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NEWSLETTER,

JANUARY, 1971.

EDITORIAL

This is the last issue of the Newsletter before the Club's Annual General Meeting. This A.G.M. could well be a critical one for the club as it could mark a turning point, one way or the other, for the future.

Basically, we, the Ceunant as a Club, are rapidly becoming extinct as a functional unit. Genuine interest in Mountaineering in the Club is on the wane and the blame can only be laid at our own door.

The issue, as I see it, is fairly simple and can be based on our attitude towards Tyn Lon. This cottage must be one of the best situated, most accessible and, thanks to the great amount of work put in by half a dozen of the club members, one with some of the best facilities in Snowdonia. Unfortunately it is in this situation and accessibility that most of the danger lies.

A climbing club should, ideally, be a group of people who meet to go climbing. The acquisition of a hut in a climbing area should be a useful appendage.

During the last few years the emphasis has shifted - the club is gradually becoming a group of people who have a hut which happens to be in an area where it is possible to climb.

This has been born out many times in the past. The time spent at A.G.M.'s and Committee Meetings on discussion of Tyn Lon has been out of all proportion, until the recent problems arose, to the importance of the hut.

Nowadays the club tends to revolve around Tyn Lon rather than it being a useful amenity to be used by the members.

The only time in recent years that this situation has changed was during the Foot and Mouth Epidemic. At that time climbers felt that the practice of their sport was threatened and the Club really functioned as a Club. This situation lasted for a short time after the lifting of travelling restrictions only to gradually return to the slow run down of interest.

Possibly the only solution is to sell Tyn Lon and acquire a hut in a less accessible area.

I sincerely hope that this outburst will raise ire in many a breast and encourage as many members as possible to come along to the A.G.M. with the determination to do something to get the club really going as a functional unit rather than argue about 'who stole the cutlery etc. from Tyn Lon.'

Finally I would like to thank the people who have provided articles and pieces of information for the Newsletter and also that small body of people who have made the considerable improvements to Tyn Lon during the last year.

Roger Bennett.

COMMITTEE REPORT: By the Secretary, Andy Dowell.

I have little to report since the last newsletter, but would like to point out that, although we have not heard from Caernarvonshire County Council, we feel it would be unwise to become complacent and we must strive to continue the work necessary to bring Tyn Lon up to the required standard.

The floor in the main room is becoming badly marked and all members are asked not to wear boots in this room.

The financial situation of the Club is good at the present time and revenues do not seem to have been affected by the ban on bookings. The cottage is available for use by members at all times except when occupied by the Services.

The dinner will be held at the Saracen's Head, Beddgelert on March 6th and will cost approximately 30/-.

The A.G.M. will be held in March, the date to be announced later.

Two new members have been accepted by the Club:

P. Soppitt

M. R. Limley.

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INDOOR MEETS REPORT: Roger Lavill (Meets Secretary)

Members who regularly visit the Prince of Wales on Wednesdays will have noticed a change in the pattern of Indoor Meets lately. There have not been any. This has been entirely due to the I. M. Secretary's lack of enthusiasm for organising slide shows of 'our holiday in the Alps' type. Unfortunately Bill Cheverst, who offered to talk to the Club about the Hindu Kush Derbyshire Expedition, seems to have disappeared and no one seemed to be interested in the 'Abominal Snowman' Lecture by Nicki Clough at Aston.

If anybody who fancies arranging a few jolly evenings gets himself nominated at the next A.G.M. he can have my vote for a start and can hardly fail to improve on this year's efforts.

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OUTDOOR MEETS REPORT: Derek Grimmett (Meets Secretary)

No report.

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INFORMATION

Roger Lavill reports the presence of a recently developed crag in North Wales. It is to be found at RHYD Y FOEL some two miles South-West of ABERGELE. The crag is natural limestone some 150 feet high with good natural lines, most of which have been climbed at standards varying from Severe to Hard VS. The standard of each route is scratched on the rock at the bottom of each climb. The weather tends to be good and few people visit the place.

Rumour has it that the peg on Mesach has now been replaced, though the block has gone making the climb harder than before.

A new cafe has opened and been in operation for some months at PEN Y PASS. The prices are very low and the food excellent. They seem to spread the butter on the bread with a bulldozer !

Some Mancunian climbers are developing a limestone quarry at PANDY, some four miles South-South-West of LLANGOLLEN on the B4500. The rock is very steep giving routes of about 100 to 120 feet in length. Most of the routes seem to be in the upper grades.

The crag called WYNDECLIFFE, near CHEPSTOW, has been visited by club members and the climbing found to be excellent. It consists of two buttresses of steep clean natural limestone separated by a wide vegetated gully down which a staircase has been constructed providing an extremely civilised way down. The routes are well documented in the Oct/Nov issue of Rocksport and further details may be found in Frank Canning's Excellent Interim Guide. Most of the clean lines have gone but there is a lot of scope for keen Percy Throwers.

At AVON GORGE Matt Peacock reports a change in S.O.S. A rather vital hold in the short steep groove at thirty feet has disappeared and the route has not been repeated since.

UPHILL QUARRY, near WESTON, was visited recently by Dave Irons. The rock, again, is limestone and rather loose near the top. The climbs are good with pleasant views out over the sea with the flesh pots (?) of WESTON nearby.

ALPINE REPORT: SUMMER 1970.

CHAMONIX:

Ken Hipkiss spent ten days in Chamonix with Sandra. Activities were severely hampered by bad weather. Ken and A.N.Other did the North Ridge of the Blaitiere (PD) as a reconnaissance for the West Face (ED). They were repulsed from the latter by a storm on their first attempt, went off route on their second, and were finally halted by an impenetrable barrier of eight Frenchmen jammed in the Fissure Brown on their third. They ended up soloing the South Face of the Aiguille du Peigne (AD). He took Sandra up the N.N.E. Ridge of the Aiguille de l'M (D) where they were caught in a storm, Ken being knocked unconscious by lightning.. To quote Ken, "A rather unsatisfactory holiday".

Pete Holden was active in this area and his deeds are recorded in the 'Northern Newsletter'.

DOLOMITES:

Pete Meese, Sandra Meese, Martin Smith and Moira Haden spent a holiday in the Catinaccio area. Pete and Martin did the Piaz Crack (IV) on the Punta Emma, the Winkler Crack (III) on the Torre Winkler and the South Face (IV) of the Torre Stabeler. They were forced to retreat from the S.W. Ridge of the Torre Delago (IV) by a storm. Martin took Moira up the South Ridge of the Torre Piaz (III).

Rumour has it that Steve Jones was active in the area with Pat Littlejohn and apparently they had some good do's. Details are, at present, unknown.

CORSICA:

Dave Irons, Matt Peacock, Roger and Barbara Bennett and Richard Hodgkinson visited the Calasima area of the Golo Valley.

The weather was so pleasant and the camp site so attractive that little was done.

Dave and Matt did the N.E. Arete of the Paglia Orba (TD), the South Shoulder of the Moine Un of the Cinque Fratti (D) and the West Arete of the Moine Un of the Cinque Frati (AD). They were stormed off a route on the Punta Liciola and had to retreat from the 'Eagle's Nest Route' on the North Face of Paglia Orba (ED). (See D. Iron's article).

Roger and Richard did the West Arete of the Moine Un of the Cinque Frati, the South Shoulder Direct of the Moine Un of the Cinque Frati (D) and the South Dierdre of the Moine Un of the Cinque Frati (TD). They also attempted the Voire Finch on Paglia Orba (D) but were repulsed by bad weather.

I MUST GO DOWN By Ken Hipkiss

As self preservation and almost reckless abandon are integral components of my personality, the decision to go and have "a good do" on Gogarth with Harry Smith was not easily reached.

However, despite prolonged bleatings concerning health, lack of strength and the fact that I hadn't done anything hard for ages (which is, after all, only the groundwork laid down by all participants in this particular sport before embarking on a route of some difficulty, with a new partner, to preserve one's image in case the outcome is one ghastly mess of clawing fingers and shaking limbs) I found myself, along with the company of two Cave and Crag competitors and one female spectator being herded across the heathery moors in the general direction of the crag.

Mr. Smith was looking resplendent in his Ex W.D. jacket and boots. He was sporting a fine array of Krabs which would certainly be labelled as "collectors items" if they should ever come up for sale.

Upon arriving at the crag Mr. Smith stated that we would "do this Scavenger thing" which partly relieved my somewhat anxious feelings as it was only graded V.S. With the air of a magician producing wonderous things from a top hat Mr. Smith proceeded to sort out his "gear". Could all that be contained in one little Ex. W.D. sack !

"Haven't you forgotten your P.A.'s ?" I enquired.

"I don't go in for these new fangled rubber things" he replied.

"Oh" I said.

Soon we were making the initial moves on the sea-level traverse, but as most of it was in fact below sea-level, this task proved to be quite difficult. However Mr. Smith being a born leader soon had the party "organised" as he put it. A good swell, turning tide and strong onshore winds, are perhaps idyllic conditions for surfers but not, I'm afraid, for sea-level traverses, and so by the time we eventually arrived at the perched block of Pentathol, we were, to say the least, a little damp. As our companions prepared to tackle Pentathol Harry turned to me and said, "Well, it looks like we won't be able to get round to the start of Scavenger so we'll go up this 'ere wall and traverse round to join it".

"Er Harry, this 'ere wall happens to be Syringe".

"I don't go in for these 'ere names, you know".

"But it's graded Extreme, and it's supposed to be quite hard at that".

"I don't go in for these 'ere grades".

"Oh !" I said.

On this pitch Harry showed his brilliance as a rock climber as he moved slowly but steadily up the impressively steep grey wall planting immaculate runners every three or four feet.

After one particularly trying sequence of moves he leered down at me and said, "I'm going to have to pull you through a karabiner to get you up this Young 'Ipkiss".

"Oh !" I said.

Whilst Mr. Smith had been engaged in overcoming the difficulties of the first pitch, a round rubber ball plopped up out of the sea and watched his efforts with the detached interest of a barman viewing the antics of the regular drunkard. With an almost audible yawn he rolled over on to his back, pulled out his plug and sank to his cool retreat at the bottom of Gogarth Bay.

"Climb when you dare", cried Mr. Smith from above. After fifty feet of nonstop grip on the steepest wall I have ever had the misfortune to be on I managed to slip my right foot into a sling to have a short rest. Unfortunately this was not to be, for no sooner had I placed all my weight in the sling when the nut shot out of the crack rapidly followed by me. Fortunately (for the image, you know) I was able to grab a hand hold and stop my descent before Mr. Smith was aware of what had happened, and so honour was saved.

The sling, or to be precise, two slings and two alloy krabs linked together, landed on the block of Pentathol, were soon collected by a climber with a keen eye for "swag"; but later recovered in a diplomatic confrontation at the top of the crag.

"Well done, Harry", I managed to gasp when I reached him, "not bad for an old un".

"Yes, it was quite a do. Surprising what the kids get up to nowadays. We won't have time to finish it so if you climb about thirty feet up the next pitch and get something in we'll be able to pendule into the top of Pentathol".

When this was achieved and I was securely belayed I told Harry "to do his thing". This he did. To save time he climbed hand over hand up the rope and swung across to me. This was quite a remarkable feat as the pitch was gently overhanging.

Three quarters of an hour later saw us jangling our way across the cliff tops to join our friends waiting at the descent gully.

"How did he manage ?" enquired a feminine voice.

"Well. You've put me in quite a difficult position there Sandra, as you seem to think he's a bit of a goer or something and I don't want to spoil anything for him", he grinned.

"Thanks a lot Harry", I said.

"Anytime, son, anytime".

"Oh, by the way Harry", I said, "Can I just take a look at the guidebook to see what it says about the route ?".

"I don't go in for".

"Oh !" I said.

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NORTHERN LETTER: By Pete Holden.

Residing in the quiet township of Darlington, on the southern border of Co. Durham, are four country members of the Club, the Hays and the Holdens. This letter is just to convey a little news to you of our existence in these northern climes. The longest residing pair of us is well established in the area and is taking an active part in the climbing world by being chairman of the Cleveland C.C. As for myself, being fresh to the area, I am, as yet, merely an acquaintance.

Mountaineering and rock climbing up here have quite different atmospheres from Birmingham with its main theatres of action in Wales and Derbyshire.

The nearest crag to Darlington is ten minutes drive away in the village of High Commisscliffe. Certainly a place for those seeking episcopal comfort in the hills because very conveniently atop this bastion is a rather grand vicarage and its grounds whose boundary wall forms a very fine man-made extension to the height of the crag making it an almost respectable 35 feet high in all. Unfortunately the patience of the vicar has recently been exhausted and he has read the banns and those who aspire to ascend to the house of God have now to seek more conventional means.

The closest real crag is about twenty minutes drive away just beyond Richmond in Wensleydale, a limestone cliff up to sixty feet high with a good selection of routes - a very fine place on a summer's evening when the sun shines full upon it.

Further afield, up to an hour's drive away, we have an abundance of outcrops and small crags on the North Yorkshire Moors. The majority of these are sandstone outcrops reminiscent of the gritstone edges but only usually up to 25 feet high; but being well dotted around the area, there is great variety and they provide a good selection of venues for summer evening meets, followed by a well earned pie and peas supper in one of the many local alehouses.

On these moors there is one good limestone crag which provides a selection of routes up to eighty feet high, all very steep and usually of good quality. The crag which contains some of the best climbs is a rather frightening place called Whitestone Crag near Sutton Bank. The rock is very unreliable and strong nerves are an asset as the climbing is generally steep and strenuous. The biggest undertaking is an 800 foot Girdle Traverse (A2 + HVS) with some very hard free climbing sections and some artificial pitches, not climbed very frequently and only one complete traverse has been made within a single day.

Of course for weekend climbing the Lake District is the main attraction - two hours run to Langdale and one and a half to Borrowdale. The Cleveland C.C. has a very good hut in Patterdale and this is used quite regularly as a base, though personally I prefer to camp a little more central to where I intend to climb and walk.

For those who are prepared to drive six hours for their climbing there is plenty of scope in Scotland but inclement weather is the main problem here. It is more popular in the winter when it seems worth the effort if the snow and ice conditions are good. Then you really have to work for your pleasure - the long drive, in bed for about two o'clock, rise at six and the long flog to the crag to see if conditions are good.

The big difference up here is that ageing climbers often take up ski-ing; which can be enjoyed locally in Teesdale and Weardale, both of which are organised with permanent tows and are very popular. Scotland again is a big attraction for the skiers and provides a much less arduous weekend than climbing and, of course, conditions are not quite so critical and thus there is a far greater chance of getting something done.

An area that I have not yet mentioned is Northumberland, that huge rather unknown county which, though it seems to contain no great climbing crags, has an abundance of good crags of Whinsill (Craig Lough on Hadrians' Wall) and many good sandstone outcrops all of which are at present being listed and detailed in a new guidebook to be published by the Northumberland M.C. The county also has endless scope for hill walking. Just inside the S.E. border of Scotland we have a fine coastal area with a little climbing which makes a good place for an occasional visit.

As for our own activities abroad this summer I will give you a brief resume of our several attempts. Chamonix was our first port of call, reached after twenty four hours travelling. I was climbing with Ron Lake and on some routes we teamed up with Pete Scott and Chris Radcliffe of the Oread M.C. To warm up we decided to climb the Couturier Couloir on the Verte, but after a Bivouacc beneath the face the following day was one long storm and we retreated like drowned rats to Chamonix. A few days later we decided to attempt the Frendo Spur on the Aiguille du Midi and planned to climb it in two days because of the prevailing conditions - thus we climbed the dark rock buttress in the afternoon and bivouacked beneath the long snow/ice arete. The following morning conditions were poor though the weather was good and we enjoyed the arete and the plastered upper rock buttress all in glorious sunshine.

After this Ron and I went to the Col de la Trident Hut on the Frontiere Ridge with huge sacks of food and gear with the intention of attempting the Ecksfieler by the Bonatti-Gobi Route. After a day's rest and observation of the magnificent views we moved off on the attempt. The route follows a crack/chimney line up the huge rock buttress and eventually traverses on to the mixed rock and ice North Face before emerging on to the Peuterey Ridge of Mont Blanc. After a day's climbing up very steep, often loose rock, we were forced to bivouacc on a small ledge at the onset of a storm at five in the afternoon. The following morning we set off up a very hard pitch and then it began to snow again so we made the big decision to retreat. This was a very serious undertaking as we were exposed to rock falls and escaped one of enormous size and then once down the rock buttress we could not get on to the glacier because it was too late in the day and we had to bivouacc again with more storms in the night. The following morning we were able to retreat over the various glaciers and reach Chamonix.

Then it was our turn to leave Chamonix and journey to Grindelwald where with Pete and Chris we wished to climb the classic Eigerwand by the 1938 route. On arrival the weather was good but on close inspection the face was seen to be in thaw conditions. We moved straight up on to the face and we were duly impressed by its immense size and complexity. Unfortunately we could see ahead of us a party of four moving up the face and another party installed in the "Wet Bivouacc" cave. So many climbers on the face together was bad and we were forced to seek out new bivouacc sites beneath the "Wet Cave" because of its occupation by the "Tele Team". That night the heavens opened and we experienced a fantastic thunderstorm with impressive electronics playing on the railway in the valley.

We descended the following morning down, down, down to Alpglen and then to Grindelwald. Pete and Chris left for Chamonix having decided the face was just not in condition to their liking. We all tended to agree on this point but Ron and I decided to sit around for a few days.

Two days later we were once again on the lower slopes, the face was still wet but at least we had it to ourselves this time. We roped up for the Difficult Crack which was a waterfall and then traversed under the huge Rote Fluh wall dodging, not always successfully, the waterfalls and then swung across the Hinterstoisser Traverse through a cascade and reached our bivouacc, the "Swallows Nest". A rather small and somewhat damp bivvy. The view of the face that evening, rained between the whirl of falling stones, was really impressive - vast black and yellow limestone walls and ridges with waterfalls pouring from all the icefields and a torrent issuing from beneath the bottom of the first icefield.

The night was clear until just before dawn when a storm brewed up but not badly and we were undecided, taking into account the conditions of the face. "He who hesitates is lost" - we retreated as the storm blew over, passed the Tele Team as they swam up the difficult Crack and down to the heat in the valley and Alpglen in the sunshine. We were bitterly disappointed and nagged by the question of whether we were right to retreat. Who knows? That mountain will always be there, there is no doubt about that.

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POP CASUALTIES - A FAIRY TALE by Joe Brennan

We had just finished Demo route at Sennen and were lying wilting in the heat. Not a breath of wind stirred. The horizon was obscured by a combination of heat haze and artificially induced substances in the bloodstream. Makers of maps say that there are islands called Silly out there. They say that they are covered more in flowers than concrete, which by mainland standards, also seems silly.

"I'll go for some pop", gasps Stokes.

"I'll scramble back down", says I, "and get my delicate northern body out of this bloody sun or I'll die".

It was very quiet down there. After a time I soloed some way up the cliffs. The sea was like a sheet of glass. Nothing stirred, until suddenly, out of the stillness, I saw it ! An unspeakable horror ! A ghoul silhouetted against the blue sky at the top, arms upraised as though caught in some stance of primordial incantation to the gods: an abomination in red gore, dripping blood down the cliffs. But for all that bearing an uncanny resemblance to Stokes. It spoke.

"I've fallen off a boulder on to the bottle. I'm bleeding to death !".

"Holy Mother of God, move back, you're making the rock slippery".

A mad dash to the lifeboat house, with Stokes rapidly becoming anaemic. His thumb was swinging from a hinge of skin. And there were lots of other interesting wounds.

"Do you coagulate easily ?".

"Depends on the beer".

"They are good at cleaning rocks down here. They've had plenty of practice with oil. Your life's essence will be no problem to them".

The lifeboatman, at the bottom of the slipway, was pottering with lobsters or something. The sight of blood covered sweaty figures tearing down the slipway was too much - he thought the lifeboat was about to be called out.

"I say, my man, have you a needle and thread and an elastoplast ?".

"It's more than my life's worth to open the medicine box in the life-boat. That's for emergencies".

"Bloody Hell".

Slowly, the difficult concept that emergencies did not occur exclusively within the confines of four hundred foot waves, sunk through to the quaint barnacled brain. He disappeared into the boat, and after a moment, came back, incredibly, with an armful of drawers. Noticed that all the plasters were missing. Filth. Stokes was in no mood to be stimulated. An increased heart-rate and he threatened to become a fountain.

With several pairs of the aforesaid garments bandaged tightly around the most gushing part, we made occasional acquaintance with the road surface on the way to Penzance Hospital. Half of the Health Service turned out to see the grand finale of another successful mountain rescue operation as we howled into town at around 95 m.p.h.

"No, they weren't like that originally".

"Where did you get hold of them ?".

"We ran beserk in the Nurse's Home".

Glances of distaste. Stokes was about to be mummified, prepared for his new role as Egypt's answer to Walter Bonatti.

"I'll have to sit down, Sister", say I, looking for my share of the sympathy, "all this running around has shattered me".

"Don't look at it. You mustn't look at it. If you feel faint, lie on a bench in the waiting room".

"What ?".

"Try not to look at it. Have some salts", chirped in a nurse.

"What ?".

Think I'll go outside. Lie on the wall in the sun. Leave Stokes surrounded by this crowd of doting, if slightly insane, nurses. Visions of a gloriously hot climbing holiday coming to a sudden bloody end. If Stokes dies, I'll have double the gear, but no one to climb with. Inconvenient. Still it was quite an interesting spectacle. Sharks were seen at Chair

Ladder. Most of them are still alive, for they make difficult targets. Young seals used to swim in and watch us climb - but they soon learned better. Route finding here was difficult. Best thing was to forget the quidebook, the climbing is better for the uncertainty. The heat of Bosigran was unbelievable. Nothing for it now but to join that peculiar species known to the climber as 'The Rest of Humanity' on the beaches. Slowly ripening in the sun. The only point of a holiday being to change the shade of the skin. Expensive. Brown is beautiful - as long as it is acquired rather than given away at birth. Take my shirt off and they will need sunglasses to see me in the reflected glare. All of them grease covered, glistening in the sun. Day after day, lying silent and still. Life's nearest approach to death. The only movement being by the bikini clad ones as they hurl themselves, overcome by a sensual desire, in desperate futile attempts at our incredibly beautiful bodies. Otherwise, for the rest, reptilian stillness and slowed metabolism. Perhaps if enough people do it often enough, the memory pattern of the genes will be altered and the evolutionary process reversed with the whole human race eventually crawling lizard-like back into the polluted seas. Full circle.

"Jesus, Mary and Holy Saint Joseph, Nurse !".

Driven by her professional zeal, the sight of me flat out on the wall convinced her that the carnage inside had been too much for my sensitive soul. She advances to administer a trusty dose of the salts.

Eventually Stokes emerges, stitched and stuck together. The main offender, his thumb, looked as though it had been more goitered than gashed.

Despite being weighed down by some 75 lbs. of bandages, Stokes by some means contrived to climb rather better than me - which is no recommendation, I know - but a few more bottles of Dandelion and Burdock should even things up. Once, at Bosigram, having somehow just completed Nameless, we found seven pegs, all in good condition. Unbelievably the weather got hotter. There was not a soul to be seen on the crags after midday. It had become literally too hot to climb in the afternoon. The Watergate Bay Pop Festival would provide more suitable entertainment. Besides, we had a plan. Anarchy shall have its day

An ape-like creature approaches across the car park outside the giant marquee. It speaks.

"Are you Roger's Mates ?".

"No chief, we're poets in search of the transcendental existentialism of a total POP experience".

"You takin' the piss ?".

"Who's Roger ?".

"He organises the bouncers".

An outer enclosure guards the marquee. Two barriers to get through; the enclosure, and a band of dressed gorillas guarding the entrance to the inner sanctum. No problem with the enclosure; in the dark round on the sea side, a few hard extreme moves and we were in. Who says that climbing is not of practical value ? But the more difficult obstacle was to come. Crowds were milling round the entrance to the marquee. We approached one bouncer.

"Where's Roger ?".

"Roger who ?".

"Em.".

"You mean Roger Smith, organiser of the bouncers ?".

"Yes, that's the one".

"Around".

We wait until they change shift and another prime neanderthal set troop into position. Confidentially up to the most officious looking one, staring straight into small pink eyes.

"Where's Roger Smith, my man ?".

"Around".

"Well, he told us we'd be alright".

"Oh" .

"And if we had any trouble to ask for em Fred Crump".

"Em. ".

Confusion dawns.

"Look here, are you trying to keep us here all night, or have we got to find Roger and tell him his orders are being disobeyed ?".

"Oh. I suppose you'd better go through then".

Inside, pounds saved, all conversation ceased. Deafening decibels way beyond the pain threshold, blasting eardrums to smithereens. The paying customers looked like a Saturday night crowd in the Padarn, multiplied a thousandfold - but suffering of hangups rather than hangovers.

"We're creating new life styles, man".

"Yes, but we got in free".

"Groovey. Have some grass".

After a time things became confused. Strong stuff. The Padarn. Of course. Were they all climbers ? What was the plan ? Of course, they must all be. Why was everything spinning ? We must be in the Padarn. What was the plan ? Must try

The vast confused throng see the jump on to the stage. The microphone is grabbed. A voice, impossibly magnified, comes booming from the giant amplifiers.

"The Sociology of Climbing - Part One. Introduction".

"The myth that is being deliberately perpetuated is that climbing is an activity for the independent and self-reliant individualist. And that the hard man is the personification of these admirable qualities".

"But is it so ? Look closer and the opposite appears to be nearer the truth. How else could the complete and absolute group conformity be explained ? Everyone looks alike, behaves alike, talks alike, holds the same attitudes. If you want evidence of this, try extolling the virtues of the Ordinary Route up Mont Blanc in the Bar National in Chamonix, and, no matter how good you are, watch

the looks of amused contempt. You have spoken out of turn. You are not conforming to the archetypal image of the pre-pressed, mass-produced, universal way-out hard man. The conditioning process has been successful and complete. The laws of marketing are being rigorously applied. Demand is being created. Alpine holidays are encouraged, because more equipment is required. Hard men are encouraged, because then they will need more equipment. The masses are encouraged to emulate the hard man and so buy the equipment HE uses. We need to buy information to keep up to date. The vast hoards that flock to the same old hack places, to indulge in the same old predictable epics, only evidence by their behaviour that the brainwashing process is complete. They are sold on others' well publicised ideas.

Look at the incredible prices of climbing gear and clothing. Note that significant price variation is virtually non-existent. If present trends continue, there will soon be a separate guide book for every tiny lump of exposed rock in the country. Slightly larger lumps will have several competing guidebooks, each desperately looking for a new formula to justify its existence, each talking piously about its so-called sophisticated numero-adjectival grading system, which, in reality, must seem obvious even to a baby. More than one cliff per guidebook will not be allowed.

The rapidly multiplying outdoor pursuits schools will ensure a constant supply of new fodder.

Equipment manufacturers, publishers, circuit lecturers, tour operators, cafe owners, pub owners, suppliers, advertisers, distributors rub their hands, line their pockets, and beam benevolently down on their obedient, way out public".

The crowd moves forward. Violence. Chaos. Anarchy

Next morning sees a painful awakening. We are camped on a hill. Heads are not in the best of condition. What happened last night? Not sure but I think it's rough up here. Must have been windy.

Think I'll retire to Sennen. Be a lifeboatman. Collect bandages.

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ONE MOMENT IN ANNIHILATION'S WASTE.

by Roger Bennett.

The line meandered up a steep wall spattered by small overlaps that, on one hand discouraged the attempt and on the other, coyly beckoned. The first fifty feet or so were impatiently identified and a start made.

At first, a short groove with a light-coloured scar, mute testament to a missing hold. A few awkward thin moves and establishment on the route. Gradually getting into the rhythm of observation, calculation and achievement. A slow dawning of the realisation of a certain paucity of protection gradually slowing down that same rhythm. The everslowing creep ending at a peg below an overhang. Temporary relief clouded by the presence of the overhang, overwhich the line goes. Can see where to go but not HOW. Can now see how but lack resolve to DO. A quick peep over to be confronted by a small slab below a bulging wall. The only accessible hold, in the middle of the slab, seemingly connected to the rock by mud. Retreat to the peg for discussion.

Super-ego: "One can have a go at any move with protection like that".

Id: "That's pub talk. This is reality".

Super-ego: "If YOU don't HE will".

Id: "So what ?".

With the super-ego chuckling its temporary victory the move went with surprising ease followed by some awkward crab-like sidling to a comfortable position below a groove. Time for a runner. A nut placed unconvincingly in a crack and movement

is continued. Now the way can be seen as far as the belay and confidence gradually overtakes apprehension as progress slowly brings it within reach.

An immediate outpouring of tension - no more responsibility as there is only one more pitch and that is HIS.

He ambles up with disconcerting ease and takes over the lead. Fast nimble moves up to a large roof. Hard-looking moves across below it executed quickly and competently to a crouched position below a slight weakness in the overhang. The way goes up.

The flow of movements falters and stops. His movements now consist of repeated advances and retreats intersposed by minor protection improvements.

Doubts now set in. 'If it's hard, leave it. Blast him for finding it hard.' That always sets off an ever accelerating progression of interest, worry, disinterest, boredom and finally fear. Another battle in the mind.

Id: "This is illogical. There is an easy way off to the left".

Super-ego: "But that would mean an uncompleted route - an uncollected stamp for the album".

Id: "Comfort and peace of mind are more important right now".

Super-ego: "He'll look at you, and in his mind he'll be laughing, and then you'll know"

A sudden jerky movement of the rope followed by a smooth flow and he's up.

A mixture of elation that the route is, to all intents and purposes, over, coupled with an apprehension about that move.

The minutes tick by and, after what seems an eternity, the rope is following the line rapidly until there is no more.

All worries pushed into the background as the belay is untied and gear arranged. A last pull on the cigarette in the hope of gaining extra strength and confidence from the nicotine and movement starts.

Clumsy at first, as muscles readjust to movement again. Elation giving way to worry as the overhang gets nearer.

The holds, seen from below, gradually disappear, but, after a few tentative exploratory moves, they are replaced by others. Adrenalin escapes into the blood and the move is made to easier ground - a few feet more and it's over.

The gear is discarded with mixed feelings of relief and triumph.

"What next ?".

* * * * *

I have had plenty of time to work out why climbers climb. Being married to one gives me ample opportunity to ponder the question, whether I'm flat on my back in a two foot high cave, sardined between snoring but happy climbers, or alone at weekends in a cold double bed; whether I'm pounding climbing socks into the rocks of a mountain stream in Corsica, or watching them as they rotate between shirts and levis in the spin dryer at the local launderette. Certain conclusions have been forcing themselves upon me so, although they are not new I will set them down - if only to pad out the Newsletter.

Basically climbers are misfits, in some cases drop-outs. They are not examples of the Average Male. They are either too small, or too large, too shy or too boisterous, too bored or too boring to comply with the exacting standards laid down by society. They come from both ends of all sorts of scales, but never from the middle. You just have to sit in the Prince of Wales on a Wednesday night and look around you, as I have done, to see what I mean. The Club comprises the oddest collection of people I have ever seen, all drawn together by a need to belong somewhere, to be accepted, if not as themselves, as climbers. On Wednesday nights, at any rate, they have an identity, they have companions who talk the same language, and think in the same way.

It is this need for an identity, I think, which drives the climber, particularly the fanatic. When he was younger he must have felt in some way that he could not compete with his contemporaries. Perhaps he was no good at games or he found schooling difficult. Maybe it was hard to make friends or he was unhappy at home. There are all sorts of possible reasons, but the effect has always been the same - it has developed a need in the man to prove himself. He must find an area in which he can excel, something unusual which will test him and prove him competent, more competent than those against whom he struggled in childhood. He is thus able to overcome his feelings of inferiority and gain the respect he has sought so long.

I am sure that very few climbers would say, "I climb to overcome my inferiority complex, to prove my identity". On the contrary, they would explain that they enjoy the outdoor life and that the challenge of rock is irresistible; they may try to describe the exaltation felt in conquering fear and defying nature on a route just within their capabilities; or they may content themselves with the pleasures of the pub and the darts board. But if you examine it, it all boils down to the same thing. Climbers climb in order to overcome a basic feeling of inadequacy forced on them when young, simply because society cannot tolerate anyone who is slightly different. I must add, however, that despite all this, I like people who are different. An Average Male is an extremely boring animal.

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Above us was the most peculiar rock face that I had ever seen. The right-hand half built like a gritstone edge, only some twenty times larger, the left-hand section, up which the North West Face route, the Voie du Nid d'aigle, goes is a deep red in its lower half and honeycombed by holes and chimneys. This last consisting of a rock called locally Tafoni, a strange bubble like formation, impossible to peg but containing innumerable natural threads for protection. The upper section of this fantastic face is grey-yellow streaked with brilliant yellow, bald rock, save for the obvious dierdre which the route follows. High up is the feature that gives the climb its name. This is a round hole, the Eagle's Nest, from which a large white streak of bird-lime issues.

We had found a grassy hollow in the icy gritty scree slope at the base of the face in which to bivouacc. A good stream was nearby. We were hemmed in by the North Pillar of Paglia Orba and the strange black turreted ridge of Tafonato. I had a bruised rib and spent an uncomfortable and sleepless night though it was not very cold. I had a marvellous view of a deep starlight sky above surrounded by fascinating ridges. Thoughts of others, back at camp, gulping bottle after bottle of deep red wine, flashed through my mind.

As we plodded up the scree next morning two men above leaped across and disappeared into the gully up which the route started. When we arrived they were soloing around looking for a way around the initial overhang. We found out that they were Austrians. Eventually they found the way and soloed up the first few pitches, a large gully jammed by two huge boulders forming a succession of caves. We gave them half an hour's start and then roped up on the first pitch of grade IV. Five hundred feet of easy but interesting climbing lead to the base of the wall proper where we caught up with the two Austrians. They had roped up at the foot of the first chimney, which overhung considerably but was well furnished with huge crispy holds. I led up to a small pulpit at the foot of the chimney. Matt followed, reached me, unshouldered his ruc sac and leaned out and swung up into the chimney. He belayed sixty foo. higher. I found the chimney quite hard and awkward. Two similar pitches followed and we

caught up with the Austrians. Above was the first grade VI pitch, an overhanging chimney. The leader of the Austrian party had climbed this and then gone off route towards the Eagle's Nest and was fighting his way, peg by peg, up a crack that we could see from below and knew to lead nowhere. So we sat and waited. After half an hour he decided to retreat and called to us to climb past. Matt lead the chimney up to the point where the Austrian had gone off route but could not progress any further as it was difficult to place the two pegs required to surmount the short wall above to the stance. Matt, being Matt, kept trying for about two hours before admitting defeat. The Austrians had, in the meantime, joined me below the chimney. At one point, whilst reversing the pitch, he had boldly jumped down into the upper section of the chimney catching a runner on the way. They both spoke English and offered me pineapple, bread and sausage, so I feasted whilst Matt struggled above me.

The Austrians then decided to abseil off and threaded one of the numerous natural threads with a sling for the abseil rope. The leader tested it and set off boldly down and in one long free abseil was back on easy ground at the base of the first chimney. His second, however, inspected the thread more closely and seemed a little doubtful of its stability and asked me if I thought it safe. I said yes - but to reassure him I clipped our tape into their sling that was around another thread. He set off down and as he disappeared over the edge the thread from which he was abseiling began to crack and break up alarmingly. I was sure it would snap at any second. Our belay was smaller and thinner than the abseil point - so I immediately began to tie it to everything in sight to try and save us from impending disaster. Matt was above me and blissfully unaware of the situation and was calling down to me to watch the rope as he was in danger of falling. Then suddenly he was down and the perlon became weightless again and Matt decided that it was too difficult and began to retreat. Gradually my heart beats slowed and softened as Matt and I rigged up one of the most elaborate systems of abseil slings imaginable.

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THOUGHT ON THE CRUX:

Rock above, rock below,
Rock on either side,
Fingers an' toes
Clinging to holds;
Trying to sense
A friendly adhesion
In the rock.

Alone, gloriously,
And frighteningly, alone.
The only communication
A rope,
Stretching down,
Through small devices;
Sops to the conscience, or fear.
At the other end ?
A person watching the rope,
Or thinking
Of a girl,
A beer,
Comfort,
God.

The move, can I do it ?
The mind
Tabulates and calculates.
Relating theory to reality.
A step, a pull
GENTLY
With tongue in cheek.
An overwhelming exhilaration.
I will, I won't,
I HAVE.

CAVING VERSUS CLIMBING: By Bruce Webb.

The reaction of most keen climbers to the idea of going caving is startling and often violent. They feel threatened, as if their climbing ability and manhood had been insulted. Caving is the ultimate degradation, a sport fit only for ex-climbers, pathetic, no longer able to hold their own in a man's world.

To cavers, such as my friends and myself, this attitude is ridiculous. Caving has so much to offer; it is a combination of climbing, exploration, danger and the discovery of a whole new world underground. This article looks at the subject of caving versus climbing from the cavers' point of view, for a change.

What can rock-climbing offer the caver? Several things. For example:

1. The mixed feelings of joy and relief after getting up a new route, HVS or EXS, and thinking to oneself, "Hell, what a route! But I enjoyed it". Or, perhaps, on approaching the summit ridge of some gruelling and majestic Alpine Peak, the exaltation of looking down and knowing it was worth the effort.

2. The exhilarating thought that one false move could lead to a serious peel. (This seems to be a driving force behind many climbers these days).

3. The "Spirit of Adventure" (or sheer stubbornness) that climbers seem to acquire if or when they peel off. To quote an instance: after falling unexpectedly into my poor, unhappy second's lap, on a cliff in the Lake District, I immediately turned around, without bothering to find out if either of us were hurt, and before I started to shake from shock flung a mouthful of violent abuse at the rock face. "You bastard!! I'll get you yet". After we had resorted the gear I succeeded in climbing the crack that had refused to go the first time. (Climbers are a pretty mad lot when they get started. They have to be or the sport would stagnate and nothing new would be done).

4. The beauty of living close to Nature up in the mountain air.

What can caving offer the rock-climber? Many things. For Example:

1. First and foremost, scientific research.

2. The ability to go where the general non-caving public cannot, in peace and quiet, away from the hustle and bustle of every day life.

3. The chance of following in the footsteps of the first explorers and experiencing the beauty of rare natural wonders. Exploration is a very important part of the caver's sport. (The word spelaeology means the scientific study of caves). It can involve making surveys of particular cave systems, spore and dye testing underground rivers, digging out and removing clay, earth and rock rubble to enable a possible passage to be uncovered and perhaps archaeological remains to be found. When making a survey including rock and fossil samples, you have a ready-made guide for others wishing to continue work on your system, and also you have a piece of scientific information that you have collected yourself. There are many beautiful sights underground, e.g. cave pearls which are formed in a similar way to genuine pearls, geodes or crystal lined cavities, rock crystals, calcite formations, moon milk etc.

4. The opportunity to combine rock climbing techniques with caving when weather conditions prohibit exterior climbing.

5. An extremely dangerous sport only to be undertaken through a club or with experienced cavers. This cannot be too strongly stressed. Parties of less than four, it has been found, carry the highest risk of danger in the event of an accident. You must be fully equipped at all times, which can be rather cumbersome.

6. Caves are usually wet, dark places. Most people dislike the idea straight away. (Some caves can be really wet and muddy, e.g. Carlsward Cavern and Merlin's Cave, both at Stoney Middleton, and the Sandford Levy and Rods Pot, both in the Mendips).

7. Lastly, and most important, the knowledge that an injury, even a small one, in a cave system causes major difficulties. The subsequent rescue operation involves a lot of money, time and patience. (The majority of caving accidents are caused by inexperienced people i.e. caving with insufficient numbers and equipment, exhaustion etc.).

NOW ! The average climber thinks of caving as a dirty stinking sport, (some say "a waste of time ! ") that involves crawling about on hands and knees, or stomach, or back, sometimes through a trickle of water, loads of mud, MUD, MUD, MUD GLORIA'S MUD ! (Please excuse me, I get carried away) on earth and rocks, and at other times actually crawling through a foot or so of water and that clinging, heavy, slimy mud ! EUK ! GREAT !

This could go on for ever. I think that basically climbers and cavers enjoy the similar feelings when they reach their goal.

To conclude! I mentioned this article to R.F.Cox, an ardent caving friend, and we put our heads together to produce the following epilogue.

The potholer or caver is a strange breed, neither man nor beast. He links man's age old urge for exploration with the exhilarating dangers which are inherent in any physical sport. The caver is more intelligent than most, especially climbers who are children scrambling about like apes, because he sees the wider picture of man's past and future all around him in his exhilarating escapades.

What could be more beautiful than three feet of mud clinging to one's body (MORE!! MORE!! MORE!!), cut elbows and knees, being stuck in a hole with water gushing around your ankles and rising, and no means of escape ? The whole system of Nature surrounds you in this dark, dark world where only the "Brave steel-hearted men of our glorious country" would dare to venture, in the intricate subterranean world of early Greek mythology.

But all this only goes to prove that, "WE'RE ONLY HERE FOR THE BEER! ".

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NEW ROUTES

This is a brief note on some of the new routes done by club members since the last Newsletter.

WALES: TRANQUILITY

700 feet HVS. This girdles the North cliff of Clogwyn y Geifr. It starts fifty feet up East Gully, crossing the cliff at two thirds height, reversing part of Devil's Nordwand and crossing Druid'd Doghouse (A. Austin), to finish up Inferno by an obvious curving chimney. An excellent route on good rock with superb situations. First Ascent: K. Hipkiss and Z. Leppert.

INFERNO

340 feet V.S. This takes a groove line to the left of the North Slabs with a fairly hard first pitch. The rock is fairly clean and very sound.
First Ascent: K. Hipkiss and Z. Leppert.

LLANYMYNECH: ECHELON

35 feet Al. This is in the small Cul-de-Sac Quarry and it takes the gently overhanging wall on the left as one enters the Quarry. The actual line goes up a groove and crack line on the left of the wall.
First Ascent: Phil Robbins and Dave Irons.

SWAN SONG

100 feet HVD. This is on the first large buttress of Asterley Rocks as one approaches from the Bay Wall Area. It takes a line up the buttress starting just right of a low wide cave in the base of the crag, up a short steep groove, and then up a rather loose arete in two stages to the top.
This could improve with traffic.
First Ascent: Joe Brennan and Roger Bennett. (Alternate leads).

CORNWALL: XENOLITH

160 feet Hard S. This is on the Mild and Bitter Buttress of Carn Les Boel. It takes the left edge of the lower slabs, a short steep wall (crux) and some awkward corners to the chimney of Mild and Bitter. Up this and then a slab to the top. An interesting and varied route.
First Ascent: Ken Hipkiss, Joe Brennan and Roger Bennett (Various leads).