couldn't get a peg in, and so ----- a Wink was to be seen rapidly sliding down to safety. Conga went back up and pegged

Cont/d..

out to within three moves from the lip of the overhang as it was now 5 o'clock that was enough for Saturday. The night was spent darting and boozing until the drunkenly hour of 11.30.

Sunday dawned, but we missed it.

At 10.00 a.m. we were all back under the roof except Smiler who was lowering a very frightened photographer over the roof, Andy was to take photographs of Conga moving round the lip of the overhang. At the time the tide was in and Andy was sliding straight into the sea below, we waited till he was 5 feet from the waves then pulled him to safety. King Conga raced round the lip and up the wall to the top belay. It was my turn again for the roof "so soon", I thought of running but there was nowhere to run to an so up the back wall and onto the roof.

I went quite well for 35 feet until suddenly I found I was stuck !! Sitting there smoking and wondering what to do I noticed Smiler underneath was fast asleep in the sun and Jel, Peter, and Frank were lying on their backs looking out to sea. Not being one to break up the party I sat there for half an hour, until Smiler eventually woke to see to his amazement that I hadn't moved. While his eyes were still blurred I slid down the rope, and pushed him onto the route. He bombed out with no trouble at all determined that we should finish the route that day. At six he was on the top and after a little strenuous sac hauling it was all over. Smiles all round and back for a feed.

WINK