

EDITORIAL, NOVEMBER 1971.

R.J.F. Bennett.

The first thing to strike club members about this issue of the Newsletter will be the new format. The reason for this change is the increasing cost of the charges of professional printing. During the last club year it has cost, on the average, the sum of £20 to bring out each issue of the Newsletter. Averaging four issues a year this brings the annual cost to the region of £80, a sum it was felt that could be put to better use in other directions.

This publication is called a "NEWSLETTER" but it can only be said to be this is name. If one takes the trouble to glance through the copies covering the last three years the material presented tends to lean toward reminiscencing and away from news.

It is relatively easy for a few people to compile reminiscences but not so for a large number of people to supply news and information.

I have had to stop the INFORMATION section as no information has come in from sources other than myself. I cannot believe that club members go around with their eyes shut but that they feel that any information they happen to pick up is not of interest to other people. This is quite often a mistaken belief arising from misplaced modesty.

There is no fresh news from the committee at the moment and no reports on OUTDOOR MEETS.

\* \* \* \* \*

\* \* \* \* \*

SECRETARY'S REPORT.

Andy Dowell.

The only thing of importance that I have to report is that members of the Committee and Club members are at present looking into possible amendments to the constitution. Any suggestions that members have for amendments should be mentioned to the following for consideration.

G. Fenton, D. Grimitt, R. Lovell, R. Hay and W. Martin.

The following have been accepted as full members of the Club.

M. Pickering, B. Farrelly, J. Robertson, G and R. Fenton.

\* \* \* \* \*

PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION.

L. Devlin.

This is to be held at 8.0 p.m. on Wednesday 24th. November, 1971. The closing date for entries will be the 10th. November, 1971.

It is requested that the black and white entries be half plate size, but some of our younger or impecunious members may find this too expensive, particularly if several shots are to be entered, so enprints will be accepted though their impact would not be so great as would the selected enlargements. Larger sizes than half plate will also be accepted.

As advertised on the wall adjacent to the dart board there will be four sections:

Black and White..... Action  
Black and White..... General  
Colour..... Action  
Colour..... General

A certain amount of artistic licence will of course be allowed for in the General Section.

We are more concerned with the subject of your efforts rather than the actual quality of the photographic processing.

Please make every endeavour to come early on the 24th. so that everyone will have a chance to see all the exhibits and so that all the colour slides may be shown.

We are trying to enlist the services of an eminent mountaineering photographer to judge everything prior to the actual night of the exhibition.

\* \* \* \* \*

THE SNOWS OF KILIMANJARO (WITH APOLOGIES TO ERNEST HEMINGWAY).

The rains had broken bringing the long drawn out bone chilling winds up from the sun baked plains to hurl the large snow flakes against the men on THE MOUNTAIN.

Dougal stood in the snow gazing blank eyed towards the upper camps and his thoughts reached out to the men up there in the storm.

"Is there news, my friend?" he inquired.

"No. There is no news." answered Christian.

"Always. There is no news. We stand and wait watching the porters dragging tired slack feet towards THE MOUNTAIN. And still no news."

"No. There is no news." said Christian.

Each man stood there thinking of the waiting for some word from Don perched up in that white world on THE MOUNTAIN. Don the artist, the real man, an hombre sincero, the man who used pitons and axe like bandilleras to dominate the mountain as the torero dominates a good mucra in the ruedo. Don, lo major del montanas.

"We could go up and see for ourselves." grunted Dougal.

"Yes. We could go up there." replied Christian.

"But there is the storm. We would not find the climbing easy in the storm."

"No. It would not be easy."

Each man retreated into his own thoughts concerning the MOUNTAIN, the storm, Don, the drinking in the beer stinking smoky bar in Nyeri where old men sit clutching glasses of Pombe made from fermented meal thinking of those younger ones going up to THE MOUNTAIN and the things of the past like the thing with women.'

A man staggered drunkenly out of the whiteness and stood shrunken before them.

"I have made the long journey up to the upper camps." he said.

"That is a difficult thing; to go up to the upper camps." said Dougal.

"Aice...." he hissed "It was not an easy thing."

"Is there no news." asked Christian.

"There is no news". said he shaking his head.

"No. There is no news." said Dougal.

\* \* \* \* \*

### THE DECLINE OF A PASTIME.

In Breconshire there is a small village known as Three Cocks, and a story is told (which I believe is true) of a man of this place who, being an ardent promoter of the Welsh tongue, spent the whole of his life trying to get its name written in this language; rather than the English by which it was, and still is known. The foregoing is an example of a life wasted by devotion to a cause unworthy of so much endeavour. An example which, unfortunately, has its analogy in two attitudes which pervade mountaineering today.

Immoderation is a vice in all things, as much with the mountaineer as the drunkard. The man who can think of nothing but the climbs he is about to do, or the climbs he intends to do, is as much an addict as an alcoholic; whose life consists of the contemplation of present and future drink. To spend every minute of time available in clinging to some crag, or to feel cheated if circumstances thwart this ambition; indicates a poverty of intellect which is not conducive to a vivacity of temperament. Such people are, as Hazlitt wrote, "people with one idea; not so much because they have one idea, but because they have no others"; like all addicts they are pathetic bores.

Since the early nineteen twenties mountaineering has been permeated by a very pernicious doctrine, this doctrine has become the accepted creed of a very large section of climbers, to the extent that it is regarded as the only legitimate outlook that a climber can hold. This creed is best described as the cult of the 'hard man', or to use less esoteric language, the adoration of the hero. As the motivating spirit of the pastime it is an importation from the world as a whole, and has its source in various philosophical teachings which, having their origins in late eighteenth century Europe, have had a profound effect on humanity as a whole. An article such as this is not the best method of elucidating this movement; suffice it to say that in politics this creed is usually known as nationalism, or in its most extreme form, Fascism; which reached its climax in Nazi Germany.

Self-glorification is the basic desire of the adherents of the cult that I am considering, this can be of a collective or individual kind, when it is collective it takes the form of the nationalism that I have mentioned above. Formerly nationalism played an important part in the sport, particularly in major Himalayan expeditions, although its influence is much diminished at present, but as the recent International Everest Expedition so amply demonstrated it is still a force to be reckoned with. And we shall always have the Japanese to keep this particular tradition alive. The decline of collective egotism in the pastime is a cause for some rejoicing, unfortunately concomitant with this decline there has been an increase in the more individual variety. Essentially, those who find this state of affairs satisfying, see themselves as the centre of a universe, around which all else revolves. They are the gods of their own religion. What was once the dubious motive of the few, has become the inherited prejudice of the many.

Amongst those to whom mountaineering is not just an occasional pursuit, as opposed to those who only engage in it for a few days a year, there can now be observed the fanaticism that has, increasingly, become a feature of the pastime. With this fervour has also appeared the zealots dogmatic belief in the validity of his aims. Fanatics are always people of very limited vision, and it is this narrow-mindedness that produces the contemptuous and intolerant nature which is their usual characteristic. Intolerance of all perspectives but one's own produces the corollary that the ends justify the means: if one is convinced that one's aims are the only right objectives in life, then whatever it takes to achieve them is acceptable; it is because of the prevalence of this attitude, that modern mountaineering has sunk to the level it has.

To be thought well of in climbing circles today, or to be able to indulge in an orgy of self-congratulation, both of which appear to be what present day mountaineering is about; it is necessary to perform some feat that has never before been accomplished. No matter how futile or stupid the exploit may be. Thus we have been led into a concept of progress ( a dubious term) in climbing which is merely the ascent of ever greater, and objectively more dangerous, faces. There is in this belief the tacit assumption that the only legitimate aim of a mountaineer, is to accomplish the most difficult climbs that he is physically capable of, and that any lapse from this state of affairs must be wholeheartedly deplored. Those who subscribe to this ethic will regard the ability to spend a week clawing their way up some stupendous cliff as a commendable piece of work, and the desire to do so a laudable purpose. A scheme to ascend some weather racked Himalayan face will receive automatic applause; no-one will doubt for a moment that it is of inestimable value to humanity that it should be accomplished; in many cases no expense will be considered too much - although any demand by the porters or Sherpas for more than a cheap pair of boots (army surplus) and five shillings a week, for a great deal of hard work, will be thought outrageous. (I am probably in the minority, when I say that I do not think that the recent Annapurna and Everest expeditions were worth a tenth of the money spent on them; let alone two dead. It would not matter two pins if no-one ever did those climbs at all). If the sport is simply the ascent of climbs of ever increasing difficulty, there will soon come a time when success will be solely dependant on luck, rather than ability. In this it will have rendered its own extinction inevitable; and its demise will be no-ones loss.

Misplaced zeal is usually accompanied by an unconscious acceptance of qualities which would, in other circumstances, be considered abhorrent; correspondingly, those who best embody these qualities become exalted among the zealots: a society usually produces the sort of people it idealises. For the production of 'heroes', in the modern mould, sensibility, and a wide appreciation of the world they perform their sport in, are not traits which are efficacious. Instead there is often found in these people, besides that narrow-minded fanaticism that I have already remarked upon, an ability to endure self-inflicted discomfort (perhaps even enjoy it?) and an acceptance of, and admiration for, a callousness that can, and does, brutalise all concerned. The former of these two characteristics is called masochism, and is regarded as a perversion; the latter is a quality which is admirable in no-one, whatever else he may be noted for. Nowhere is the degeneration of mountaineering values better demonstrated than in its literature - of which I shall say more later - and the euphemisms which have made their appearance in vocabulary of climbing terms.

Euphemisms are the language of those who wish to draw a veil over the truth, or, they are used by those who are indifferent to reality, or wish others to think that they are. The former attitude is based on fear, the latter on an arrogant indifference to suffering. The words this slang deposes is an indication of the mental state of climbers, and its currency shows how wide-spread this mental attitude is. A list of these expressions is revealing: chopped - dead; gripped - frightened; spastic - clumsy (this is a term I find particularly repulsive; it also has its roots in fear) it is immediately apparent that they all concern the less pleasant aspect of the pastime, and are an attempt to disguise the fact that climbing accidents, like all other kinds, are a bloody and distressing business.

Two short extracts will suffice to demonstrate the change that, in outlook, the literature of the sport exemplifies. I am not criticising the authors, but I am suggesting that each is characteristic of its own era, both in outlook and style, and that the sentiments expressed by one age would find little sympathy in the other:

We do not lessen the reclusive beauty of a rock cliff by climbing it - and no one else need read our descriptions. The Matterhorn is unchangeably the Matterhorn, for all the hundreds who trample up and down it during a few weeks each summer. We have only to avoid them, or to learn merely to shut them out of our mind's eye, and the sublimity meets us unaltered. Climb upon Lliwedd during all but a few week-ends and holiday spates of the year, forget record and rumour, above all forget all that admirable books such as this guide have to say about it, and the lift of its sombre precipice above the ruffled lake, the challenge of each foot of the stark crags looning into the lowering clouds, the cold ruckle of the wind-draughts up the wet rifts and the harsh croak of the expectant Raven will give you back most of the uncertainty and all of the delight that it held for those who first ventured upon it.

(From the historical section of the 1939 Lliwedd guide by Geoffrey Winthrop Young.)



Now for the modern viewpoint:

The route up the right wall of Scoop Wall, Our Father, is one of the fiercest: strenuousness and looseness, small holds, advanced layback and delicacy, small runners and an occasional piton, all combine to make this a climb requiring a concentration of superlative efforts. For a safe ascent, it requires extreme leadership of the most mature kind, recognition of the margin without weakness. Possibly, no such ascent has ever been made. Only those who have done it really know.

(Stoney Middleton at the change of life; an article by Paul Nunn in issue 9 of Mountain, May 1970.)

It is not just time that separates the authors of these articles, but also a completely changed outlook. Whilst it must be admitted that Lliwedd, unlike Stoney Middleton, which resembles a council tip in atmosphere, gives ample scope for a more lyrical style, the difference is in the approach of each writer to the sport: the first passage is indicative of an age that enjoyed its climbing principally through a delight in the surroundings that they found themselves in: the second passage is, in rather pretentious language, an unashamed wallow in vicarious egotism and power worship. As I said before, I have not chosen these two people because they represented views that are extreme, but because the outlooks they reveal in these passages are typical of their times.

Earlier I said that if present trends continue success, and survival, will depend more on luck than ability, in mountaineering: for my own part I think that this state of affairs is already with us. Few recent Himalayan expeditions have not returned with at least one of their number dead. And in the recent Japanese performance on Everest, to commemorate Expo'71, Sherpas appear to have regarded as expendable items of equipment. But perhaps we should not expect anything else from a people whose outlook on such things is that of barbarians: it may be thought that in saying this I am being unjust, so I must confess to a very low opinion of the traditional Japanese ethos. At least they can always claim to be merely exaggerating the prevalent attitudes of mountaineering. The ideal mountaineer, according to the modern mould, is a gymnast who is also fanatical to the point of insanity. This being so, the Japanese will probably become the world's leading climbers; no other nation has so successfully alloyed a talent for suicide, with such total lack of imagination.

However, they have their counterparts in other parts of the world, as the present vogue for soloing demonstrates. It must be a particularly demanding kind of vanity that causes people to risk their lives for the applause of the mob, and a very morbid sense of values that thinks such conceit, and carelessness of life, so admirable. Those who think it a praiseworthy thing to disregard every method of minimizing the risks inherent in mountaineering, cannot complain if the rest of the community place as little value on their lives, as they do themselves. Yet no one of these egotistical zealots would not expect to be rescued from whatever situation he had managed to get himself, should the need arise. In a word, they are parasites; who trade on the goodwill and pity of those they frequently despise. Picture the cry of horror if it were suggested that those who deliberately place themselves in extreme situations, say soloing the Eiger, should be left to their own devices in the event of difficulty: such people obviously think such a climb to be worth a considerable chance of dying for; they cannot then lament overmuch, if imbued with the spirit of death or glory, the former rather than the latter is their reward, Who amongst us would not be satisfied to achieve half his ambitions.

The world has not an infinity of compassion, and the measure it contains would be best distributed among those most in need of its receipt. When one of our modern 'heroes' comes to grief, his sycophantic admirers will, should he survive, treat him with a deference that usually acknowledges accomplishment; if he does not, their condolences will be sincere; they will be the commiserations of those who have just discovered, with shocked surprise, that neither he, or themselves, are after all, immortal. In contrast to this sympathetic attitude, the posture adopted towards novices who come to grief often takes the form of censure, or derision, the former attitude is exemplified by the strictures, heaped upon beginners who have accidents, by all the pompous moralisers who now infest the sport, and who hope that the grave and ostentatious manner in which they flaunt their opinions, will cause others to recognize the mantle they have already assumed; the mantle of 'Expert'. At some time or other we have all borne witness to the pontifications of these self styled experts. They will pronounce with affected gravity on the sins and omissions of those unfortunate to have an accident, (however, such people are strangely silent if the victim is a noted member of the climbing world) and will vigorously condemn all who, "were not properly equipped" - whatever that may mean? Many climbers must

no more afraid of involvement in an accident where they are found to lack some item of 'proper equipment', (a whistle or compass perhaps?) than in injury itself.

However, should any of the notable expeditions suffer casualties - usually by deliberately placing themselves in positions where casualties are probable, rather than possible - not a word is heard from self-appointed guardians of the pastime. Like many of their kind they are mostly concerned with enhancing their own prestige, and criticism of mountaineering's idols is not an efficacious method of pursuing this aim.

Of the derision I have mentioned the evidence is, sadly, all too common. In days that are not so far in the distant past serious accidents would engender a sense of dejection and dismay amongst all climbers, now - except when the victim is prominent in the sport - such events frequently provoke amused indifference, or, if the cause of the accident has been some particularly gross error of technique committed by an inevitably nescient new-comer to the pastime, that smug derision which is little better than suppressed hilarity. (The sentiments I have criticized here I have heard personally, they are not conjectures.)

Increasing brutalisation is a common adjunct to excessive autism: a predilection to see one's self and actions as the centre around which all does or should revolve, is not an attitude that tends to produce that generosity of spirit which tolerates, and sympathises with, the failings and misfortunes of others. This is one cause of the changed outlook of the sport. Another is the fact that since climbers appear to have assumed the role that gladiators once held in ancient Rome, they no longer feel that it is incumbent on them to justify the sport to the public. A populace to whom all climbers were once 'mad', will sit in their gullible thousands to watch some performers of note go through their pre-arranged tricks, accompanied by a banal and adulatory commentary: a few deaths are now weighed against so much vicarious pleasure. We have now reached a point where ignorance, or the occasional lapse of attention, (both of which are inseparable from any human activity) receive the condemnation of many; but the sort of courage that would be better described as indifference to life, or wanton stupidity; is acclaimed by all. A sad state of affairs.

My remarks so far have been of a deprecatory and negative nature, so to redress the balance, and refute those who will, by now, have come to the conclusion that the mountaineering I favour is a complete emasculation of the sport as they think of it, I will describe those features of the pastime that I think are of value, and the sort of outlook that all engaged in the sport would do well to cultivate.

When I say that the only defensible reason for climbing is that it gives pleasure to the people who indulge in it without cost to anyone else, it will be accepted as obvious by all. Even those who I have inveighed against will claim this reason - of simple pleasure in climbing - as their sole motive for their 'heroic' deeds. This, however, is to take a very superficial view of the matter.

The particular value of mountaineering, is its ability to give those who participate in it, an outlet for the spontaneous impulses that a mechanistic industrial civilisation denies most of its inhabitants: this, together with the fact that this activity takes place in surroundings that are unlike those in which people normally live is its great attraction. (The fact that the ordered mechanical life came late to most mountain regions, and the familiarity of the scenery, may account for the lack of climbers from these regions.) To get the most out of climbing it is necessary \*\* to incur a certain amount of risk, this being the only way that the acquired skill \*\* to overcome it) and it is the exercise of this skill that is one of the chief pleasures of climbing. It enables the mountaineer to see, and enjoy, terrain that would otherwise be too dangerous to travel in.

Asto the amount of risk that is undertaken; that will depend on the skill of the individual; but climbers appear to enjoy themselves most when they feel the chance of getting hurt to be negligible, not because the situation they are in is inherently safe, but because they feel their mastery of an otherwise dangerous situation. At such times people say that they are climbing well. Conversely when they are climbing badly (assuming fitness), it is due to a lack of confidence in the ability to overcome the dangers they have set before themselves, in a word it is fear, and climbers do not enjoy this.

Our more 'heroic' friends however, do not climb for such amiable reasons, their pleasure is in having done the climb, not in doing it. In the difference between these two attitudes is the gulf that separates the ethics of the barbarian and those of the reasonable man.

\*\* BETWEEN THESE TWO LINES READ: 'Of a climber can be used (for a situation without risk does not need any skill'

To then pleasure is not, 'to spend a warm sunny day treading the dry ridges and buttresses of some Welsh or Cumbrian crag, when strenuous activity alternates with blissful inactivity, so that there are moments spent reclining in the sun on some bilberry-clad terrace....', but is a maniacal quest to increase their collection of routes; so that they may bask in their own and their friend's admiration. They are like latter-day Vikings, ignorant of their surroundings, and only conscious of the plunder that will magnify their standing in the tribe. I have often heard people express a desire to climb on the Chanonix aguilles again, but I have yet to hear of anyone wishing to climb the Eigerwand more than once.

This article is unfinished and will be continued in the next Newsletter.

\* \* \* \* \*

THE DECLINE OF A PASTIME ... SOME ANSWERS.

By R. Bennett.

Several points were made in the foregoing article that I would wish to question; I have set them out below.

The idea, in the opening paragraph, that, because the old man had failed in his life long task, he had wasted his life seems, to me rather pretentious. How can one human being judge the validity of another's endeavours. We use our own experiences as a yardstick; this technique having been demonstrated from time immemorial to be unreliable. If many of the great thinkers, artists and inventors of the past had listened to the scorn of their contemporaries, progress, as we measure it, would have been pitifully slow.

In the second paragraph the charge that fanatics become boring is a good one. There is a danger however, that their critics may become equally narrow minded in their criticism and, in turn, become bores.

The so called cult of the hard man is merely an expression of man's normal outlook towards life and its activities expressed in mountaineering terms. It is in the very nature of man, a normal competitive animal, to respect those who excell in any chosen calling. Christianity has its Jesus Christ, Communism its Lenin, Physics its Einstein, Art its Picasso... and so on ad nauseam. We all need and indeed manufacture, HEROES.

The remarks concerning the role of the Japanese during the recent International Everest Expedition are particularly interesting. Far from being nationalistic neo-fascists they, and they alone, seemed to be prepared to act as porters and a back up team to Willans and Haston. So much so in fact that they have already been invited to join the next expedition.

The assertion that the progress of mountaineering into more dangerous terrain is the result of an "orgy of self congratulation" is something of an oversimplification. Whilst there is undoubtedly some of this present there is also the natural instinct of man to explore or go where no man has gone before. The greater the dangers involved the greater the temptation to take the risks and the greater the personal satisfaction upon a successful conclusion to the feat.

The euphemistic approach to the sport is nothing more than a reflection of our times. Man has ceased to call a spade a spade a long time ago. Also there is nothing particularly good or bad in using words like dead, frightened or clumsy. The slang versions are merely words that are particular to a sport, and like all specialist slang, merely convey a meaning to the adherents of that particular sport. Because they are not readily understood by all and sundry does not indicate the mental abnormalities of the users and in fact reveal absolutely nothing about the users.

The criticism of the modern attitude is rather hard to understand. It is rather like looking into the empty stable, after the horse has bolted, and pig headedly refusing to recognise the animals absence. Every climber knows that attitudes have changed as the sport has matured and broadened its horizons. The climbing standards of today require climbers of a very different mental approach for a successful ascent to the approach required on the old fashioned climbs. A statistical point raises its ugly head here: if modern climbers demanded the same atmosphere as their earlier counterparts the climbs and cliffs giving this atmosphere would be even more hopelessly overcrowded than they are now. The

majority of climbing grounds now used in this country would hardly come within the scope of Mr. G. L. Young's attitudes.

The charge that, as new areas of difficulty are explored, so we move from relying on skill to reliance on luck is not strictly true. Certainly, when a new area of the sport is first attempted, luck is very important; this factor tends to diminish as familiarity with the special problems and techniques required is gained. This is amply illustrated in the history of the Eiger Nordwand. At first accidents were rife but, as time went by and the special problems of the Eiger were gradually understood the reliance on pure luck diminished until accidents became less and less and successful ascents more commonplace.

The suggestion that the Japanese lack imagination can soon be refuted by merely *taking* the trouble to look at Japanese art, literature, architecture, flower arrangement and the many other skills requiring great imagination and ~~appreciation~~ appreciation of beauty shown by this particular race.

And finally, the man who is satisfied by achieving only half of his ambitions is a man who is very easily satisfied and is prepared to live a very mediocre existence.

\* \* \* \* \*

It had been a pleasant night, Alyson and I having bivouaced by Little Tryfan to avoid paying (We didn't think our budgets would stretch that far). After such nightmarish thoughts as the farmer searching for us, accompanied by six bloodthirsty alsatians, to measure us both up to see how many square inches of his boulder space we were using, I eventually nodded off.

The previous day had had its moments. Jon and Barry had ascended Tryfan by the Grooved Arete and when we saw them next, at about six o'clock that evening, they were both still recovering from the after effects of severe dehydration. I think that it would be fair to say that they would both like to pass on their curses to the two people they passed, drinking orange, both people seemingly incapable of taking a hint. Alyson and I had soloed around on Little Tryfan and then walked up to Braich ty Ddu where we led through on Pinnacle Ridge. We then decided to go down to Llyn Ogwen for a swim.

It was Sunday morning now and Alyson and I, after having suggested to one another that we get up, the rain started falling. We leapt up and made a mad dash for Jon's car. We were greeted by Mrs. Williams rubbing her hands.

"Been camping, then?"

"No." I replied truthfully. After having breakfast cooked by our sherpas Barry and Jon I decided to wash my plate (Unlike my uncivilised companions). I dawdled along and suddenly realised that the electric storm, previously at Ogwen, was directly overhead. I made a mad dash for it. The mind boggled .. the plate .. metal ... a GOOD conductor. The lightning was flashing across to Tryfan and then the Carnedd's and back again. We jumped into the car and tore off towards Capel with the storm following on our heels. On reaching Tremadoc Jon and Barry elected to do Oberon.

Alyson suggested, when they returned, that we have a mass ascent of Bramble Buttress. We only had two ropes and so the rope was lowered down to me by Alyson. The rope got caught at the top of the second pitch below the pinnacles. So head first I descended into the hole tugging frantically at the rope. Eventually I won.

The second pitch had its moments. After the fifteenth mantelshelf (Guinness Book of Records please note) I was advised by Alyson to do it in socks. I took my boots off and started to mantelshelf and succeeded. The traverse into the sloping hold caused my left leg to grow another six inches

It was this epic beginning that caused me to put/<sup>UP</sup>the Scramble Bramble Variant. Standard: steady hard extreme, extremely prickly and only moderate in crampons. This route is ideal for botanists. Follow the obvious line to the left of the foot of Bramble Buttress. Traverse left and up a hidden slope to a tree by means of sound roots. Go left of an Elder Tree, rope tends to bind round the tree stand on the tree until it bends at right angles. There is a tendency to be catapulted off the crag here. Make a few quick moves through brambles (Interesting in shorts). The combination of exposure, honeysuckle and garlic plants make the moves particularly overpowering. Using a dandelion for aid pull up to a ledge. Beware of using slugs as holds .. they can become unpleasantly violent.



Continue to the top by means of an assortment of grass, ivy and foxgloves. The top few moves are rather unpleasant as the vegetation gives way to rock.

The use of crampons or a pogo stick would certainly make the route easier.

Flushed with victory we slid down to the farm with the grace of Margot Fontayne and thence to the car and the end of another eventful weekend.

(Certain diagrams were included in the original manuscript but they have not been printed as it was felt that they were prejudicial to the moral welfare of the Club. They have been forwarded to the editor of the Bhagavad Gita in the hope that they may be of some assistance. ... Editor's Note?)

\* \* \* \* \*

SCRAMBLE BRAMBLE VARIANT.

By Jon de  
Montjoye.

A new route: these words conjure up thoughts of untold glory. It was such a day. Our hero, or rather heroine, having failed to achieve the necessary shelf on the last pitch of Bramble Buttress, using such unheard of combinations as boots, one sock and one boot, two socks, bare feet, crampons etc., suddenly had her attention snatched by a very stark looking, 'nearer-vertical-than-horizontal' line rising sharply up the much overgrown left gully. Upon deciding that this would give more pleasure to our aspiring hard woman a daring exposed step was taken left into the gully. The resting place, a very slender looking ash tree, was reached after much cursing (Second ascentionist note: climb to the left of the tree). From this exposed stance our intrepid lady made a HVS move onto the left wall to an extremely precarious situation is forced, much against her conscience, to use a foxglove for aid. A few moves of about VS standard led to the summit.

An overall grading of Extreme was suggested - and judging from the hands and knees of the lady I presume this is taken to mean Extremely Prickly. Most people would now be content to return to the car 'a pied' but not our heroine; who concludes a near perfect first ascent by glissading down the way off, using the rear portion of a pair of much nissued levis.

\* \* \* \* \*

## PUMP STORAGE SCHEMES IN THE SNOWDONIA NATIONAL PARK.

### What is a pumped storage scheme?

Most large power plants, including nuclear power stations, are steam raising and take from 8 to 12 hours to build up before they start generating, so that it is not worth closing them down during off-peak periods. Two large reservoirs are built with high dams, one approx. 1,000 ft. above the other. During the off-peak periods surplus electricity is used to pump water from the low lake into the higher one. When electricity is needed during the short peak periods, the water is allowed to flow back to the lower reservoir, driving the generators in the power station. The cycle is a daily one, with the lower lake at its lowest levels in daytime, exposing a large area of flooded land. The rise and fall in the water level is great - the reservoir at Cwm Stwlan goes up and down 65ft. every 24 hours. The Ffestiniog Pumped Storage scheme is linked to Trawsfynydd Atomic Power Station; the proposed pumped storage scheme(s) will be linked to Wylfa Power Station.

### Where are the proposed sites?

Over the past year, or more, the Central Electricity Board have been considering and surveying three possible sites in Snowdonia. These are at Croesor, above Dolwyddelan and at Llanberis. Initially only one of these schemes would be constructed, but if permission is obtained for this, then there is no doubt that the other two, and more in the future, would also be built.

All the schemes will involve large dams, underground power stations, 24ft. wide access roads and miles of overhead 40,000 volt transmission lines.

Croesor would apparently involve a lower dam 130/160ft. high and one mile wide, across the mouth of the valley. The upper dam would be 295ft. high. The proposed access roads for this scheme are particularly complex, linking up over the

Dolwyns with the existing scheme at Ffestiniog.

At Dolwyddelan there would be a 180ft. dam immediately above the village, across the mouth of Cwm Penannan. The upper reservoir would be formed by three dams above Blaenau Ffestiniog, Dolwyddelan and Cwm Pennachno. Apparently this scheme is the most satisfactory from the technical point of view.

Both the Croesor and Dolwyddelan schemes would involve miles of transmission cables across some of the most beautiful parts of Snowdonia.

At Llanberis, several alternative schemes have been put forward. The worst would have involved both Llyn Padarn and Llyn Peris as the lower reservoir, with a barrage across Padarn at Pen Llyn. The current proposals are for 40ft. high dams (above present water level) at both ends of Llyn Peris and a 100ft. dam to enlarge the lake at Marchlyn Mawr. Two access roads would be needed, one to Marchlyn Mawr and one across the spur of Elidir Fach to a 'surge shaft' at the top of the quarries. The overhead transmission lines would start from Dinorwic, go behind Biniolen and eventually to the switching station at Pentir.

### Why Llanberis?

Llanberis appears to be the site in which the C.E.G.B. are most interested at present and is the scheme for which the most detailed plans have been drawn up. It is nearest to Pentir, which is the main switching station in this part of North Wales. It would probably be the cheapest scheme to construct. The lakes are already there, avoiding the flooding of farmland etc. Llyn Peris is not in the National Park (the boundary runs around its shore), though Marchlyn Mawr is. The Dinorwic/Marchlyn Quarries already form a 'blot' on the landscape and would, presumably, be tidied up to some extent by the scheme.

The situation is similar to that which arose over the siting of the third London airport at Cudlington or Foulness. In this case, there is certain to be a great deal of opposition to both the Dolwyddelan and Croesor schemes, which are both beautiful parts of the National Park. Many people feel, perhaps with some justification, that the Llanberis scheme in itself would not be so bad from the visual/amenity point of view.

The County Planning Committee are apparently opposed to the Llanberis scheme, because the proposed County Park above Llyn Padarn would be affected and also because it would prevent the use of Marchlyn Mawr for domestic water supply (The present improvements at Marchlyn are being carried out to provide water for Anglesey) However, the final decisions will be made at the Parliamentary stage and there is little doubt that if any of these schemes are allowed, it will be the one proposed for the Llanberis area.

### Is there any possibility of a compromise?

It would be possible to have lower dams on Llyn Peris, by having the power station deeper underground. The transmission lines could be buried underground. This would remove two of the eyesores. Compromise could only be achieved by complete opposition to all the schemes from the onset.

Compromise, however, still means that the desecration of the National Park has begun and that the thin end of the wedge has been driven in.

### The threat to the landscape.

There is no need to stress the obvious effects on the landscape of the area, which is its most valuable asset and the foundation of the tourist industry. The view up and down Llanberis Pass will be considerably changed. The atmosphere of Nant Peris, cut off by a 40ft. dam, will be ruined. The 'tide' mark on Llyn Peris, caused by the daily rise and fall of 30ft., will be particularly objectionable. At Marchlyn the huge dam and lake, which will rise and fall 105ft., will ruin one of the most beautiful and lonely cwmns in Snowdonia. The overhead transmission lines pass through an area of designated Outstanding Rural Beauty. Both the Marchlyn Dam, the access roads and the pylons will be clearly visible from large distances.

The National Park was formed, and it is essential that it be kept, as an area for people to enjoy. There are few enough areas in this country which are not unspoilt and they will become more and more important as time goes on. Quote: "We spend all our time decrying the vandalism of the young but how are we going to explain concrete dams, power stations, pylons and access roads to our grandchildren?"

### Will the scheme solve the unemployment problem?

There is no doubt that a large number of jobs will be available during the construction period. C.E.G.B. estimate that a labour force of 1000 - 2000 may be needed for up to two years. There is no doubt that a large amount of money would come into the area during the same period. These are the two main points by which C.E.G.B. justify the intrusion into the National Park.

It will be at least two years before the scheme could actually start - will there be so many unemployed in two years time?

After the period of construction only 40 people would be employed permanently on the site. The majority of these would be skilled engineers, imported from other parts of the country.

At both Stwlan, Wylfa and Rio Tinto Zinc, the unemployment rate after these schemes rose to higher levels than before. Big short-lived schemes draw labour away from local industries; garages, farms, shops, hotels. The smaller employer goes out of business, or reduces his activities, for lack of manpower and when the construction is finished the local labour force are on the dole. Many leave the area. These schemes effectively increase unemployment and speed depopulation.

The type of work is not suitable for everyone. The rates of pay are good, but it is hard, physical labour, with long hours including overtime and weekend work. In practice the majority of the labouring at the other schemes was done by labour forces from outside the area.

What Local people need is steady employment and a steady wage, with normal working hours, which could be provided by more light industry, more expansion and development of the tourist industry, in keeping with the long term needs of both the locality and the nation. It is this which ought to be fought for.

#### Is the Llanberis scheme safe?

A rockfall from the Pillar of Elidir, or a failure of the dam, could cause a devastating tidal wave from Marchlyn Mawr which could sweep over Deiniolen, Tregarth and a large number of isolated farms and homes. A rockfall from the unstable faces or tips of the Dinorwic Quarries, into Llyn Peris, could cause flooding in Llanberis or Nant Peris.

Every few years there are short periods of heavy rainfall which fill the lakes to capacity and cause flooding at the Nant Peris end of Llyn Peris. With Llyn Peris isolated from the valley, and unable to contain the additional water, flooding could easily occur, either in Llanberis or Nant Peris, depending on the capacity of the underground diversion tunnels.

The care taken by the C.E.G.B. in these schemes is well illustrated by the recent fiasco with the underground store of explosives which was discovered near the Stwlan dam.

### Other effects.

A section of new road would be built to by pass Deiniolen and presumably the present narrow roads will be widened for access to the Marchlyn Quarries. Perhaps this is really why the Llanberis bypass has been planned for so long? During the construction period heavy lorries and plant will be passing through the area day and night, with unavoidable danger to children and general inconvenience to everyone. Large numbers of labourers will be drafted into the area; possibly new areas of unsightly temporary housing will be erected. Perhaps also this is why there has been such frantic activity recently to clear the Glyn Rhonwy Quarries of explosives? Property values in some parts of the area will fall dramatically, with little chance of compensation. There is already a case near Dolwyddelan of a lady who wishes to sell her house, but the prospective purchaser cannot obtain a mortgage because of the possible threat from the dam.

IF THE BUILDING SOCIETIES DO NOT THINK THAT THE DAMS ARE COMPLETELY SAFE WHY SHOULD WE?

### Is the scheme economic?

Pumped storage schemes stand up mainly on the principle that water is free, or at least cheap, and that pumped storage is the most economical way of producing peak power electricity. Water certainly isn't free or cheap, as it involves great expense to trap it. If the Llanberis scheme goes through the domestic water supply at Marchlyn will be lost and the Water Board will have to construct new schemes to meet local needs. Who will pay for this?

Secondly, pumped storage is only economical because the gas and electricity industries are in competition with each other, as they are bound to be by Statute. New gas turbine generators have recently been developed in Sweden which can be brought to full production in under 10 minutes. These could be built near to the areas where there is significant peak power demand at a fraction of the cost of pumped storage schemes. The surplus off-peak power produced by the nuclear power stations could be used for driving de-salination plants, a process which is bound to become economical in the near future.

The C.E.G.B. have also admitted that if there is a slight increase in the present overnight demand for power, then there would be no need for this particular scheme. If, as C.E.G.B. say, a pumped storage scheme is essential to make Wylfa an economic proposition, then why was it not planned years ago to come into operation at the same time as Wylfa? This seems to indicate bad planning or that C.E.G.B. is not giving the full reasons for wanting this scheme. The latter case is obviously the more likely so

### What are the long term possibilities?

Another nuclear power station at Edern, on the Llyn Peninsula? More pumped storage schemes connected with this? More aluminium smelters? Rio Tinto smelting copper on the Mawddach Estuary (it now appears that Planning Permission will be