



ceunont
mountaineering
club

Affiliated to the BMC

Newsletter October 1987



ceunant
mountaineering
club
Affiliated to the BMC

NEWSLETTER OCTOBER 1987

Its me again, I'm afraid (Joe Brennan), pressed into service for one issue only.

The mighty Lund has had to retire - no time anymore. They've asked him to do a full time job for once, as the City, post election, post Big Bang gets on with its proper job of concentrating what is left of the Country's resources into the South East.

What's been happening in the Club of late, you may ask. Well, my usual grumble, its been all action and no words, a kind of politics in reverse. Sterling deeds have been done and way out places visited. Weirdo experiences have been had, standards have soared. Listening to a climbing conversation these days is like listening to a group of health freaks talk about food. 'E' numbers predominate.

But you will not be able to read about it.

A feature of the year has been the remarkable attendances on a packed outdoor meets programme. See the article inside. Well done Roger.

Forthcoming Events

Ceunant 'T' Shirt

This long incubating project looks as though it will at last come to fruition. The design, we are assured, will be in the best possible taste. Nothing garish, obscene or nasty like Snowdon Mouldings' little offerings.

The Annual Dinner

Now fixed for Saturday, 20th February at the Vic, Llanberis. A date for your diary. It was nice to see a few of the old faces at last year's bean feast. Looking at the membership list, with its 130 names however, it is apparant how few of the early club members do put in an appearance. So make an effort for 1988. Put out the pipe, put away the slippers and show there is still life beyond marriage and mortgage.

As usual there will be prizes in various categories, disco, haute Welsh cuisine, indeterminate extension and a whole range of optional activities,

For those who find Tyn Lon too luxurious and would prefer to rough it in the Vic instead, B and B will be half price.

Reports on New Areas

Now that people are going to so many new places, brief reports would be very useful for those who may wish to follow.

In particular Spain is now the 'in' area but there is very little in the way of information. Other areas visited by club members have included Kenya, Sudan, Yugo Rock, Italy beyond the Dolomites, Harrisons' Rocks, Australia, the U S of A beyond Yosemite.

Ask most of these characters who have often travelled half way round the world with no more than dole money and native cunning and the likely reply will be "Well.....I don't know what.....tosay.....".

So, to help others and certainly to help whoever produces the newsletter next time, the following checklist is suggested:

1. Recommended routes/ type of climbing
2. Guidebooks, topo's, etc
3. Are the natives friendly (if not, temperaments of local yaks, llamas, donkeys, sheep, yetis, wombats etc)
4. The camping, dossing, hut situation
5. What's the place like!
6. Where is it!
7. Local talent (m/f)
8. Best, cheapest boozers, caffs
9. Best way to 'live off the land'
10. Local hazards and their avoidance (eg police, bears, large hairy things, weather, con tricks, gut rot)

A few weeks after these cheery notes were written and awaiting duplication came most tragic news.

Big Jim

A friend to many members of the Club and known to all, Jim, the amazing solo climber, with his thirst for life and cheerful presence, is gone.

Jim knew the narrow divide but words are useless at this time.

No doubt obituaries will appear shortly in the climbing magazines and perhaps we should do our own in time but not yet.

 Yeh! "To-day the Axe, tomorrow the Chop" - ge Stevie Haston!

OUTDOOR MEETS 1987 Roger Haworth

Editor Brennan - you know the one - he of the drunken driving and large red nose - has asked me to make a few notes on this years' meets.

As usual weather and attendance at the meets has varied from brilliant to atrocious. Many thanks to everyone who turned up and made the meets a success.

Cornwall 17th - 21st April

Easter, nice weather and 29 members and hangers on attended. Climbing at all the usual venues, ie Sennen, Bosigran, Chair Ladder, Kenijack and Gurnards Head. There were a lot of other climbers araound and queing for routes was a tedious reality at times.

Pembroke 2nd - 4th May

Beautiful weather on all three days of the meet and 26 members in attendance. Stacks of brilliant routes done. Much drinking in the St Govans Inn. Ian Sayers was missed at the meet and when we returned home he was dead.

Borrowdale 23rd - 26th May

Once again marvellous weather. 31 member s camping at Hollows Farm. Excellent climbing and excessive consumption of Theakstones O. P. in 'The George' and 'The Dog' in Keswick. Best meet of the year.

Skye 30th May - 7th June

A small but convivial meet attended by 6 members. The weather was none too kind but a serious attempt on the Main Ridge traverse took place which succeeded in getting half way befor e we got lost in the mist. There is an^a epic account of this outing in the Outdoor Meets Log which Editor Brennan might consider publishing in the Newsletter.

Gower 13th - 14th June

A fine sunny weekend and 25 members camped overlooking the incredibly scenic Three Cliffs Bay. The general verdict was that the climbing is good but a bit loose on the upper tiers - Juniper Wall in particular!

Langdale 27th - 28th June

Dreadful - rained all weekend. 25 members got soaked.

South Devon and Dartmoor 11th - 12th July

Only 12 people attended this meet - rumour has it because one cliff in the district is restricted at that time of year. Those who attended had an excellent and generally fine weekend with climbing at Chudleigh, Dewerstone, Haytor, Torbay. Very pleasand farm campsite at Buckfastleigh.

Wasdale 25th - 26th July

Saturday was ok so off we went to Scafell Crag. Watched by the ghosts of Jones, Botterill, Herford and co. we proceeded to ascend some of the classics. I felt like a trespasser in a museum. Sunday was unfortunately wet. 16 people turned up.

Peak District 8th - 9th August

I didn't make this one but apparently about 14 Ceunant members attended this joint meet with the LCCC. Climbing mainly at Stoney Middleton and Willersley.

Tyn Lon 29th - 31st August

A mega meet. Nearly 50 people came and there were 14 tents up in the Cottage garden. Many routes done including a fine lead of Cenotaph Corner by Nick Oldfield.

North Devon and North Cornwall 12 and 13th September

Unfortunately (for everyone else) only two of us turned up. Weather mainly good and climbing at Baggy Point excellent. The 'Thatched Barn' in Croyde does good food and an excellent pint of 'Directors'.

Pembroke 26th - 27th September

Two fine days and 17 people in attendance. Climbing at Mowing Word, Mewsford Point and Stennis Head mainly. New extreme team of Nick O and James W have mixed success!

There's one more meet to go at the time of writing and that will be at Swanage on 10th and 11th October.

I hope this article will encourage people who didn't come to any of this year's meets to come to some next year. Its always good fun even if it rains and meets help to create a feeling that the Club is more than just a mailing list.

Roger Haworth,
Outdoor Meets Secretary

THE CEUNANT OUTDOOR MEETS LOG

Our Outdoor Meets Oberfuhrer, Roger Howarth (he doesn't like to be called 'Hitler') , has initiated the excellent idea of a log to be filled in during outdoor meets. In practice this seems to have developed into an organ for alcoholic and hallucinatory expressionism. Most entries are made from about 10.00pm onwards.

Here are a few exerpts:

Borrowdale Meet 23rd May 1987

It would seem that after a lot of practice Roger has at last got the weather right. Well done Rog!!!

Any members who have not polished and vacuumed their cars before coming on the meet should be thoroughly ashamed of themselves. (Cleaning lessons available from Mr Jolly) Another good turnout by most members, one or two being conspicuous by their absence.

At last we have ourselves organised with all present going to Black, Raven, Shepherds or even possibly Great End Crag, well nearly anyway!! Anon.

Excellent Weekend. Plenty of teas, scones and boozing and only two climbs accomplished.

Weather has been excellent, also, plenty of laughs thanks to Steve's sense of humour and ever witty mouth. Cheers Steve for making my weekend a great one. Louise. (!!)

Climbed Little Chamonix with Dawn and Sue H. Took us almost two and a half hours, had to wait for some stupid bastard in front to get up it.

We went up at a steady cruise. Walked to the Napes on Sunday. Absolutely knackered, found a dead sheep at the bottom of our climb so we gave in to the stink. Think it was the sheep anyway? Sitting pretty close to Tony R's armpits. Tony R and Elly did Kern Knotts Chimney after a great amount of persuasion, Tony's a lazy bastard! Managed to top rope him! Elly gave him a piggy back, back to the car. Worn his poor little legs down to the knees, we were certain he was 6 ft when he started.

Monday went to Shepherd's again! Did Brown slabs Direct. Sue Elly Dawn Sandra and Me. James said he was there!! So was Ian. They did Brown Crack.

Ian, James, Dawn and Sue ended up on Brown Crag Wall HS.

Me. (Who's Me)

It was a day. This is a day. It was a weekend. This is a weekend. It was a bank holiday. This is a bank holiday. Oh Yeah. Some climbs were done and in Charles's words "it was the bizz". Anon.

While I was walking the Newlands Round I came across a rambling man. This rambling man he said to me you must follow the chosen path. Cos' if you don't you will become a lump of strawberry jam. My answer to him was - I am not a bumbling man but a well accomplished climber. He then did quoth - they all say that and always end up with a shiner. My closing words were - PISS OFF. Anon.

Saturday. We came, we saw, we went off route.

Sunday. We walked and walked and walked.

Monday. Brown CRag Wall plus misc. diff. Anon.

I think 5.15am is much too early. Anyway up they were, school children stupid. No one has put anything about the scouts. Well - a hole in the ground with water in..

To amend this matter on sky high Mick's behalf we should mention the devilishly wicked tale of how he managed to avoid paying camp site fees at the Grange (a feat in itself) by pretending to be a scout, in case anyone is wondering how to do it. Anon.

Charles and Roger came to the meet and did a few routes:-

Sat: Shroud and Direct on Black Crag. Also failed on Brush Off at Bleak How.

Sun: Hedera Grooves and Spinup at Lower Falcon Crag. Also Irony at Quayfoot Buttress (this latter was an extremely pokey little number).

Mon: Coffin and failed on Obituary Grooves on Black Crag. Also did Eve at Shepherd's Crag. Roger.

Tues; Charles and Roger did Overhanging Bastion at Castle Rock - brilliant route! Roger.

Those attending the Borrowdale Meet included:

Steve C (Meet leader)	James	Stan O		
Steve H	Sarah	Ian	Nick O	
Tony M	Young Richard	Mick L	Bob and son	
Tony R	Henry	Mick C	Martin	
Dawn	Roger H	Mick (Scottish)	Alison	
Helly	Charles II	Two friends of Steve C	Tanker	
Sandra	Louise	Jim Fairey		
Tony W	Mark A	Sue H	(31)	

Langdale 27th and 28th June 1987

Today has been a fairly damp little number. Things must be getting bad, went for an extremely scenic little stroll to Bumblethwaith. Returned from scenic stroll after a few pints of glugging tackle. After this silly walking business went to Hodge Close, looser than the average bear. Did a few new routes:

1st ascent herberts: Steve, Joe, Tony, Graham.

Looning the Fridge El2, 9c (one bucket for protection)

The Four Bucketeers (unseconded) Grade XX1 - whitewater

Steve Coughlan.

A crowded Britannia was cleared in time honoured fashion with a few well directed jets from the clinker zone.

The Farles's Climbing Machine stuttered to a temporary halt when Sarah, mistaking her ankle for her mouth, incapacitated herself with boiling tea.

Hodge Close - the place with the greatest collection of ex-routes lying around on the floor.

Rococco Rock - here today, gone tomorrow.

Joe B

The Langdale meet was one of the wettest that any of us could remember, which is saying quite a lot.

The Management (or was it the staff) proved slightly unfriendly in the Britannia at Elterwater and most of the Club left with the distinct

impression that they weren't welcome.

I really forget everyone who attended the meet as most were confined to tents pubs, etc in the heavy rain.

(About 25 attended) Roger H

South Devon and Dartmoor 11th and 12th July 1987

11th July: Not a very well attended meet but what it lacked in quantity it gained in quality. Those attending:

Nick, Martin, James, Ian, Jim F, Jane F, Geneviere, 2 small Fairies, Roger, Maggie, Charles II.

Roger, Charles Maggie: Dewerstone; Needle Arete, Fly on the Wall and Raven Wall.

Haytor; Rav en Gully, Direct Finish, Vandal and Anne.

10th July

Nick, Ian, James and Martin went to Chudleigh. Did Sarcophagus in the pitch dark due to a miscalculation about the daylight. With the full moon and all the bats flying about we might have been terrified had we not been ruff tuff rock climbers.

11th July

Haytor N,I,J,M. Greymares Grooves solo! James led d'Artagnan HVS 5b. Nick failed to follow. Oh my god I,m so crap. The fine drizzle up on the moor drove us to sample the fleshpots of Torquay. At Daddyhole - N and J, Gates of Eden, another tick on my hit list!

We then did a sea level traverse from Daddyhole to Meadfoot, about MS moves of up to 3c/4a, but about E4 due to the fact that Mum would kill me if I dropped her camera in the sea by falling in.

In Meadfoot Quarry I decided its time I got my finger out and get an E point, so I point myself at Demeter - no stars in the book. Everything went ok up to the iron stake - balancy climbing with small, ie RPO wires every 30ft but above it lay vertical scree so I decide to bring up James then ab from the stake. Meanwhile Martin had walked to the top and knocked a block onto my shoulder, trying to set up an ab for Ian to take photo's. Oh well, nothing for it but to apply general anaesthetic from the inside out, which is what I am doing now, hence the dreadful writing.

Nick Oldfield.

Skye 30th May - 6th June

(This is an extract from the Skye report which goes on for many, many pages. Those interested in the *pubs, distilleries, cafes and restaurants on the island should read the full account in the log. JB)

Tuesday, 2nd June

Its clear over the Cuillins today so the preparations for an attempt on the Main Ridge are put into effect. Eric kindly picks me up from Sligachan where I've left my car. Much packing and repacking of sacks. Its very hard to decide what to take and what not to take.

3.00pm Charles, Ian, Sue and Roger leave Glenbrittle. We arrive at Gars Bheinn at about 6.15pm and proceed along the ridge - all is easy 'till we reach Casteal a' Gharbh Choire where we rope up and reach the top of the tower with a delightful pitch of Diff. We locate the way off at the South West end of the Tower and scramble to the summit of Sgurr Dubh na Bheinn. We hoped to cross the T D Gap that evening but at the summit of the Dubhs it

claggs down. We decide to bivi close to the summit at 9.30pm.

During a cold night we see the Northern Lights illuminating the Sligachan end of the ridge.

Wednesday 3rd June

We leave the bivi at 5.30am Two pitches bring us up to the T D Gap. Charles and Ian ab. into the Gap. Charles leads out in fine style and Sue and I ab. in.

We commence sack hauling but unfortunately I drop Sue's sack 200ft down the gully on the Coire a Ghrunnda side! I retrieve it without too much difficulty. The ab. rope jams but luckily unjams. I lead the Gap and bring up Sue.

On to Sgurr Alasdair and then back across the scree to Thearlaich - the mist is down now so much of the exposure is eclipsed. Down the ridge to Bealach Mhic Connich with one ab. on 10mm tape en route.

Charles and Ian do Kings Chimney followed by Roger and Sue. The mist is getting thicker but we manage to get down the narrow ridge to Bealach Coire Lagan without too much difficulty.

We go off route going up past An Stac and Sue nearly falls off the interminable choss. Eventually we arrive at the fott of the Inn Pinn and leave the sacks to scramble across to the summit of An Stac.

Charles and Sue lead the Inn Pinn and bring up Ian and Roger. It must be the best Mod. in Britian. Also a brilliant ab. on a large steel cable sling off the North end. We're off again down to Bealach Bannachdich where we meet a walker - the only person we've seen since we left Glen Brittle. On to the airy crest of Bannachdich in thick mist. By now lack of water and tiredness are taking their toll and as we have no prior knowledge of this part of the ridge we fail to find the way to Sgurr Thormaid. We wait for the mist to lift but it doesn't. We have about 1 litre of water left between us and we've done half the ridge. Its 3.00pm.

Eventually we decide to descend into Coire an Eich. We walk down and back across the moor to the campsite - I feel really pleased with what we've done - but the concept of doing the whole ridge has become a bigger undertaking than I ever thought it would be. Next time!

Roger Haworth.

Wed 4.00pm

Arrived back at the campsite not knowing what to do - have a shower, eat some food or fall asleep. Everyone seems to revive about 7.00 when the campsite office has closed and another night's fees have been evaded. After the debrief in the pub we now know what to do. A mass ascent on the ridge starting at 11.00pm. Forget the bivi, its too cold and noisy - all the rustling of people in posh gortex bivi bags trying to get warm - you can't beat a good poly bag and sleeping bag especially when carried up onto the ridge by someone else. Next time it will be done in a day starting after the pub has closed - the alcohol will certainly make the walk over the bank a damn sight easier.

Back in the pub everyone is falling asleep to such an extent that we all leave before closing time (is this a world r ecord for the Ceunant ?)

Arriving back at the campsite there is more snaffling of food before everyone crashe: out for the night and the better part of the next day.

A civilised waking hour of 12.00 noon results in coffee in Roger's tent for a further debriefing. Following further eating desperately trying to replace all the lost carbohydrates and body fat, there is a unanimous vote to visit the distillery - the main draw being the f ree dram of whiskey.

The guided tour is very interesting especially with 8 year old malt warming the bloodstream and various tips being given by the guide on how to distill your own - but beware the Customs and Excise!

After a number of purchases in the Distillery Shop (no names mentioned) a short walk around the coastline wakes people up again. Especially when Charles and Roger, putting up new routes on a sea stack disturb an oyster catcher on her nest. From the noise it made anyone would think they had eaten her eggs!

All this activity makes everyone feel very hungry, so its back to the campsite where Angela and Eric produce a gourmet meal which is helped down by a number of bottles of wine produced from various tents. The only thing to finish off the day is a visit to the pub - guess where we are now?

Sue.

Friday 5th June

I've woken up with a hangover again.

Roger.

(It sounds to my innocent ears like the real reason for not completing the Ridge were too many debriefing sessions in Roger's tent. JB)

THE E GRADING SYSTEM IN USE ? M.Mitchell 6/85

Although the E grading system has been in use for a number of years now, it is still not fully understood. This short article will I hope help to clarify some of the aims of the system. I must point out at this point that these are my own views on how all the grades should hang together.

To start with the aim of the E system is to extend the current adjectival system, of which it forms a part. This system now forms the basis of most climbing in this country. Running along side the adjectival system is the newer technical system. These may be compared to a stupidity grade and a gymnastic grade.

Although the technical grading system is newer than the adjectival system it forms the nucleus of the adjectival grade. This is because the adjectival grade describes the overall difficulty of the route, and if a route is technically harder it will increase the overall difficulty. It is now possible to create a list of standard grades.

VS	-	4c
HVS	-	5a
E1	-	5b
E2	-	5b/5c
E3	-	5c/6a
E4	-	6a
E5	-	6b
E6	-	6c

If the grades are now regarded as standard grades then any deviation from these must be for some reason. These include the seriousness, the strenuous nature of the route or how sustained or not the route is. For example:-

If a route had a technical grade of 6a then the E grade could be a number from E1 to E6. Taking these extremes an E1 6a would be one 6a move on an otherwise easy climb with above the head protection. The other route being E6 6a would be continuous 6a climbing throughout the route, it would also be overhanging with no protection, and therefore a more serious proposition. The average 6a route however would be an E3 6a. These usually have a couple of 6a moves, not too strenuous, and the protection is fairly close.

So now you know how to grade them, you've got to climb them !

GUESS WHO!

At the third pint he becomes forgetful and starts drinking other peoples beer; at the fourth pint he starts animated prodding with a downwards facing palm; at five he starts leaning on you; at six his nose starts glowing. Two pints later he's ready to drive!

Her "I can't do it - I'm never climbing again - that's it - I've had enough, let me down you - you sod!

Him "Come on love you can make it, just reach a bit higher, just a little bit more"

Her Agghh! you pig!

Him - silence. Just a little loving dialogue on the road to married bliss.

He prefers the handle "Mouth from the South" rather than "fule from de pule". Carry him to the nearest roadside crag, point him at the route and his rapid progress at high grade will be an invective expletive bawling din.

This is not macho man. No pissing about in candy striped tights for this guy. Just catch him with his Mom's old cardy pushing his legs into the arms, buttoning the front upside down to his chest. This is Bilston Man!

You would think that the mat of black hair that protrudes from his collar would have him treated like a werewolf. But no! the girls they all swoon when he gives them the moon by the light of the midnight (Nordic) sun.

That hand peeping from under the knee, who can it be? It's wearing a red silk glove but the hand and wrist are firm and muscled. This puzzle is intended for all concerned; but ask once too often and you will wonder what hit you!

A dapper chap with piles of/and charm he is now starting to creak. That golden brown torsoe and silvery grey hair still long for the sun and the French ladies. "Give me some more Cow Pie" he says, as with head down he tries to ski straight through a wall of snow/ice.

T Bone & Duke a disparate and unlikely duo. Him with legs ramrod stiff as he takes the Betws salute. Him with the ski legs that no-one can follow.

I might go to the Andes - I broke my leg soloing - I've been to the Alps - I might go to Africa - I broke my wrist soloing - I like climbing - I don't like anything else - I do like soloing - I might do the Walker Direct - I'm a born again climber.....I am.

"Did I tell you about the time we were in the disco at Ambleside when the three biggest bouncers you've ever seen tried to throw us out - anyway Mad Huey just stepped forward and....."

"Did you hear about when we were riding back from Brodick when we lost Mike the Bike....." "I came to in the hospital opened one eye partly and spied a copper by the bedside - I immediately closed it again..." etc., etc., etc.

V.G. "Excuse me would you be prepared to tell me all those stories again when I have got my tape recorder available."

Him "Piss off!"

V.G. "You are the most impressive raconteur I've ever heard"

Him "I told you to piss off!"

V.G. "But...but I could make another record...I mean we could..."

Him "Listen you little prick - one more word and I'll break your legs"

That female fixer with the glint in her eye and the wicked smile. The landlady to half the climbing world. The mother hen for the Ceunant gels. The fitness freak who can keep up with any man - well almost. That half hearted asserter of wimins rights. Take your pick.

Anon

Four hours late Ski West's travelling bunkhouse trundled off the ferry and onto French soil. Enough time had passed by then for first impressions and body language to have staked out initial relationships on board. We, or at least everybody else, were British after all so it did not take long for a rudimentary class structure to evolve. The loud, plummy accents of the home counties predominated, resonant with imagined self assurance and authority. Standard English rules. Skiing is an in-sport, safe for any self respecting sloane to pose in, along with rugger, rowing, golf, cricket. Definitely out are darts, soccer, pool.

A large Henry and Henrietta contingent together with a range of their ample material possessions had draped themselves across the seats, occupying several places each. Those not earning their living in financial services were left to make do as best they could with what was left. Obviously the City of London instinct lives on outside working hours. No matter, we would bide our time.

As for the conversation I could not believe my ears. The height of Yuppie ambition seems to be to climb into and live out their own cliches. The following few samples are all word for word true, I made notes at the time:

"Charles, did you know Jeremy Cash. He skied over my hand!"

"At Harrow was he?"

"No, same prep school as me."

(Is the purpose of a prep school to help enable Yup minors make the grade for junior school ?)

"Nigel, how many Lira are there to the Pound ?"

"Don't know dolling. I don't deal on the Munich Exchange myself."

Coach Driver: "Want some tea, Guv ?"

"Oh yes, sooper. Which kind of tea, Darjeeling ?"

Coach Driver: "!!!!!!!"

"Charles, how have you got on since the big bang ?"

"Hopeless dolling, I have five screens in my office and I can't read a single sodding thing! Haw, Haaw, Haaaaw!"

"Fredrick, what did you think of 'Cats' ?"

"Almost overwhelming."

(Note the quaint use of language to give spurious emphasis to their comments. How can anything be 'almost overwhelming'?.)

Thus the two tribes proceeded through Northern France, with plenty of opportunity to watch each other at play. God knows what they thought of us.

Favourite on-board Yuppie entertainment: video at maximum inescapable volume.

'Terminator' with Arnold Swartzenegger.

'Airport II'

Any Spielberg adolescent sentimentality - this time 'Back to the Future'.

They had actually brought their own videos.

All good pre prep school preparation.

Favourite music:

Madonna, Lionel Richie, Peter Gabriel, Bruce Springsteen.

No conservative, conformist, middle-of-the-road stuff for us old chap.

Me ? I think a cat being dragged across a chainsaw might provide more musical interest.

Favourite books:

None. Yuppies don't read.

Hostile looks kept being cast in my direction. My reading light, the only one on the coach, was being judged an antisocial interference with the communal concentration on the video, like being blasphemous in church. My mistake. I assumed the chosen entertainment did not need any concentration being, like mother's milk, an electronic pap which could be taken in without any digestive problems. Although it was still daylight the curtains were closed tight to keep out real foreign images lest they interfere with the Hollywood versions.

We dozed on in a sort of electro-womb with nothing to disturb the Sloane sense of well being . Why the need for curiosity and new ideas when all that is required is confirmation of your favoured place in the scheme of things ?

A watering stop was made whilst the coach was converted to sleeper mode. With the H's, male and female, sitting in the caff bemoaning the fallen state of French Haute Cuisine we quietly slipped out.

On their return they were horrified to find that the seats had been turned figuratively as well as literally. We were now spread over ample areas of bunk and with our noisy appreciation of the 'duty frees' presented a hostile front sufficient to repel all boarders. A new phase of Henry education was about to begin - making do with less than others.

After an undisturbed night's sleep we arrived at 8.30am, dumped our stuff in a garage, hired skies and we were ready for a full day's skiing. At the shop the H's were hiring instructors.

I thought I would get thinner this holiday. Apart from Derek 'Del Boy' Grimmett and John 'Big Nose' Russell our apartment team comprised THREE Spenceley brothers, a sort of triple headed waste disposal unit. Like the weakling in the litter I would be elbowed away from any available nipples. Breakfast on baguettes sounded like rush hour in a saw mill.

I had had a total of a week and a half skiing experience. Jimmy S had two days. Peter S was the dark horse and was keeping quiet. We would have to watch him. Graham S and 'BN' were still to arrive.

Sure enough Peter's warm-up programme quickly had us spreadeagled on 'Cocaine', the longest, meanest, blackest run hereabouts, strayed onto by mistake of course. At the bottom there was little evidence that the knackered, scarred and twisted Jimmy would, within three days, be miraculously transformed into the fastest, maddest downhill snowplougher in the whole of Val D'Isere.

Anyway we all got better as the week progressed which was no big deal when starting from such a low base. The snow was brilliant, flattering even. Six days out of eight were of the stuff that catalogues are made. The lie was suspended. We skied far and wide, quartering the resort, over hill and down dale, up to the Grand Motte, across to Tignes and on to Les Breveries, back to Le Fornet at the valley head. Yippee! What a system. What machinery! What a display of anti-gravity forces. Don't get too precious about what it is doing to the mountain. Whilst certainly scoring nothing for quality we might get a few points for quantity. To hell with style. Squeeze the maximum in.

Yet there was a rat gnawing at my vitals. Although a beginner I could see that maybe piste bashing amongst herds of the faithful will have a limited life. It seems a sport with nowhere to go, a real soft option with a high bullshit profile - a mass movement of English Hoorays, French Bourgeois (they've been at it longer than us), German type Germans. At the moment though give me more.

I did get a couple of signs for the future though. One evening, pushing past a grumbling attendant, I caught the very last chair to the top of the ridge. It was cold and there was no one else around. Even those ultimate symbols of sheepdom, the pisteoirs, had gone. I sat on a rock for a while contemplating the pain in my big toe. With the last light fading from the snow I started down. All the clatter had died and the slopes were deserted. The clouds evaporated off the higher peaks revealing really wild looking ridges leading up to the Grand Casse. That's it - ski mountaineering - it reaches the parts

Meanwhile back at the start of our holidays we only just got entry to our economically determined living module. Short of the readies I had delayed the cheque which got caught in the Christmas post. Ancient rivalries between the two nations means that the French don't trust the British. Not even Paddy citizenship was acceptable. We must pay immediately! But we could not pay immediately! Eventually, with the surrender of passports and amidst dire warnings to return on the morrow with payment in coin of the realm, Madame Battleaxe reluctantly passed over the keys. With her sense of humour she would go down a treat in Iran. Ha, but we had the keys. To hell with all this money business. We'd show them why they can't trust us.

The other problem was we did not have enough money to pay the balance owed to collect the apartment keys for the 'B' team - Sirhc, Coughlan, 'T' Bone, the Two Sues, whose arrival after midnight left their agent incommunicado. They had arrived two days later than us having flown out! To show that some clouds have silver linings that night we got an indication of the prospect of more economic ski holidays for the future. Eleven slept perfectly comfortably in an apartment for five. Later in the holiday we met a Yorkshireman who, true to the traditions of that county, was one of fifteen in an apartment for three. They never check.

Likewise bypass the tour operators. Ring up the local tourist office and get the telephone numbers of the booking agents in the area. Go out on the operators' buses. We did this and halved the cost of the holiday. Anything to beat the system ~~is~~ and cut out the profits of a few pseud middlemen.

New Year's Eve (Frogmanay ?) saw the novel spectacle of 2000 drunken French out in the village square. Much convivial vino collapse was swapped and a lot of high explosive sub-nuclear fireworks detonated which would have done credit to Tyn Lon bonfire night. Our apartment was slap bang in the middle of town and had a papal balcony overlooking the square.

Sirhc and Big Nose appeared on the balcony as if to bestow a blessing on the multitude.

It does not take much to start a tidal movement in that sort of charged atmosphere. Skiers like to follow after all. We aimed a few snowballs.

Sirhc stepped smartly inside and locked the balcony door. The whole square suddenly caught on as one man. BN was left the unfortunate target of over two thousand maniacal Eurocitizens as a blizzard of snowballs swept his way in a kind of reverse avalanche. That will teach him not to overtake me again.

We then had the novel experience of celebrating New Year twice. At 1.00am the British came out (Midnight in Britian) and when abroadetc. Unfortunatley John had extricated himself by this time from his snowdrift. Liberal doses of whiskey started mixing with the appellation uncontrolee.

Eventually when revelries subsided we straggled back to the shoebox. Have you noticed how many climbing articles pour scorn on supposed lesser life from a higher astethic stance? Tourists gawp, moderate climbers bumble, walkers shamle in long faceless groups. "I hung from a single quarter inch blade on my North Face bivouac. Faintly from the valley below I heard the sound of revellry. I would not have swapped places." Utter pretention. Climbing Hoorays. We were as pissed as rats and we didn't give a toss.

Only one thing was wrong. Del Boy was missing. He was last seen, crazed as a broken windscreen, trying to shove half an iceberg into the open door of a gaumless BMW which had foolishly stopped to admire proceedings. We feared he might be the victim of either French hospitality or French hospitilisation. Either would probably have the same effect on his health.

We need not have worried. As the first morning of 1987 crept through the curtains there he was, crashed out on the floor, fully clothed, asleep where he had fallen. He did not know where he had been, the missing hours caught somewhere in a timewarp between 1986 and 1987.

January 1 and 2 were the only two bad days out of eight. On New Year's morn, with high speed clag over the Alps and the rest of the citizenry sensibly abed, we took the highest lift still open up to a ridge at about 11,000ft. The wind did blow you backwards. Sharp shards of ice stung any exposed skin raw. I quickly learned the worth of my £3 C and A goggles. Fine powder swept through the ventilation holes and instantly froze on the inside of the lenses. I couldn't see a thing. It was a whiteout anyway. The others had disappeared. It was not the place to hang about. I tried taking t he goggles off and was blinded by shotblasted ice. Off I slid. An unseen bump knocked me off balance backwards in such a way that I sat down on the back of the skies in the manner of the keen boys you see on the piste. On I careered, not knowing speed or direction. It must have taken half a minute before I realised I had eventually stopped in the white out conditions. I wasn't sure which way was up and which was down. By then there was not a soul left this high on the mountain. This was good training for Aviemore.

The St Anton Fairies have got 1987 successors in the chairlift return ticket stakes. Sirhc, Big N and non-London Sue took one look at these normal type Scottish conditions from the top of the chairlift and quietly crept back on board. A prize for the best name for this intrepid trio.

The last day, Saturday, saw the return of brilliant weather and a full day's skiing concluded with an off piste run down a long rocky canyon, a real switchback. This took us directly into the valley and a quick change at the 'B' team boxroom.

4.45pm. Armed with half of an actual crate of vin plonk which some kind hostelry had donated to Monsieur Coughlan we dashed round the corner and onto the culture wagon for more enlightened conversation on the way home.

Extracts from Graham Spenceley's India Diary 1985Mon 14th October Srinagar (early days)

Still in Srinagar, lazing on the roof of Zafaran Houseboat deciding where to go next. Weather not bad - a little cloudy. Bob Marley playing down below. Salim making coffee. Just had a willie shrinking cold shower and washed my hair. Feels nice to be clean; and unusual.

There is an Australian named John staying here with us. He is 'out of his box' most of the time. Dope costs about 90R (₹5) an ounce here. Slightly more or less dependant on quality.

Lay in the sun until 2.30pm then walked to Dal Lake for a shiccara ride (small one paddled boat). Very interesting; went around floating gardens. Siccara man asked us to have a cuppa at his place. "O K" we said. Funny how his house was full of Kashmit carpets and s plattered with VISA signs.

I had a go at the paddling. Its not too difficult.

A be autiful girl gave a lotus flower to Steve. Oh love at first sight. The spell was broken though because of no 'backshesh', so the three year old grabbed her flower back and paddled off in dis gust.

Stoned again! Nice.

Tues 29 Oct Middle Days Raft TripRaft Day 1

Up at 6 o'clock and packed. Man arrives in taxi at 6.30am - Steve not ready - still pooping.

I won't bother describing the usual problems (waiting for buses etc) about getting to the river.

Rafting is ace especially in rapids where everyone paddles like crazy to give the boat some momentum so the helmsman can steer. At other times the boat just drifts frontways, sideways, anyways. The river is fast, about 10mph. We travelled 25km today. Stopped for picnic at midday.

The last rapids before our night camp were great - large holes in the river. Three weeks ago someone drowned here. We paddled like crazy!

Very good evening meal, rice, dal, cauliflower, beans, potatoes, even a fresh chicken! Our guide went into a local village, bought a chicken, killed and cooked it.

Camped by river overnight. Nice to be away from towns. The camp is a sandy beach, good tents, fire going for a brew. Sleep at 9.00pm - not much else to do.

Wed 30 Oct Raft Trip Day 2

Woke up early and just lay in bed contemplating and dreaming of home

(139 Warwards Lane and Kate). Looking forward to getting there - will be estatic when we leave Delhi.

Suddenly tea and biscuits appear in the tent door and I jump up and nosh.

Breakfast - cornflakes! / pancakes/ toast/ eggs and tea and coffee.

At last the sun comes out at 9.30am. Up 'till now its been misty.

Perfect shits!

Finished reading 'Airship 9', my 8th book! Ready for action now.

Sitting here on our raft, on the sand, is like being beside a wavy beach with a primus stove (the rapids) roaring in the background. Plus wa rm sun shining on my back. Think I'll take my shirt off. Must be brown and healthy when I return home - the opposite of what is expected after you've been to India. These last three weeks s eem to pass slowly. I'll be glad to be back in Delhi - apres home shopping.

Waiting for some more 'rafters' to arrive from Kathmandu, lo and behold who arrives, Simon and Penny a young English couple we met on 27th October. Some more people arrive and the raft boys bring another boat to inflate it. There is 6 in one boat and 5 in ours. Off we go, straight into rapids, Steve up front getting soaked.

Having two boats enables us to photo one another as we rush through rapids. Great fun. We have splash battles between the two boats. Steve gets pushed in by two girls.

Stop for lunch - good. Afterwards we catch up with two larger rafts full of Germans I think. We attack them - SPLASH WARFARE. After the initial shock they fight back. Their captain has a bucket and we g et soaked. Our boats are more manouverable. We get one enemy between our two and give them 'what for'. All good clean fun. Then their mates catch up and we get trapped. Everyone is laughing except a few women on their boat. It didn't say anythin g about this in the brochure.

If yo u g o rafting use RAPID ADVENTURE NEPAL. They are best for several reasons:

1. You have to do a lot of paddling
2. Boats are smaller and faster
3. You don't have to wear crash hats and waterproofs (yes, on some companys boats you do!) You do wear lifejackets.

A few mor e rapids and we float down several miles of relatively flat water to our night camp. We have a wood fire to sit around. I decide to go to bed.

"What time is it , Simon ?"

"Eight o'clock."

"Bloody heck."

Anyway I still go although its early.

Sweet sreams.

No beer.

Thurs 31 Oct Raft trip Day Three

Three days of rafting. Tea arrivea at tent door again. Blue sky. Leave early today after usual big breakfast. No rapids, river much larger now and slower.

Stop at 12 noon for lunch by where two rivers join. Supposed to be crocodiles about but we only see monkeys.

Set off aga in but after 1 hour arrive at our finishing point.

Unpack r aft, have a coke in a quiet bar and suddenly we find ourselves in a crowded local bus on route to Pokhara. The journey is supposed to take three hours. I hope it does as I'm not fond of this bus already. Our guide has paid for the tickets but kept them. Let's see what problems that causes when the conductor arrives.

Well it turned out ok. The conductor must have been briefed and gave us no hassle. Actually he was quite helpful and even stop ped the bus and waited while Steve went for another liquid shit. Po or bugger he must go and see the Doc.

The bus journey was quite interesting. People were fighting to get on the bus, it was that full! The last few miles into Pokhara were nearly empty though. Three seats each.

Trus t us. We got off at the wrong place and had to get a taxi to take u s to a hotel.

--oOo--

Thankfully, perhaps, the Ceunant's name is not generally synonymous with prudent and careful planning. It was, therefore, with profound surprise and no doubt, divine cooperation that the Club celebrated its 30th Birthday precisely in conjunction with British Summer Time 1987.

Having due regard to the solemnity of the occasion an advance party of 20 or so 'old guard' assembled for pre-luncheon pink gins at Pen-Y-Gwyrdd. These were dressed, for the most part, appropriately for them and for July in Wales, in 1930's style thick tweeds, stout shoes, etc. (Incidentally, please return the Editor's gear rack lent for the occasion).

After lunch an expanded crowd of guests numbering 30 to 40 proceeded to Afon Glaslyn and Llyn Gwynant where a halcyon afternoon of harmless capering ensued. Under a fierce and unrelenting sun revellers took gratefully to the water, though some more gratefully than others. Of those negotiating the 'Tyrolean' and Elephant Rock traverses (Blondel Robbins and Delboy Grimmitt come hazily to mind) a slightly worrying mix of ineptitude and inebriation ensued early and frequent immersions for most.

How paradoxical, I mused, that most weekends we curse the wet and drive for miles, spending small fortunes to avoid the damp at any cost.

Musing on, I reflected how privileged we were to witness children at innocent play on that golden afternoon. Children of all ages, backgrounds and persuasions happily enjoined in carefree abandon. As shadows lengthened over Llyn Gwynant and dragon flies danced their twilight ritual over limpid pools, I observed, as oft before, how children of 5 to 11 years exercise more restraint and maturity in their innocent games than their counterparts of 25 to 45 years.

In the gathering dusk, safely back inside the laager, camp fires crackled and flickered into life. Soon, the scented air was laden with the aroma of roasting, freshly bagged guinea fowl, mountain hare and Co-op fish fingers. These succulent dishes were washed down with generous flagons of Robinson's barley water, with the occasional hop thrown in.

Following the feast came the traditional barn dance with music provided by local hill folk. Friends from a nearby inn stopped by to wish us well and brought nosegays of purple heather and mountain thyme. A languid moon climbed steadily above Crib Goch and stars twinkled in the heavily scented night sky as the dulcet tones of Hendrix, Jagger and Meatloaf drifted sonorously up to Pen-Y-Passand down again. This soothing lullaby 'rocked' many a weary valley dweller into slumber that night. Some of these called by the following morning to comment appreciatively on the thoughtful gesture.

As smoke from the dying fires curled upwards to mingle with the ancient yews in the churchyard, a hushed and sleepy stillness descended on that hallowed spot. The tranquillity disturbed only by the occasional distant yap of a dog, the murmur of a child, or the urgent wrestling of a man and wife.....

NOTE: Special, limited edition prints in sepia are available of this article and the writer. Please apply to the recently established: Sunshine Home for Retired Chairmen, The Snowdon Mouldings Bivi-bag, Third Flat Iron, Boulder, Colorado. Credit cards very welcome.

Tony Mynette

LOOKING BACK INTO CEUNANT HISTORYFrom the Newsletter, January 1971I Must Go DownBy 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 somewhzt 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!

"Havn'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 ideal 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 Syrinqe".

"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 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 decent 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 30feet 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 top of the decent gully.

"How did you 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.