

NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER, 1963



*Ceunant
Mountaineering
Club*

E D I T O R I A L

The compliments of the season to everyone, and lots of good climbing in 1964.

We have reached the end of another Club year, and this will be the last Newsletter before the Annual General Meeting on 26th February, 1964. Accordingly, we should like to take this opportunity of reminding members, once again, that one of the purposes of the AGM is the election of the Committee.

In some clubs it is the practise for the existing Committee to be automatically renominated, or, if someone wishes to retire, for the Committee to nominate a successor, and present the AGM with a fait accompli. All that is required of the members is that they raise their hands in favour.

This does not happen here.

There are no Committee nominations.

If you wish to put the existing committee up for re-election, each person must be proposed and seconded.

If you want some new people to have a go, you only have to put their names forward (getting their consent first, of course).

In the past members have been rather slack in this respect, and on a few occasions we have been reduced to the indignity of trying to shanghai somebody into office on the night of the AGM itself.

Remember, it is the members who decide the candidates for the Committee places, just as it is the members' votes which decide, if necessary, which candidate is to be successful.

Let us make sure that the nomination board is full this year.

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During a recent debate on the advisability of increasing club social activities, it was claimed that one third of the members were active mountaineers, and two thirds were interested only in the social side of the club.

Lest anyone should thereby get hold of the wrong impression, let us say at once

a) We doubt if there is one member of this club who was not, at the time of joining, an active mountaineer. Increased domestic responsibilities can bog down even the most fanatic climber, and the fact that these people continue to be members proves that they are still mountaineers at heart. No one ever joined this club for the sake of its social functions, and while the present committee policy continues no one ever will.

b) Many of these inactive and unseen members were founders of the Club, whose foresight and hard work, not to mention money, enable present day members to enjoy such luxuries as Tyn Lon. If the occasional home social does nothing more than enable these giants of past years to keep in touch, it will have been well worth while.

c) Far more reprehensible, in our view, are those members who are active mountaineers, yet who show no interest whatever in official club activities - social or otherwise. Some such people have joined the Club in the past, but if the committee are successful in their appraisal of future candidates for membership, it will not happen in the future.

With regard to the pros and cons of the debate itself, it is really pointless trying to separate out the social activities as if they were distinct from everything else. Whether we are drinking in the Vaynol, or in the Cambridge, or attending a club dance, the talk is mainly of mountains. And there is an outdoor meet every fortnight throughout the year for those who are one hundred percent active. You can't have it more often than that.

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Except where otherwise stated, the opinions expressed in this Newsletter are those of the Editor, and are not necessarily endorsed by the Committee.

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CLUB NEWS

ANNUAL DINNER

The Annual Dinner will be held at
The Prince Llewelyn Hotel, Beddgelert
on Saturday, 14th March 1964.

The Committee again wish to draw attention to the fact that stale food MUST NOT BE LEFT LYING AROUND IN THE HUT. Not only is this unpleasant for the first arrivals the following week-end, but it encourages vermin.

All items of a perishable nature must be disposed of before the hut is locked up.

As most members will know, the Editor's car was stolen about three months ago, and has not been heard of since. At the time, the Editor was acting as librarian in the absence of John Daffern on holiday, and amongst the items missing with the car was the library record book, showing which books were out, and who had borrowed them.

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A complete inventory was made of the library to discover which books were missing, and of these the following have still not been accounted for:

Alpine Points of View by R.G. Collomb
Romance of Mountaineering by R.L.G. Irving
Selected Climbs - Mont Blanc
Avon Gorge Guide by J. Nixon
Mountaineering Vol.2 No.7 March 1955

Will the people who have borrowed these books please get in touch with John Daffern so that the library record may be completed.

We have received some literature from the "Club Mediteranee", a French organisation which runs straw hut holiday villages on the shores of the Mediterranean during the summer, and takes over hotels in the Alps for winter sports.

If any members are interested, the Editor has copies of their magazine "Le Trident", which give details of the holidays offered.

New Members

J.R. Costello	████████████████████ Birmingham, 16.
R. Lavill	████████████████████ Langley, Oldbury, Worcs.
J.A. Lee	████████████████████, Birmingham, 16.

FORTHCOMING OUTDOOR MEETS

January 17th-19th	LANGDALE	Leader M. Manser Camping and and possibility of hut.
February 2nd	MALVERNNS	Leader D. Stokes Day Meet.
February 21st-23rd	CADER IDRIS	Leader P. Holden Camping.
March 13th-15th	LLANBERIS	Leader M. Connelly Annual Dinner.
March 27th-31st	WASDALE	Leader P. Hay Camping.
April 10th-12th	TREMADOC	Leader A.M. Daffern Cave & Crag Hut, or camping.
April 19th	BIRCHENS EDGE	Leader J. Brennan Day Meet.

The Annual club dance was held on Wednesday, 27th November at the Variety Artistes Club, Perry Barr. The room was good, the buffet excellent, and everyone present had a good time. The fact that the evening did not go with the 'swing' that one might anticipate from a Ceunant Social was due to several reasons. For a start, although the band was booked from 8 o'clock, they had nobody to play to until about twenty past, and even by quarter to nine only a handful of people were present. The total attendance was not good (fewer than 70 tickets were sold), but the hall would have looked more full had all the people been there most of the time. As it was, soon after the late arrivals had finished coming in, the early leavers started going out. It appears that members have got into such a habit of strolling in at half-time at the Cambridge that they

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cannot get anywhere for 8 'clock in any circumstances.

However, far from being discouraged, the committee are already starting to make arrangements for next year's dance, which will probably be held early in December 1964. Part of the trouble this year was the short notice which members were given. This was unavoidable in the circumstances, but for next year all the basic arrangements should be in hand at least six months before the date, so everyone will have plenty of warning.

The Great Debate

by I.D. Corbett

On November the 6th a large concourse of members and friends attended a debating session at the Cambridge. The chair was taken by the organiser of the event, Tony Daffern, who drew the subjects for debate (these having been circulated previously) from a hat.

The proceedings started at 8.30, and those of us who had entertained doubts as to the success of this venture were quickly proved wrong, as the first subject brought a proposer and opposer fairly scuttling to their places.

Motion No.1 was "This Club considers the Snowdon Mountain Railway should be demolished"

John Pettet, proposing, said the matter really needed very little argument. All the railway did for the mountaineer was to make a general mess of the whole thing. The Snowdon Horseshoe had been described as the finest ridge walk south of the border, but it was spoilt by this terrible monstrosity, the railway terminus, at its very centre. John said he used to wonder why no one climbed on the cliffs below Snowdon summit, but now he had seen the piles of garbage tipped down the North face, he knew. All the railway did was bring to the summit crowds of litter scattering, bottle throwing tourists, who had no appreciation of the mountains; and this should be stopped. He said that, as a purist, he considered the whole thing

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should be torn up and thrown into the lake, and the rails melted down and converted into karabiners! Robin Costello, opposing, said that he thought the railway should stay, for the following reasons:

- a) It keeps all the tourists together. These people had an outlet on Snowdon, which, if denied, would probably lead to tourist facilities being provided on other mountains.
- b) It uses the least interesting route up the mountain.
- c) The track provides a useful way of descent in foul weather.
- d) It has proved extremely valuable in rescue operations.
- e) It brings a certain amount of prosperity to Llanberis.
- f) It gives the second something to moan about while waiting for the leader, thereby contributing to human happiness.

Regarding climbing, Robin said that nobody wanted to climb on the Snowdon north face anyway.

Mike Connelly said he thought the main function of the railway, which made its retention worthwhile, was the carrying of beer and lemonade crystals to the summit and the half-way station.

Mike Kerby said that Joe Brown had found a good use for the railway - sliding down the centre on a flat rock.

Dave Stokes said a point we were losing sight of was that the railway did bring a lot of happiness to people who would not otherwise be able to visit the summit of a mountain.

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Some exchanges followed, centred round whether or not Snowdon was a good mountain. The point was made that the peak had probably degenerated, as a mountain, since the railway was built.

A vote was then taken, and the motion was defeated by 11 votes to 8.

Motion No.2 was "This Club considers that the technical limit in free rock climbing has now been reached"

C. Scragg, proposing, said that over the last ten years climbing had felt the benefit of Joe Brown, who had put our standards far above those of other countries. There was no doubt that Joe Brown is in a class of his own, and no normal human being can equal his feats. Therefore, since most of us are, in this respect at least, normal, Joe Brown's efforts represent the limit of free climbing.

Roger Lavill, opposing, said that all through climbing history it has been repeatedly said by the bearded sages that "surely we have now reached the absolute limit". Joe Brown's routes may be of a very high standard, but they are not unsurpassable. For instance, Joe Brown is a very small, strong man. Some day, a tall, strong man will appear, who can reach holds which Joe Brown can't, and put up a whole series of new routes. Then there is the matter of footwear. From nails we advanced to rubbers, then to P.A's. In future some sort of adhesive boot may be used, boots which can ignore wet or grease, etc. (Shades of climbers with rubber suckers on hands and feet! - Editor.) Although Joe Brown has put up routes, these are being followed. He is getting older, and a successor will be found - maybe, suggested Roger, from among those present in the room!

Martin Pritchard said that he thought we were ignoring other good climbers of the day who had not had the publicity which Joe Brown has had. He thought that harder routes would be done, although he didn't know how!

Mike Connelly said he couldn't tolerate derogatory remarks about "St. Joe Brown". Those who had been able to scramble up some of his easy routes thought he was marvellous. Inevitably, though, standards must continue to go up. Although, probably, the greatest development had now taken place, there must still be room for a little more.

C. Scragg entered the discussion again to say that it was all a matter of engineering principles. A man weighing 160 lbs, standing 9" away from a vertical wall was physically certain to fall off unless there was something for him to hold on to. It was all very well talking of very small people, very large people, or altogether superhuman people, but for most of us, the standard has been reached.

Pete Holden said that a lot of the harder routes were cracks, involving lots of use of friction, not holds as such. The limit of friction depends on strength, and Joe Brown can't have reached the ultimate in strength for one individual. He thought there was still scope for improvement.

Roger Lavill wondered what would have happened had, say, Nijinsky taken up climbing, with his ability to leap great distances. He should have done well (having made sure there was something to jump on to). Roger agreed with Pete Holden that there was no limit to the angle of crack which could be climbed, given sufficient strength.

The vote was taken, and the motion was defeated by 14 votes to 2.

Motion No.3 was "This Club considers that solo climbing should form part of a climber's education"

Dave Stokes, proposing, said that he thought solo climbing experience was necessary, particularly for people intending to climb in the Alps, where some of the longer climbs were unroped. He did not think that it should be practised above V.Diff. standard.

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Derbyshire was a very good place for solo practise, where it was a waste of time having a rope anyway, except for the second.

Mike Kerby, opposing, said that climbing solo was dangerous. He agreed that it would form part of a climber's education, but not for long if he fell off. If it was officially accepted that people should climb solo, he said, any accidents resulting would get the club concerned, and the mountaineering community generally, a bad name.

Pete Holden said it would be wrong to restrict a climber as to the field of his activities. If a person felt capable of climbing solo, he should be able to do so, and up to any grade he liked. It would depend on the individual; some people may be able to solo V.S. without danger. He thought a climber who could climb solo was more capable on rock than one who could not.

Robin Costello said the most important thing about solo climbing was that it made the climber more self reliant. When climbing on a rope, one tended to draw on the strength of the other members of the party.

Bill Martin thought that solo climbing should not be generally regarded as a good thing, because it might then become common practise, and although many people were capable, others were not.

Roger Lavill thought that, although no rules should be laid down, a person should solo 2 grades below his leading capabilities. Solo climbing gives one the necessary self confidence to work ones way out of an emergency, but it would be dangerous for a climber to solo at the limit of his capabilities.

Mike Kerby, recapping, said the question was "Should it form part of a climber's education?". He thought if people were accustomed to climbing solo, there was a danger of their judgment becoming impaired, leading them to wander off on rocks they didn't know.

Calling for a vote, Tony Daffern said a point to be considered was "is a person who cannot climb solo safe to move among mountains?".

The motion was carried by 19 votes to 3.

The next item out of the hat was "This Club considers hut ownership encourages lethargy".

Pete Holden proposed. He said that in a hut there is more comfort; and the more comfort, the greater the effort needed to get up. When you are in a tent, freezing cold, with water dripping in and the tent about to blow down, there is a great incentive to get out and climb. In a hut you take hours over breakfast, seated in a nice chair, which is quite different from sitting on a wet stone outside a tent.

Bill Martin said he thought the facts were the other way round. If he was camping, and had struggled to get the tent up in a gale, and then taken about 6 hours to get comfortable, he would be damned if he would get up very early the following morning. The factors producing lethargy were just as great.

Joe Brennan said that if the will to climb was there, a hut wouldn't stop it.

Robin Costello didn't think that huts encourage lethargy. The first night he stayed at Tyn Lon he was kept awake by snoring, the next two nights by the extra curricular activities of certain campers present, and the fourth night by the cries of a couple of infants. At a different hut, the whole crowd awoke at 4 a.m. because they didn't want to miss the sunrise. For light sleepers, hut life could be very stimulating.

Roger Lavill said that, properly used, a hut could encourage energy to be diverted in the right direction. If you are limited to camping, then trouble with tents, cooking, keeping the water out, etc. diverted this energy.

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Pete Holden said camping caused lots of activity - the tent collapses, was rolled up, pitched, collapsed again - activity all the time.

It was suggested that he gave up camping, or got another tent!

After a few further fatuous comments about hut life in general, the motion was carried 13 - 10.

The next subject got off to a hilarious start, and carried on from there. It was "This Club considers that its social activities should be increased".

Nobody was in a hurry to talk about this, but eventually Joe Brennan was shanghai'd into the proposer's seat and Basil Jones agreed to oppose. When Joe got up, it was to say that he thought the club had got enough social activity already! When he had sorted out which side he wanted to be on, he went back to his place among the spectators, and another proposer was sought. At this point, Basil said he would propose and let Joe oppose, so to everyone's vast amusement, the two changed sides! With, one couldn't help feeling, doubtful sincerity, Basil opened the case. He electrified the meeting with the statement that the club could either have more social activity or less, or things could remain static. When the uproar had died down, he said there was ample scope for increasing our activities. He wondered if we couldn't extend the "treasure hunt" idea into the mountains. For instance, week-end after week-end people go to Wales and climb, say, Gashed Crag. How much more interesting if you made this into a treasure hunt, and had to find the sixpence at the top of the first pitch.

Joe Brennan, struggling to get the discussion back to a serious level, said that this was a Mountaineering Club, not a social club, and that at the moment two-thirds of the members weren't interested in climbing, only in the social activities. He saw no

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reason to further increase the social activities.

Mike Kerby pointed out that all members had at some time been interested in mountaineering, and that in any case the club couldn't exist without the inactive "two-thirds". Agreed this was a club for mountaineering, but if we increase our social activities, members will get to know each other better, which is all to the good.

Roger Lavill said that climbing itself was by no means a non-social activity. He thought we should have more parties at the hut, more mixed family climbing - in fact, bring the social side of the club to the crags.

Jim Lee said the chief aim should be to foster climbing activities, leaving the social side as a sideline for dark winter nights.

Fred Castle thought there was scope for increased social life, provided it was coupled with climbing.

The motion was carried 13 - 12 on the chairman's casting vote.

Of the next subject, great things were expected. They didn't materialise. It was "This Club considers that women and mountaineering don't mix".

Mike Connelly, whose girl friend was not present, proposed this motion. He said there was no more serious subject than women and mountains. He thought that women were not intended for climbing mountains, and they tended to drag men down from climbing up to their standards. Whenever a good climber got attached to a female, his climbing went to the winds.

Fred Castle, on the other hand, thought that women had their advantages, if only for tidying up the hut. He saw no reason why men should wish to run away from their young ladies every weekend - they did nothing to hinder a man's climbing, and they came very

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much into the social side we had been talking about.

Discussion on this subject failed to get going at all (not one single comment was heard from any of the ladies), and after a few desultory comments the motion was defeated by 12 votes to 6.

The last item to come up for expression was -

This club needs a president

Tony Fowler said the club needed a figurehead, a person with no connection with mountaineering - someone in reasonably high esteem who could talk for the club. Such a person, he thought, could put forward the interests of the club without being dismissed as 'just another cranky mountaineer'. Should the club ever be in financial difficulties, such a person was more likely to obtain help.

John Pettet did not agree. He said the only reason a club had a president was to provide an excuse for periodical booze-ups. He thought that there was no cause for trying to present to the community a semi-respectable air by having a 'superior person' at the head. The club is interested in mountaineering, and a president could add nothing.

Roger Lavill was in favour of having a president, but not necessarily a V.I.P. Also, he thought the person chosen should be a mountaineer, since a person without mountaineering knowledge could not adequately represent the club.

There was some general conversation on the subject, most of it consisting of slanderous sounding hints about various presidents and their usefulness to the bodies they presided over! At the end of all this, the great debate was brought to a triumphant conclusion by the club deciding, by 15 votes to 8, that they did not require a president.

After a regrettably long absence from club meets, I joined the October trip to Idwal. In view of prevailing circumstances I decided to stop at Tal-y-Waen with the newsletter's editor, who was recovering from a bronchial infection.

The Saturday morning breakfast gathering provided an interesting discussion. The only other inmate of Scotty's was a gentleman of pronounced political leanings, and since we "old men" love an argument, we immediately leaned the other way. As a result of this, the editor and myself did not arrive at Ogwen until a quarter to eleven - where we met five of the campers collecting their breakfast requisites from the Ogwen car park!

On arrival at the Idwal camp site (one of two encampments on this widely scattered meet), instead of finding it deserted by the keen young climbers, as we expected, we found the same "active" members thinking about breakfast. I was ready for lunch!

After enquiring about plans for the day (or for such of the day as was left) Ivor and I set off at a gentle pace for the Devil's Kitchen, just short of which we rested - noting the still-habitated camp site below.

However, five campers had made an effort, and had quickly reached the foot of their rock-climb near the Kitchen.

We watched the start of the climb, and after eating our sandwiches, pressed on at our comfortable pace to the top of Glyder Fawr, which was reached just as heavy rain started. We were soaked through in a matter of minutes, and decided that the sensible thing would be to get down as quickly as possible.

The journey from the top of Glyder Fawr to Glyder Fach, and then via Bwlch Tryfan to Ogwen was completed in sixty-five minutes - which for a couple of unfit fellows was not unreasonable.

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Our clothes were still sodden on Sunday morning, despite the Dwyer's help with a large fire, so they were thrown in the boot of the car and, as the weather was far from encouraging, left for home early, visiting Tyn Lon, which was deserted, on the way.

Not for the first time, a Sunday in Wales was a "wet" one.

DOVEDALE MEET 16th November by I.D. Corbett

"Swing away climber, on the belay
If the rope holds, you'll dangle all day"

This meet was notable because the 21 people who attended it were divided more sharply than usual between climbers and spectators. Nothing was climbed which was not overhanging and holdless - this was the whole idea - and those intending to be active came equipped with double ropes, pegs, pitons, etriers, fifi-hooks, cows-tails, krabs by the dozen, and so on. People not having the means (or in certain cases, the desire) to hang motionless for hours in a self-conceived spiders web, merely came to watch and learn.

The spectators arrived late, and, starting from the Southern side of the dale, headed for Tissington Spires in a gloomy overcast which threatened every minute to justify the wet weather forecast. As the party splashed through the thick mud in the vicinity of the Spires, not a soul was to be seen, but a sharp ear picked up tell-tale tapping noises coming from high in the mist. Having been led to believe that woodpeckers were rare hereabouts, the spectators set off up a leafy, muddy, slippery slope, confidently expecting to discover climbers. And they were not disappointed. The Ceunant was in action. What Showell Styles has picturesquely described as the "Whack and dangle boys" were hard at work. At least, two were whacking, but only one was dangling, the other having failed so far to get off the ground.

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The dangler was in the person of one J. Robin Costello Esq., who was suspended about half-way up a twenty-five foot wall with an overhanging top. Mr. Costello leaned back comfortably from two etriers, twin ropes, a cows-tail and about ten pegs, and surveyed the rock-face with a disbelieving expression.

"I can't get a peg in", quoth he, feeling around various crevices in the limestone. The hands swept higher and discovered a shattered ledge which might offer hope.

"Below" said Mr. Costello, as he started to hurl large chunks of rock and masses of foliage down the slope. Eventually a crack was found. Tap tap went the hammer, and the piton disappeared into the hole. A good pull from below and it reappeared again, slanting sideways. In spite of this, however, attempts to get it out again failed completely.

"Perhaps it will hold after all", said Mr. Costello. The appropriate rope was hoisted up, the sling appendage disengaged, the krabs clipped in and out, the etrier attached, and readiness made to get moving once more. A foot was lifted up into the newly placed ladder.

"Below", said Mr. Costello, and he brought his weight full into the rung. The piton stayed put.

The spectators were fascinated. This was obviously a highly technical business. The second man stood in frozen (literally) immobility, now tensioning the red, now slackening, now pulling on the white, now slackening. This seemed to go on for hours, and number two had our sympathy. It was not until much later that we saw a second get off the ground, and then it was not a member of this Club. At this rate, the Cima Grande would take a fortnight.

Eventually Mr. Costello surmounted the overhang, at which point his concentration was interrupted by a slight disturbance at base. Two climbing boots and a parcel containing the Costello lunch had been kicked

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from behind a tree, and were bounding down the slope towards the river at high speed. They were eventually retrieved by one of the spectators, this being the only useful function served by these worthies all day.

The other two climbers, having festooned the rock with an astonishing web of multi-coloured rope up to a height of about six feet, had packed up for lunch.

Since the locality was becoming draughty, and the entertainment had for the time being ceased, the spectators moved off to see if they could hear more hammering.

This they did at Ilam Rock, where one of the Club's bearded gentlemen could be seen swinging part way up the overhanging side. Alas, he was coming down, but this nevertheless took a considerable time, so there was plenty of spectacle left. Round the back, two other members had already descended, leaving a trail of 13 pegs, with attached karabiners, to ease their way for a re-ascent after lunch. They had apparently decided on lunch when the leader's supply of krabs had given out.

The spectators, now increased in number, soon had no Ceunanters to gawp at, and were reduced to watching the antics of a pair of strangers. These were doing mervellously, except that Number Two got stuck at about 15 feet on the first pitch, and spent most of the remainder of the afternoon trying to get a peg out.

The rain which had been forecast, and had long threatened, duly arrived. The spectators were nice and dry under the overhang, stepping out from time to time to gaze up into the rain at the danglers. Lunch over, our gallants on the back of the stone got going again, having borrowed more krabs from the now redundant pair round the corner. The leader quickly got as far as peg No.13 of the original route, after which he appeared to become a fixture. The rain beat down heavier and heavier, and the spectators, weighing the chances of the

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weather clearing, against the prospect of the three mile walk back to the car park, decided to clear off. So, as the rain streamed down, the danglers, unable to do anything but dangle and get wetter and wetter, watched their gallery depart.

Apparently the problems of time and peg placing were too great, and they eventually had to retreat, soaked, leaving about £3 worth of equipment jammed in the Ilam Rock.

Fred Castle had the best idea. He and his party found a large, dry cave, and did their climbing in that!

THE SILVRETTA ALPS

by E.R. Webster

The Silvretta is a fairly compact group of mountains in the Western Tyrol of Austria, bordering with Switzerland; in fact the highest of the group, Piz Linard (11,100 ft) is completely in Switzerland. It is an area very well worth considering by anyone contemplating an Alpine holiday, and Bill Yale, Ernest Eastwood, Margaret and I spent most of a two-week holiday there last year.

Although the weather for most of the period was not particularly good, we were fortunate to get four glorious days whilst staying at the Wiesbadener Hut. This hut is well-appointed, and of the three main Austrian huts serving the Silvretta, is the best situated. It is almost completely ringed by fine mountains and glaciers, and facing it across the narrow Ochsen valley is the Ochsenal glacier, heavily crevassed and hanging down the mountainside in a great serac-covered ice fall. A little to the left is Piz Buin (10,750 ft), perhaps the main and most popular peak of the area, the first of a ring of peaks surrounding the upper Ochsenal glacier. These include Piz Buin, Kleine Buin, Signal Horn (10,420 ft), Eckhorn (10,220 ft),

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Silvretta-horn (10,560 ft) and a little to the right, the Schneeglockner. To "do the lot" in one day's outing would be a very big task (!) but two or three normal Alpine days would be sufficient. Other mountains round the Wiesbadener Hut are the Dreiländer Spitze (10,390 ft), Ochsenkopf and Tirolerkopf, quite equal to those previously mentioned.

Whatever one's standard of mountaineering, the area offers scope in both rock and ice climbing, for the mountains are nearly all rock peaks joined by ridges requiring scrambling of a high standard. Perhaps we are not mountaineers of a high technical standard, but the routes we used taxed our abilities to their highest, without being so difficult to be anything but a great delight.

Our day on Piz Buin was one of the best days mountaineering we have ever experienced. The day started with very light cloud in the sky, but by the time we had crammed down as much breakfast as we could tolerate (caraway seed, bread, butter, jam and coffee), the sun had begun to rise and, piercing the cloud, was giving a golden glow to the upper slopes. We set out with our guide, Johann, and after about half a mile of moraine foot path, started across the Vermunt glacier. Following the recent bad weather there was a good depth of crisp snow on the glacier, which necessitated precautions against covered crevasses. Having traversed the main glacier, the route commenced a rather zig-zag course, to avoid some large crevasses, and to ease the gradient up a steep snow-covered ice field to the Wiesbadener Grätle. This rock ridge divides the Vermunt glacier from the upper Ochsenal glacier. It took about half-an-hour to ascend; half-an-hour of good firm rock scrambling. Stepping down the few feet of the other side was like stepping into a new world, for there lay before us a vast field of snow surrounded by mountain peaks, and not a soul to be seen. We "ploughed" through deep snow part way round this snow field to the col between Piz and Kleine Buin, a place rather like a window, for it gave a distant but narrow view of mountains

to the South East. A further climb up steep snow, then more rock scrambling as we reached the summit.

Visibility was good and many very distant peaks and mountain groups could be seen in all directions. For once, on a mountain top, it was reasonably warm, so we were able to spend some time on the summit in comfort. As other parties arrived, space began to get scarce, so we descended. As far as the col we retraced our steps (there may have been other routes off, but they looked severely steep) but from the col we followed the Ochsental glacier all the way down, instead of using our route of ascent. After the upper snow field came the crevasses. Our course became very changeable in order to find safe snow bridges, or places to jump. Lower down was the ice fall, but this was less severe on one side of the glacier than the other, so the route came down this easier side (under a massive looking rock buttress), and then traversed beneath the main fall. Even so, on this section some "dodgy" looking snow bridges were necessarily used, not to mention the very narrow icy ridges and slopes, between great crevasses that gave every appearance of waiting to swallow us at one false step.

Looking up at the seracs on the ice fall from such a close position makes one realise how formidable are the difficulties of real glacier mountaineering, such as the Khumbu Glacier. In due course we reached the lower glacier, now thick with slush and running water in the warmth of the early afternoon sun, and so paddled back to the hut.

It had been a superb day of mountaineering, and to put the final touch of glory, one Austrian gentleman (a day tripper to the hut) pointed us out to his young son, and said, "Bergsteigers"!

As one of the members who has been with the club for a number of years, I thought that a few comments on the beginnings of the Club, and past practices, would not be amiss at this stage of our progress.

A number of people who had varying interests in mountains grouped themselves together under a local branch of the Mountaineering Association, but as all these people did not wish to concentrate on rock-climbing, which was virtually what the Association's regulations required, a separate club, the Ceunant, was formed.

Shortly before this change, the club obtained the tenancy of Pen Ceunant, and many week-ends (including the good-weather week-ends) and many wet days when no climbing was possible, were spent, quite voluntarily, in carrying out repairs and renovations to the club's first hut.

On a Friday night the first members to arrive lit the fire (if this had not already been done by Mr. Hughes, the landlord) and started a "brew", ready for the later arrivals.

The disappearance of such practices over latter years is to be regretted, as this friendly and co-operative attitude was the basis of the club which gave - and, one hopes, will again give - much pleasure to members.

Much has been said and written about the non-attendance of meets by members whose only contact with the club, for long periods, is the payment of their annual subscription. I would think that the club is probably sustained to a reasonable degree by such contributions from members who, due to family and business commitments, can only hope for the occasional pilgrimage to Wales - perhaps for the annual dinner or the odd week-end when circumstances permit. These opportunities may not necessarily coincide with a club meet.

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Many of the older members have retained their mountain interest, visit more varied mountain areas, and perhaps practice more varied mountaineering than in their younger days. In this sense, I would like to mention, without detracting from the obviously very well organised recent meet to the Gower Peninsular, that this was not the first club outing to this area. A meet there was led by John Urwin many years ago - in spite of the relief driver informing John on the way down that one of the road wheels on his van had dissociated itself from the party!

John's van indeed did yeoman service, including taking a club party as far as the Cairngorms for a long week-end's ski-ing and walking. Was this, in fact, the last club meet to this area?

And what has happened to the long walks through Derbyshire, over the Berwyns (The "Berwyn Bash"), Cnicht, and the fast "flips" along the Malverns?

Perhaps walking skill and stamina are not so important now that it is not necessary to take a night train to Buxton and then walk for fifteen-odd miles to the Roaches for some rock-climbing, or to walk from Isaf's barn to the old "Royal" for a beer, and back.

To avoid a wrong conclusion being drawn, let me say that, although the majority of members did not perhaps reach a very high rock-climbing standard compared with today's feats, they were keen rock-climbers, and many a winter's day, as well as sunny days, were spent on rock faces. We have even waited our turn in the pouring rain and dusk to finish the last pitch on Tryfan or some other peak, and then slowly made our way down in the dark for a beer and a meal. And we would go back for more on the next day.

TWENTY-FIVE

The climbing aids at that time were not pitons, etriers and double ropes, but included your partner's head as a foothold - even though you were wearing No.6 tricounis in your boots!

B.M.C. NEWS

North Wales Committee

The committee has met five times during the last year, and has considered the following matters:

Camping in Llanberis

No spectacular progress has been made. Two sites which might have been made available, one in Nant Peris and one near Pont-y-Cromlech, were opposed by the County Council. In respect of the Nant Peris site, an appeal was made and a public enquiry held, but the Minister upheld the Council. A further site has been examined by the Committee, the County Council and Vaynol Estates, but trouble may arise over the provision of parking facilities, without which the site would not be of much use.

The best that can be said is that camping still goes on in the Pass, the difficulties for all parties are more widely recognised than they were, and tempers are cooler than they were two years ago.

National Park Warden Service

Substantial progress has been made since last year. In Caernarvonshire a corps of about 60 voluntary wardens has been formed. Although it is too early to assess their activities, they must have made an impact, and it is hoped in the near future to define their duties more clearly, and give them more specific authority.

The Chief Warden has taken over the duty of dealing with litter.

TWENTY-SIX

Access to Mountains

Much time has been given to discussion with the farmers in Nant Francon in co-operation with the Chief Warden. It is hoped that access routes from the road to most climbing areas will be agreed without resort to litigation or Access Orders. Several particularly bad cases of exclusion of walkers and climbers from the mountains have been reported from the Rydd Ddu area. The Chief Warden will investigate this, and try to reach agreement with the farmers concerned.

Snowdon Nature Reserve

There seems to be no immediate prospect of the designation of the Snowdon Massif as a Nature Reserve, although negotiations are in progress between the Nature Conservancy, the County Council and the land-owners concerned.

The Committee is being kept fully informed, and believes that the reserve would, on balance, be beneficial to the interests of mountaineers.

TYN LON

Members are reminded that, to prevent damage by frost, the water system must be drained before the hut is locked up. The drain tap, which has a spanner attached, is over the outlet to the proposed showers.

In addition to this, all taps should be turned off and the W.C. flushed.

STOP PRESS

The Annual Dinner (see under Club Notes) starts at 7.00 p.m. (for 7.30).

We have received a Christmas Card from John Noble, who is at the Adelaide Island base of the British Antarctic Survey.