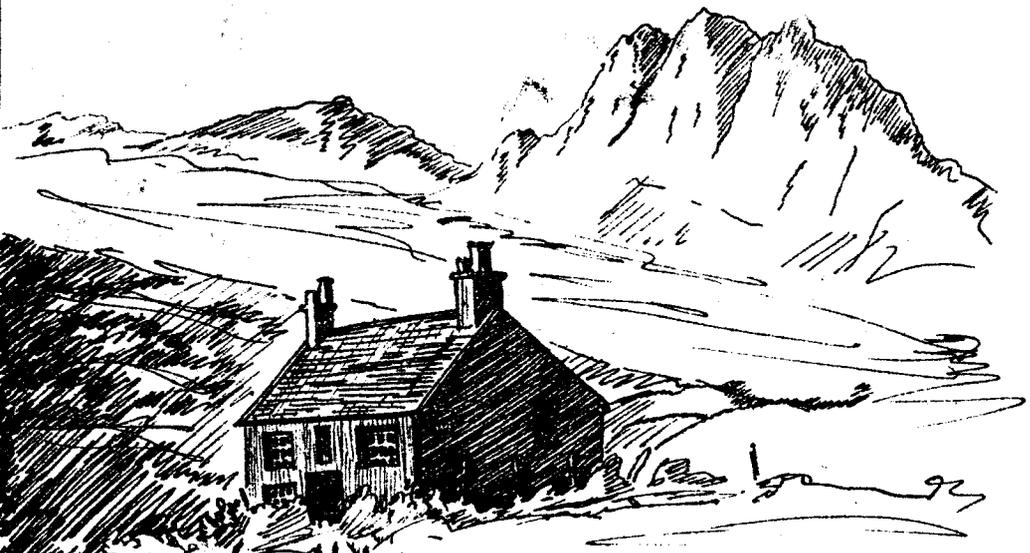




The Cumnant

MOUNTAINEERING CLUB



News Letter

4-6-58

4th June, 1958.

EDITORIAL

"One thing is essential for the success of this paper - the co-operation of all its readers as contributors ... and whatever may through the medium of this little paper help to bind us in still closer comradeship and give pleasure to all, will be very gladly accepted."

So wrote Sir Ernest Shackleton in his editorial for the very first number of the "South Polar Times" - the National Antarctic Expedition 1902.

This extract from a famous paper is so apt as to simply have to be quoted, but with or without the directness of its message we are brimful of confidence in the success of this new venture in our club. The need for an instrument of this kind in welding us together in a stronger and widening interest in activities and personalities has been felt by the committee for some time.

We are a club with a great love of mountains but widely differing ways of showing it, and though we may wander exhilaratingly over the tops or climb the sides, a common appreciation must of necessity bind us together.

The club is strengthening and our recognition by the B.M.C. is a notable step.

The climbing standard is improving with every meet and it is notable that some serious mountaineering was done during the winter.

Let us then push ourselves forward during the summer season, widening our circle of activities and tolerantly enjoying our mountaineering at our best.

M. KING.

Opinions expressed in this News Letter are those of the Editor and are not necessarily endorsed by the Committee.

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CENOTAPH CORNER - by C.T. Jones.

This was named by Edwards before the war, but there is no record of him trying it.

Preston, who was in the Commandos at Llanberis and put out Suicide Wall was the next great one to try it. He climbed quite a way up and then descended.

P.R.J. Harding abseiled down it and said it was impossible.

It is interesting to see that in his Guidebook he says "with sufficient ironmongery and a few scruples this corner could be ascended. Some day the call will prove too strong and the Cenotaph will lose much of its virtue".

This point of view is hardly reconcilable with his own 'Kaisergebirge Wall' on which seven pitons were used on the first ascent.

Arthur Dolphin in his prime did not get past the hard move at 20 feet.

It was of course left to Joe Brown to do it. He used four pitons above the niche which occurs at 100 feet.

There are now nine people who have successfully climbed it. One other fell off above the niche and had to descend.

The successful leaders are J. Brown, D. Whillans, R. Moseley, H. Banner, W. Newney (Craig Ddn), R. Downes, E. Metcalfe (Matey), J. Smith (Mortimer) probably, and H. Smith.

Actually this is all a little dated since the Girdle Traverse of the Cromlech crosses the corner, half way up, and if in difficulties we are told that we can "escape" up Cenotaph Corner!

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ALPINE WEATHER. It is reported that the Manchester Guardian are very keen to co-operate in the B.M.C. proposal to publish reports on Alpine weather and snow conditions during the season.

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The equipment sub-committee of the B.M.C. are summarising the results of member clubs use of the aluminium alloy Karabiners loaned from the Ministry of Supply. The sub-committee is anxious to see this Karabiner put on the retail market at a reasonable price.

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It is hoped that the good support of outdoor meets be kept up and intensified. We should be able to fill our own coach - let us strive to this end.

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ACCIDENTS. The following is quoted from a B.M.C. Safety Committee Report:

The Committee does not consider that it would be justified in drawing any definite conclusions from the information available, due to the fact that, on only 50% of the accidents reported

was detailed information obtained. It feels, however, that it might emphasise the following general contributory factors noted as having led to accidents.

- (a) Below standard physical condition.
- (b) Undue speed on a climb.
- (c) Undue reliance on guide books.
- (d) Failure to regard the simple rules of Mountaineering, in this case regarding belays, glissading and loan climbing.

The Committee also feels that, if any one point has emerged from the past years observations, it is that judgement, in its broadest sense, is the quality greatest required in mountaineers. This judgement must be applied to the problem in hand, related to the conditions prevailing, and also, above all, to the mountaineers own capabilities at the time in question.

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A reward of ninepence for anyone removing the vertical piton from Central Gully, Y. Garn. Now that the ice is gone it should be quite easy!

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CENTRAL TRINITY GULLY

By J. Daffern.

Unusual activity was taking place at Pen Ceunant on Saturday morning at around 7.30. "People were getting up". Some with considerable momentum, others, like myself, with a heavy feeling of sleep still on us, needed practical encouragement. (Members should not be too alarmed at this; there was at least one still dead to the world when we left the cottage).

Breakfast did not take long and Mike King and myself were off at 9 o'clock on a calm and fairly clear morning. On the Llanberis track up Snowdon we soon reached snow, and after Half-way House it had drifted deep in places. This slowed us down somewhat, but Bwlch Glas was reached in two hours. The view over into Cwm Dyli was very impressive, and the snow was much deeper on this side. There was about half cover of cloud and the glare from the sun was considerable at times. To the right the final ridge of Snowdon looked grand with intermittent cornices, but it was the North East face that held our gaze most; it looked Alpine in the conditions. Our objective was Central Trinity Gully, which is roughly in the centre of this face and is the most noticeable of the many gullies here.

We edged our way over the deep drifts at the top of the

Pyg Track and after awkwardly descending some way traversed right, passing round various Bluffs, until we reached steep ground at the foot of the gully.

We kicked our way laboriously up deep soft snow in the lower part until we reached an easier slope and a few rocks on the left. Here we stopped for something to eat for a few minutes before roping up. We had taken about one hour from the col.

From the vantage point we had an unusual view of Crib-y-Ddisgl opposite. We were amused to see the last one of a 'tourist' party on the Pyg Track below going along on all fours most of the way. Above us the ground was very fore-shortened, but the Left and Central Trinity Gullies were identified. The Central could be seen to steepen some way up and then disappear round a corner.

We roped up and made quick progress past the various minor landmarks we had noted, passing a boulder which probably marked the top of a rock pitch in Summer, where we entered the steeper part. Steps could still be kicked in the soft snow. It seemed as if the gully would go fairly easily. Then we could see a further stretch of the gully continuing narrowly between a short wall on the right and slabs on the left. We were moving one at a time now, leading through as the angle was steeper. At one point we began to find the steps breaking and found that the snow was much less deep and lying on hard ice. The snow had to be cleaned and after a few anxious moves on account of the lack of anchorage we reached a small stance on the right where a rock belay was found. The next section, though short, took us about an hour. It consisted of deeper snow on top of ice. During this slow work an eye was kept on the time and we realised we could not attack any great length of this sort. We were lucky, however, for after some hard cutting in the ice, good holds came in reach on the right wall and soon the snow became safe again as we approached a little skyline where the angle eased and the gully opened onto a wide bay, with the main ridge above. The snow was less deep here and we climbed partly on grassy rock to the left - but still moving singly right up to the final drifts of the ridge. There was no cornice but the finish was exhilaratingly sudden. The summit cairn of Y Wyddfa was a stones throw away to the left, thickly encased in ice. We had taken three hours.

We both agreed that this had been an excellent climb, with

the outcome uncertain until fairly near the top. The difficulty would vary greatly with the conditions, and as the guide book states, it could certainly be dangerous when these are poor.

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A detailed report on the Cynr Las accident will appear in (presumably) the next issue of "Mountaineering" with suitable recommendations. The main conclusion was that belay loops of thickness less than the main climbing rope were potentially dangerous.

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ROUTES OF HISTORICAL INTEREST (1) Central Gully - Glyder Fawr,
by M. King.

Sloping down into Cewn Idwal from the summit of Glyder Fawr is an expanse of deceptively uniform looking cliff, showing a series of slabs and overlapping corners. The face is in a fine position high on the mountain side and to the writer, anyway, rich in atmosphere and association.

The ascent of what is perhaps the main feature, the Central Gully, by J.M. Archer Thomson, Hughes and Edwards (not J.M.!) on 25th November 1894 was one of the earliest recorded ascents in Snowdonia, and is significant that the route is still graded in the 'severe' category, though only just. The long groove in the slabs leading to the cave is scarce in anchorage and not all that easy. Hob nailed boots must have felt insecure, a tribute to the perseverance of our pioneers, for the trimmed techniques of balanced movement were unknown.

The crux at the cave was eventually mastered by using a threaded rope as direct aid.

"It was found necessary to adopt a compromise between the wisdom of the serpent and the aimlessness of the crab - advancing by lateral jerks in a semi-recumbent attitude" - this written of the latter part of the climb! Like O.G. Jones' party in 1899, that of the Ceunant Club in 1958 were utterly unable to find any place that could possibly answer to this description.

The two large parties led by Owen Glyndwr Jones at Easter time 1899, had conditions so severe that Jones, supported on the shoulders of Abraham, had to drive ice from the hole in the roof of the cave with the party's only ice axe. Fortunately the rope was heavily iced and stiff enough to be readily poked through the resultant hole. One assumes that it wasn't so stiff as to continue vertically upwards!

Progress was then made over the capstone at the second attempt using knots in the rope. The position for doing this is distinctly alarming and the only hole that we could find was a long way back at the top. These people must have had the patience of Job.

The remainder of Jones' party followed their leader with more latitude round the chockstone to the left, two very awkward moves, the skirts of the ladies sweeping the holds clear of snow.

One of this famous group of climbers later led this crux without any direct aid, a feat repeated some time later by a party led by R.B. Brierley. The protection is good but the moves are thin even by modern standards, and although these pioneers protected themselves in their own way, there was not the security of the nylon sling and smooth running karabiner that we enjoy today on climbs even of a low standard. There are some revealing comments by G. Winthrop Young on this very topic in Snowdonia Biography.

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Next:- 'Slanting Gully' - Lliwedd.
Famously known as the "Slantingdicular".

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"Before anything else, even the scaling of summits, mountaineering is a relationship with the hills."

Gaston Rébuffat

Written after finding the Col du Midi in mist and snow entirely by instinct - we become a part of this upper world we love.

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The next issue of the News Letter will be during August. Articles and notes of news and interest will be most welcome at any time. Editor.

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LITERARY ADDITIONS - Available on application to Miss Joan Burwell.

A Century of Mountaineering - by Sir Arnold Lunn.

Historical survey commissioned by the Swiss Foundation for Alpine Research in celebration of the centenary of the Alpine Club.

Selected Climbs in the Range of Mont Blanc

Over 100 routes described, many with diagrams. Useful pocket-sized volume with much helpful information.

Book Reviews - by S. Storey.

Shackleton - by Mr. & Mrs. J. Fisher (Barrie 30/-)

Timely biography of a pioneer of Antarctic exploration. Absorbing study of an incurable optimists' fight against odds in pre-radio and 'snocat' days.

Coronation Everest - by James Morris (Faber 16/-).

Latest of the personal stories by "The Times" correspondent with the expedition. As a non-mountaineer he did more climbing than he bargained for and seems to have enjoyed it in retrospect.

The Ice Axe Murders - by Glyn Carr (Bles 12/6).

"Filthy Lewker" solves a "double event" on Mont Blanc. Technical details and description of the climb by the "Grand Mulets" route of great interest on their own account.

Logical solution if you can spot it!

Best yet by the mountaineers crime writer.

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Congratulations to Lou and Tony on the birth of Brian Antony Swan on the 21st March 1958, and only nine days later we have Robert Owen Vaughan. Heartiest congratulations to Margaret and Len.

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Look forward fifty tens and fifty more; there'll still be boys
and still by Llydaws shore,
Long haired or short haired, dressed as many befall youth must
still answer to this mountain call,
Say that they climb by cloud-ways, rope on wings, laugh at us old
unhappy far off things?
Other the boys, other their transient fame:
Snowdon will be the same.

G.W. Young.

OGWEN AND LLANBERIS COACH MEET - 2nd MAY 1958.

This meet was attended by sixteen stalwarts and enjoyed splendid weather. Twelve of the numbers stayed at Pen Ceunant whilst four braved the rats at Isaf.

The Ogwen contingent made the ascent of Central Gully Glyder Fawn for historical reasons. Grossly exaggerated reports speak of mantleshelving on overhanging wet moss and then doing delicate balance moves in slime-covered boots. Frosts Climb and activities on Terrace Wall were also indulged in.

Three enterprising gentlemen circumnavigated the Snowdon Horseshoe by Moonlight - 11.30 p.m. Friday to 9 a.m. Saturday - a fine experience.

Parties also visited the Three Cliffs and whilst H. Smith was making his magnificent ascent of Cenotaph Corner on the Saturday, our people romped up Flying Buttress, Spiral Stairs, Sabre Cut and Pharoah's Wall.

Sunday at Llanberis was spent in a variety of ways by different people - viz. in walking, a little sun-bathing, exploring Conway Crags and ascending The Unicorn.

J. Burwell - meet leader.

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NEW MEMBERS. Since the A.G.M. in February last, the following have been admitted to membership: Mr. R.D. Davies; Mr. P. Eastwood; Mr. E. Eastwood (no relation!)

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BRITISH MOUNTAINEERING COUNCIL. We are pleased indeed to report that our application for membership of the above was accepted. This is considered to be a big step forward for our Club.

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RAMBLERS' ASSOCIATION. We have also become affiliated to the R.A. (Midland Area) as it is felt that we should add our support to those who work to protect the interests of climbers in addition to their many other activities.

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It is rumoured that the face of the Pillar on Far South Climb collapsed under Ray Reeves.

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ROCK CLIMBING SUB-COMMITTEE.

The Committee of A. Daffern, J. Daffern, M.King and J. Knight, has met on two occasions and widely discussed rock climbing activities in the Club with particular emphasis on the minimum organising necessary to provide facilities for those wishing to improve their standard and widen their enjoyment.

It is probably appreciated that one purpose of the sub-committee will be to bring to the notice of the culprit any instance of unsafe climbing. It is thought necessary to mention a few examples:

Slack belays.

Indifferent belaying on less exacting climbs.

Solo climbing - except well below one's standard.

Unroping altogether on steep ground above a climb.

It is a decision of the sub-committee that the free use of running belays be encouraged by anyone leading anywhere near their limit, however low this may be. There is no disgrace and the tolerant co-operation of all is requested.

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Hugh Bammer has apparently put up a route (?) between Crackstone Rib and Ribstone Crib and called it Rackstone Crib.

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The services of John Daffern are offered to anyone dropping valuables on the hills.

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Heard at Easter: "I don't usually bother bathing when the ice is hard to break".

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BEANLANDS, Hard Very Severe. C.T. Jones of the Cave and Crag has put up this route on the face of the Pinnacle of Clogwyn d'ur arddu, the only climb there not originated by J. Brown and his Rock and Ice friends.

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There is a day meet by J. Daffern to the Malvern Hills on 8th June and it is hoped to encourage some activity on the little crags in the vicinity in addition to the fine walk.

The North Wales meet by M. King on the 13th June is primarily for rock climbing and ropes will be made up so that all may enjoy the grade of climb best suited to them.

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UNUSUAL VARIATIONS on HORNED CRAG - or RUM DOODLE in REVERSE

The climber goeth forth to climb on Lliwedd
 And seeketh him a way where man hath trod;
 But which of all the thousand routes he doth
 Is only known to Andrews and to - Thomson.

A meteorological phenomena of great peculiarity - a splendid day in the summer of 1957, was thoroughly taken advantage of by three members of a well known mountaineering club in making a way up the line of least resistance on Lliwedd's famous East Peak.

A suitable point for starting operations was decided upon after seventy minutes of hot debate during which two members of the party fell asleep and the third so conducted his oratorical protestations as to render himself speechless for some time, a fact which raised him considerably in the estimation of the others.

Nevertheless, the rope was put on in the shadow of the great cliff and a certain gentleman, with due pomp and ceremony, placed a boot upon the rock and thus commenced a "great" climb of poignant significance for the writer.

Some thirty minutes later, progress had been made, in that the leader was out of sight and had been for some considerable time. This in itself was in no way unusual. Leaders have been known to pass from view on numerous occasions - over overhangs, round corners, down crevasses and worse. These are in order, but for a leader, intent on climbing up a mountain, to disappear in a general down-hill direction and to continue thus for half-an-hour, is, to say the least, curious. Numerous theories were voiced between the second and third climbers for this extraordinary state of affairs, none of which could be proven since attempts to contact the leader failed miserably. After some time, however, during which numbers two and three had been entertained by a great slanging match between two members of a mixed party (obviously husband and wife) on Avalanche Route, and the retirement in good order of a third member, obviously harrassed by the domestic strife, contact was made with the intrepid leader.

This was achieved through the stentorian efforts of a bystander at the extreme base of the rocks. This gentleman, it should be explained, is also a gallant member of the aforesaid Club since the choice of words and expletives was hardly suitable as between persons who haven't been introduced. The general effect however, was fortunately to stop the leader in his tracks (quite an achievement in view of his having been stationary for twenty minutes).

Number two joined the leader and found him ensconced on an ample stance about as large as a tea plate in an area of steep and alarmingly shattered rock about twelve feet above the ground! The point was put to him that this was not good enough and the leader set off fiercely in a direction straight up, discarding every fifth hold.

After a comparatively short time the rope was pulled taught and the second, drawing himself up from where he had been cowering, was again prevailed upon to climb.

The pitch turned out even more alarming than it appeared, particularly a holdless groove at about severe standard; and an exceedingly disgruntled second, on a rope stretched to endurance, arrived blown on a large stance.

Number three joined by a more direct and convenient route in about fifty-eight seconds.

After the usual felicitations following such an estrangement, the party climbed a groove and rib, followed by a rib and groove followed by curious crab-like movements on things which looked like jugs and turned out to be nothing of the sort.

All this was made more entertaining by the extraordinary conduct of the rope, rendered complex by number one being a little hard of hearing.

A request for "take in the slack" usually resulted in the second man, livid from shouting, being almost somersaulted from his holds due to inadvertently standing on loops of the rope.

The strained relationship resulting from all this was aggravated when the activities had brought the climbers to a parting of the ways. A vociferous argument ensued, during which the leader made false starts in three different directions and narrowly missed a fourth, straight down. In the course of this period, number three, with commendable calm, ate a bar of chocolate, admired the view, hiccupped a couple of times and fell asleep.

The morale of the party was soon heightened by it being possible to find and stand in patches of sunlight on this North Face. Anete was climbed by its easy side at a great rate and the party, carrying coils, scrambled to the top of the East Peak. Should we, perhaps say that the party started off carrying coils, but by the time number two had fallen over twice and been pulled off his feet twice and pulled number three off his feet any number of times, there weren't any coils to be seen. Only a first rate shambles and a great shouting and commotion was left of the stout party which had departed from the Gorphwysfa bent on great things.