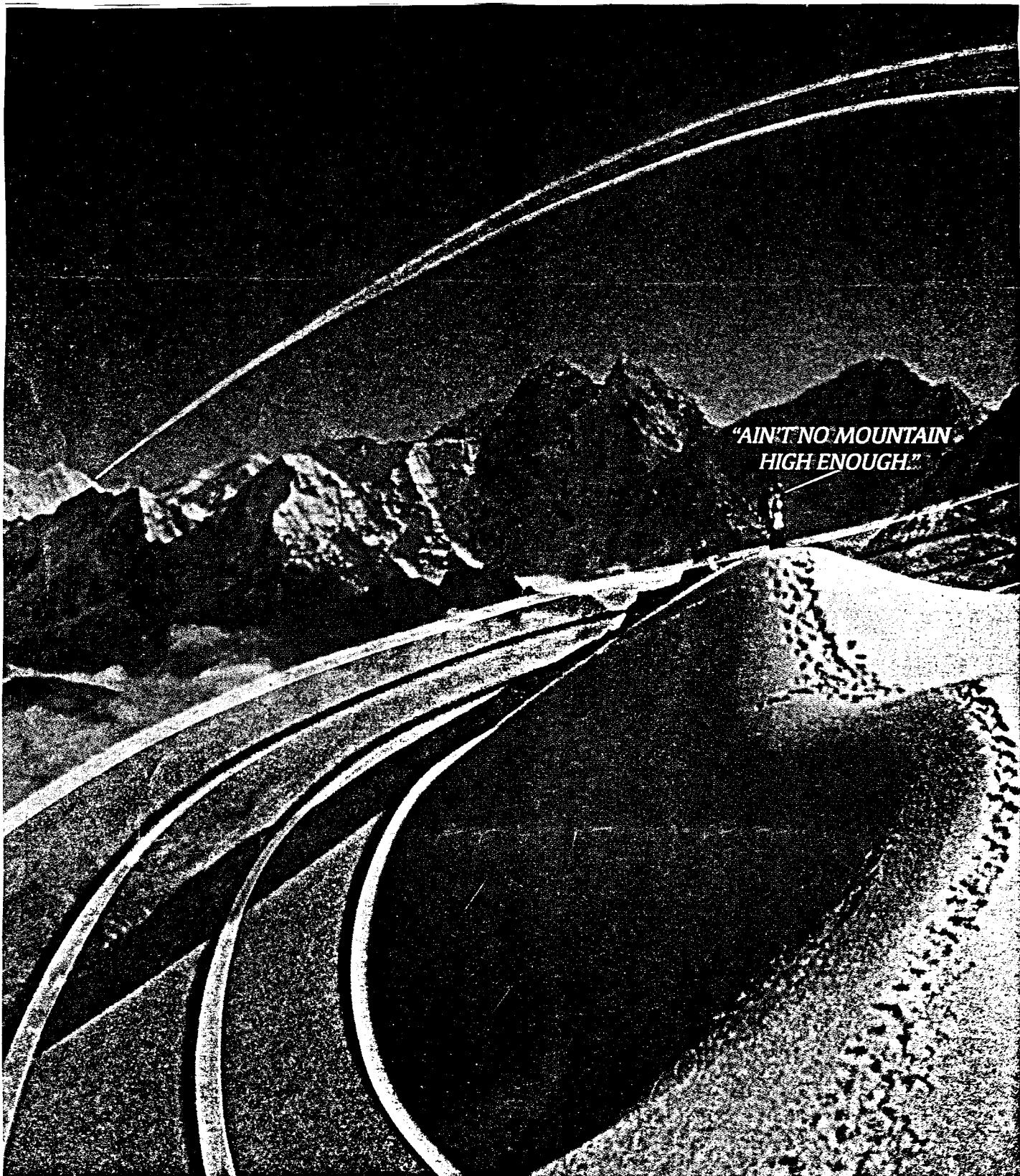


CEUNANT MC

NEWSLETTER

JUNE 1986



"AIN'T NO MOUNTAIN
HIGH ENOUGH."

COVER: J. Brennan in search of that elusive crux. Tribute to the man inside.

Saiditorial

Welcome to the first issue with yours truly as new editor. I realise that being a London based editor is not exactly going to be an asset for chasing up articles. However, watch out the newshounds will be around. And lets see some more members putting pen to paper about their exploits, whether it be on or off the hills. (The latter catagory should provide plenty of scope for Tim.)

Before detailing the new committee, a tribute to our previous editor, Joe Brennan whose editorial and written skills bear no resemblance at all to his driving and climbing, which can only be described as erratic, off route and up the wall. Seriously, as a tribute to Joe we are printing an article in this issue written in his formative years and I'll say no more! Read it.

The committee changes are as follows:

POST	NOMINEE	PROPOSER	SECONDER
CHAIRMAN	A Mynette	J Beddard	J Fairey
VICE CHAIRMAN	S Harvatt	J Hurst	D Grimmitt
SECRETARY	M Tolson	D Grimmitt	J Hurst
TREASURER	J Fairey	A Minette	R Lavill
HUT WARDEN	C Morris	M Jolley	J Beddard
OUTDOOR MEETS	R Haworth	*	*
INDOOR MEETS	S Coughlan	M Tolson	M Jolley
HUT BOOKINGS	D Grimmitt	K Forbes	A Bailey
MEMBER	J Pettet	D Grimmitt	A Mynette
MEMBER	G Spenceley	*	*
EDITOR	M Lund	J Pettet	S Harvatt
LIBRARIAN	R Lavill	J Fairey	R Haworth
AUDITORS	G Dyke	S Harvatt	J Fairey
	R Luckett	J Fairey	S Harvatt

* R Haworth and G Spenceley were both nominated for the post of Outdoor meets secretary. The meeting voted and R Haworth was duly elected with G Spenceley being elected to the committee as a member.

HUT BOOKINGS 1986/1987

19 - 23 May 1986 inclusive - Somerset Fire Brigade

27 - 28 June 1986 - Slough M.C.

22 - 26 August 1986 inclusive - West Cumbria M.C.

4 - 5 October 1986 - L.C.C.C.

24 - 25 October 1986 - Derby M.C.

19 - 20 October 1986 - Mr Stuffins - Half Term

14 - 15 November 1986 - Wolverhampton M.C.

6 - 7 December 1986 - L.C.C.C.

10 - 11 January 1987 - Polaris M.C.

23 - 25 January 1987 - Vibram M.C.

On the subject of Tyn Lon it appears that hut fees are not being paid by some members. Any member of the club can collect fees, the sheets are in the lounge, just send or give the money to the treasurer. Anyone caught cheating on fees will be shot.

It also appears that some members of the LCCC have been cheating on hut fees as well. Recently several of their members not only refused to pay up but also refused to give their names. Try that in Tranearth and see what happens. Personally I think the time has come to call it a day and end this one sided relationship. How many times have you been to Tranearth?

MEETS

B-B-Q

Saturday 14 June at Tyn Lon.

Bring own Burgers, steaks etc to be cooked on the Spencley 'turbo' grill - currently under construction at Ironbridge power station.

London Meet

Saturday 21 June 7.30pm London Heathrow Penta Hotel. Join celebrations/commiserations (delete as applicable) with Mr and Mrs Lund. All welcome.

Pontisford

Wednesday evening 16 July

See: Steve Coughlan

Wasdale Head

19 - 20 July

Camping in the field opposite the Head Hotel.

One or two interesting crags in the vicinity alternatively quite a nice power station and reprocessing plant to visit nearby.

BLOOD, WET AND TEARS

By

Fireman

You all remember 1985, it was the wettest year ever. This is what happened on the wettest day.

When the clock ticked over to Sunday August 18th, I was merrily helping one of my several sisters celebrate her birthday. I forgot how old she is; twenty something.

Four hours later, after a careful drive home and a couple of hours much needed kip (I had spent most of Friday night rushing around after faulty fire alarms), I dumped my walking and camping gear in the back of the fiasco and drove up to Horthen in Ribblesdale, picking Ken up in S London on the way.

The cuppa I'd been looking forward to did n't set us up well for the day ahead, it seemed to have been made with last nights washing up water.

11am and time to end the procrastination. The rain was not much more than a heavy drizzle and the cloud was about 200ft above our heads, so we left the cafe while the weather seemed fine. It was just a bluff.

We floundered our way up the incredibly muddy prow of Pen-y-Ghent. I was reminded of the occasion when the Farlses and I did Red Pencil route in the usual down-pour, only today was wetter and even muddier.

The top was horrible. A quick compass bearing got us on our way again despite mis-givings from Ken - he had n't used a compass before!? Next was an unforgettable crossing of Hunt Pot beck.

Wainwright says a 1 mile detour to Hunt Pot may be taken here. He omits to say that not detouring puts the 3 peaks walker into a desperate situation. We wandered into a swamp worse than any in the Lord of the Rings. We were saturated anyway, so just waded through in the end which proved to be a mistake. The place stank of rotten vegetation, sheep shit and other foul things.

Continued ... /

5 miles later saw us approaching Whernside. Two local wading enthusiasts said the mountain was the wettest they'd ever seen it. A $\frac{1}{4}$ mile long and 416 metres high mud slide was our route to the summit. The summit plateau was exceptionally horrible. Gale force sleet blew us though 1ft deep mire to the cairn and then dampened our enthusiasm and cooled our determination as we struggled back into the wind along the long summit ridge to the southward decent towards Ingleborough. The map by now was turning to papier mashe and oozing down my sleeve.

The Dales park authority have put in those steps which are exactly measured to disrupt any stride. They consist of wooden boards held in place by wooden posts. Ken at this point slipped in the mud and instantly slithered off downhill on his back at a most alarming rate, legs and arms akimbo, which was unfortunate because after accelerating he slammed to a halt with precision astride on one of the step posts. The resulting paralysis allowed him to slowly slide in an arc around the post and slip away onto the rough ground to one side.

As Henry would say, 'look, a nut-cracker'.

Continuing, we splashed down Whernside and in the Doe valley bottom came out below the cloud. Only Ingleborough to go now, a few miles away. Fascinating Limestone pavements led to infuriating scree. Then back into the cloud and up a path cum stream. Here I found mossy, golden starry and possibly purple Soxifrage enjoying the flood.

Ken was starting to drop back a bit as the last summit became achievable. He had n't done badly up to then considering his 58 years. The enticing prospect of our final ascent kept him going, then it was all down hill amid swollen streams and gurgling resurgences, some were like mini geysers spouting 2ft above the overall downward rush of water.

Down through the last limestone pavement with the last dull glow of the reclusive sun lighting up the bottom of the rain clouds - proving by setting that it had passed overhead during the day.

The 3 peaks round completed called for a celebration so we dripped into the bar of the Rose and Crown and I downed a restorative double malt - NO water.

Later, tents were pitched and a meal cooked. It was nice to rest in a dry pit listening to rain beating down on the outside.

MAIN WALL

The earlier sunshine had raised our hopes and led us on in an expectancy of shirtsleeved, casual, summer climbing, and, indeed, on Dinas Mot it had been so. But now on the way up to Cwm Glas the dark, heavy clouds were already touching the summits of Crib y Ddysgall and Crib Goch, silently floating over the empty cwm, driving away the placid life world of sunshine, and bringing instead the dead hollow world of impersonal movement, or - at least - so it seemed to me, conditioned by the morning sunshine.

Main Wall had, for a long time, been an ambition of mine, and naturally, in looking forward, I had framed the occasion in perfect conditions; experience having no say in the matter. Of all the climbs in Wales that I could attempt, Main Wall was probably the finest. I had heard much of it. I wanted everything to be right, and did not even consider that it would not be so. As I watched the mountains disappear under the cloud blanket, the earlier desire for movement and action gradually faded; the excitement and vigour was gone, replaced by an empty useless feeling. Reality - these clouds - with all their latent threat - had struck a body blow. I crumbled under its effect.

The sunlit world is a personal thing, glad of your existence, welcoming movement, talk, life, the air itself is alive. Everything strives together for harmony, and each facet of breeze, light, movement and life, a compliment to each other; the whole is complete. But with an unexpected change you become the victim of an unliving world, indifferent, even hostile to your fate, your movement is a discord in its own empty internal strife. Enclosed in a small sphere of mist horizons there is nothing, only the green wet rock stretching upwards and unknown past the mist ceiling. The grey black clouds, heavy in their menace, are the neutralisers of light and shadow, the damp ashes of a dead fire.

Under the cloud I felt the huge crag brooding, waiting: he and the elements, allies, looking down on those who dared to intrude.

We uncoiled the ropes in an atmosphere of mounting tension - for two of us, anyway - hurrying, under the darkening sky.

There were four of us, split into two parties. The two who had previously climbed this climb before were together and went ahead of us. The open corner up which the route lay at the start was a natural water channel, already streaming and covered with green slime. Everything was greasy, dirty, cold. The others went ahead; I was the last.

Alone, on the ledge, I watched the cloud base creep lower over Crib Goch. The pinnacles were already completely out of view; the breeze became stronger and more erratic, coming in gusts and falling back again, whispering, sighing, disappearing. I put my hands in my pockets for warmth. The first drops of rain began to fall. I could not break the spell. My cloud of cloom had grown, exaggerating everything. The rocks glistened, metallic, stretching upwards to the unknown. I hated these long waits - the mind is left to wander unchecked. The vast cliff face impressed itself on me, seeming impossible, bristling with overhangs between which our route must somehow find its way. I sank deeper and deeper into the dark cloud of my own making. Everything fused, moving sluggishly, lacking definition, submerged by the overall overwhelming feeling of

insignificance. Nothing. The world would rotate slowly on, would not even know of me, forces beyond me moving. There was no comfort here, everywhere I looked, nothing, no life, I could only shrink closer to the dripping rock for shelter. I would receive no help from the world, it was up to myself, and I was useless, powerless. The nagging doubts about my competence in the rain at this standard, I could not ignore. Water dominated the world. I sank deeper and deeper into the black turmoil.

A jerk on the rope signalled me at last an end to this killing wait. The climbing, to begin with, I did not find technically difficult, but my fingers objected to the cold wet rock, and I did not have much faith in my feet staying friends with their slippery partner. Gradually, however, warmth was returning, stimulated by unnecessarily energetic movements. Climbing as fast as I could, I moved forwards, needing a change of scene, desperately curious about what lay ahead.

It was a long pitch, but soon over, and now it was my turn to lead out across a delicate traverse and up a steep groove. The traverse I managed sketchily, but the groove was black and streaming, and was, I found, the hardest part of the climb. I struggled so far, the water running down my arms, and then I was stuck, in that position, my arms above my head - water channels. Everything was racing, images insane, fading, changing, my mind sinking, falling away, swirling in empty turmoil. I looked away out across the Cwm, across the sky and shale, but received no answer, only the silence of emptiness, wind whisper, an eternity of time, an eternity of sounds passed. The solution lay with myself alone. I knew it was not really the technicalities, the dead weight of my gloom was dragging me down. The spell had to be broken, it had lasted too long. The course facing me could not have been more clearly defined, in contrast to the vague and vacuous thoughts which had submerged me. The struggle was mine alone, against mine own worst enemy, myself. Suddenly, for the first time, I saw things clearly; I moved at last.

The ledge I arrived on was a perfect belay position, set in the middle of a vertical wall, an eagle's perch, about one foot wide and perfectly flat. The rain had stopped without my realising it while I was still in the groove; it had not even lasted very long, and out here the rocks were clean and dry. The lower rocks were probably dry only rarely, water usually draining on to them. Ha! The rain had been nothing. I slouched casually against the wall, watching Dave climb the groove, and - I am glad to say, climbing being a competitive sport - having difficulty in the groove, but he soon joined me. We climbed on, the exposure increasing all the time.

The rock was really fine, sound, dry, rough and, above all, steep. Another upward traverse led to a pointed perched block, and on round a corner overlooking the dark gully that flanked the right-hand side of the buttress. I climbed this block with difficulty and balanced awkwardly on the top, being pushed out by the wall above the block. Looking down I caught my breath - it was here, at this point, that the very real exposure, which had been increasing progressively as we gained height, reached a climax. Under my feet there was nothing, but the gulley bed four hundred feet below, which the rock here overhung. Anything falling here would have an uninterrupted passage all the way to the ground. I paused for a while, then moved on quickly, excited, exhilarated, glorying in my position, in the air, between heaven and earth. The distance above, the distance below, they could be equal. I could not comprehend the scale of things, I did not care. On, quickly upwards, deliberately pushing my body away from the rock, touching lightly with fingers and toes, courting gravity, laughing my heels at space. The breeze was gradually lifting the clouds of Crib Goch. Freedom.

EASTER SKI MEET - MERIBEL

Ten people bussed out and three drove to this classic resort. Conditions varied, generally there was adequate snow throughout the three valleys though the best skiing was to be found higher up.

Accommodation was in two self catering apartments. The 'cognacenti' quickly allied themselves with Sirhc (Maestro Morris) who ran the kitchen with military precision and much creative flair. The lucky six were treated to royal banquets every evening, whilst the under-privileged, residing below stairs, were denied even the wafting kitchen bouquets. Several of these 'unfortunates' appeared most evenings around 9 o'clock looking like extras from the film set of 'Oliver'.

The Alfa was much in the news during the holiday. Whether the car was under the 'Svengali' influence of the co-driver's criminal mind is difficult to say, but on several occasions, car and occupants came perilously close to the attention of 'Le Procurator Fiscale'. Cost of these japes rose progressively, viz: FF 42, FF 230, FF 10,000! (Thereby hangs another tale, Ed.)

Piste gossip:

The season's prize was awarded jointly to:

JOHN ('Big Nose') who tamed both mountain and ski after an unsteady start in St Anton (and by so doing so selfishly denied the party in Meribel a target for their usual scorn and derision!)

SUE who showed the 'biggest' over the season (Sorry: biggest improvement Ed). This stout lass from the South Riding, donned skis for the first time at Christmas and after just ten days on the Piste was descending in very fine style.

..... fortunately, the party did include a Tenderfoot in the shape (?) of Joe (he also of the large 'Hooter'). The lad was on his first visit to the alpine piste and this heaven-sent situation usefully channelled the collective malice of the party.

..... Mark, our junior member, also improved greatly and would have done better still had he not chosen simultaneously his initiation in 'la bierre a - la pression'. Chris might have exercised greater parental control, it was suggested, but was apparently preoccupied most of the week keeping his seat on the chair lift.

..... Stop press unconfirmed reports indicate than Ian, our latest recruit, who has hitherto adopted the more homespun 'Aviemore - Climber' image on the Piste, has signed up Roger (call me Killy) as wardrobe consultant for next season.

An excellent trip. Saturday afternoon saw most heading back with long faces to the English Winter, whilst the fortunate few travelling dans l'Alfa et 'deux cheval' headed South to the sun, sea and warm rocks of Les Calanques, and yet more adventures

AJM.

The Three Musketeers in the Big Apple

"Harvatt - will you please get out of your midge ridden pit and let's go climbing!!!"

It was almost as if the man had stuffed the remains of the barbecue into his ears to avoid hearing the word climbing ever again. Not really a question of selective deafness but more a case of perpetual sleeping sickness. (We later discovered a human alarm clock who could ensure rapid SH crack of dawn starts).

And so the team assembled - the three musketeers and a medical member. By divine selection in the Vaynol the previous night, the target for the day was to be Gogarth. Hurst had muttered something about a route he had in mind but nobody listened and so he said no more. A guide was purchased in order to sort out as many easy, warm up routes as possible. The journey then began.

"We must ring Eric to see if he will join us there"

"Good idea, Johnny, go and ring him"

Four visits to broken, out of order or just vandalised call boxes later we came to the conclusion that Fairey must get a phone put into the flying hearse. This was a blow. Getting Eric to Gogarth was part of the plan to stall, procrastinate and pass the time away with stories of main parachute malfunctions, how to survive a double chute malfunction and how to obtain a most unusual design in birdbaths.

A cup of tea was taken at South Stack to replace the fluids lost by all during the A5 dash at the hands of Harvatt. (If he ever asks you "Do you want to see my 3 point turn?" just calmly look the other way).

Having survived the death defying descent crevasse (just), it was noticed that Hurst stepped up three gears and disappeared along the upper tier traverse before you could say "one for all and all for one". We decided that such a turn of speed could only have resulted from an urgent call of nature.

Not so! We turned the next corner and found him already geared up and waiting to hand the ropes to us for a belay. It was now our turn to experience urgent calls of nature. (In fact the medical member from that moment on kept saying "I need a wee" every twenty five minutes. I must research Grays Anthology of Urinary Disorders to discover what her problem is).

"Central Park, Johnny? Now come on, you can't be serious? We need a nice, quiet route to warm up on, to get use to the insistent blaring of South Stack fog horn et al"

From that moment until he reached the first belay 120 ft up he was subjected to some of most formidable (previously never known to fail) verbal and nonverbal attempts to arrest his progress but to no avail. The man climbed up quickly and quietly which in the end made us think that perhaps it was not too hard and probably only the one 4c move.

Fairey next. "Jesus Christ - how do you start this?" "Bloody Hell Hursty, where's all the holds?" "How do you get up this?" By now it was becoming clear that Mr J Hurst Esq. had been determined to do this route for some time and he knew from the start that he would do it in fine style.

Harvatt immediately behind on the front of the next rope. "Where do you get a runner in here?" "Hey Jim, have you taken any more runners out up to here" "What lovely flowers to the right and left." "Wow, this is 4c all the way" But then more seriously "Is there room for four of us that ledge John?"

"What ledge Steve?"

Everybody's hearts sank to their sphincters! A hanging belay - God, what next?

A wry smile came to Hursty's lips - he knew he had the next pitch in the bag. This year's motto was about to bear fruit - WHO DARES WINS! He set off up the second pitch leaving Harvatt marooned at the start of the traverse. There were no shouts, grunts or thrutching sounds as he silently proceeded up the crack, over the bulge and into the finishing grove. It was all over so quickly we could not understand why we expected him to have trouble getting off the ground at the start.

The rest of the team quickly joined forces by insisting that the medical member overtook Harvatt and crossed over the traverse to Jim (without passing water in the process). From then on they all followed the second pitch in various fashions but with unanimous admiration for their leader.

At the top Harvatt remarks "I now know why this is called Central Park. It's because of all the beautiful flowers along the route".

"Idiot, it was put up in November!!"

But the last words were from our hero of the day. "Beautiful weather, great company and superb climbing. What more could a man want?"

True to character, the medical member could suggest nothing else.

J.W.F.

'Les Calanques'

It's probably only piss from the bog on the bus. Smells like it, tastes like it, I'll take another sack. It had taken Steve longer to cross from Victoria coach station to Waterloo than it had from the NEC to London - ~~I~~ we (must get used to that) left work early to meet him!

Home, gear, tents, sun tan cream and shorts this was not the gear list for the club's Easter meet organised by Roger 'raindancer' but 'les Calanques'. A quick vegetarian meal (we are so accommodating at Myrtle Road) and a few hours sleep.

The wind was building, Ceefax and Oracle gave the warnings. Dover was windy but the harbour calm. No 'Seabin' this time. Going posh, Townsend - T. A good breakfast - wot no bacon (!) and we pulled out of the harbour. What a sight. Two hundred flying breakfasts, waves over the bows and the gentle stirring of 200 stomach pumps. It was rough. School trips instantly turned from screaming excited kiddies to pale, groaning gobs in reverse. Heady atmosphere - (under quote). The decor was a vegetarians dream - carrots everywhere except in the kitchens. Karen managed to keep her breakfast down but enjoyed it several times in doing so.

At last Boulogne and a dash to Paris. Ah, gay Paris! We did a quick tour of the whole city, courtesy of our navigator Karen, in 4 minutes flat, before she realised where she was! Then it was Gare du Nord and the rematch with the Swedish Sex Wombat. Out of Paris and join the race for 'le Sud'. Several dices with the frogs and later, much later.

Cassis. Nowhere to camp. A room for four, and Steve loses the toss for the double bed. Easter sunday and the engineer cannot get either bog or shower to flush. Step in the pen pusher - 2 mins later instant hot water (in the bog and shower!)

Up to the campsite, we scrape out a spot in the gravel and pitch camp. Good job we took along the airhammer to put the pegs in.

Let's hit the beach. The beer was cool, the sun warm. Oh for Cornwall and rain-dancer's crew. Several beers later and the sun ducks behind a cloud. Thats no cloud, thats Brennan's nose. Sue, Joe and Tony still walking, no breaks and smelling as though they had spent the previous night in a bog - they had!

The fish soup is the business, especially with the bits. Even Sirhc likes it! He and Rice-krispies caught up in the 'two horses'.

Back to the campsite. Oh no, it's French Connection III. Steve and the Sex Wombat just on the way to have an ablution and they're held up by a frog wielding a shooter. Steve goes for him with a stick of celery and blocks with Lyssen, who kicks him in the balls. A flash, bang and he's off. French gendarmes, statements and another unsolved crime statistic.

Let's hit the rock. St Mouchel on Easter Monday. Pitches of 5b to start and no crowds around, probably very similary to the Cornsikh scene. Great day, more beers, more fish soup. The Alfa's not feeling well.

Next day the girls and Keith are having a day in Marseilles. Meanwhile, of all the dealers listed in the Alfabook, 'Laurel and Hardy' (Tony and Joe) pick one and tell us another. Little do they now that it really doesnt matter - the cars destiny is already planned. Meanwhile me, Steve and Sirhc tackle mid-morning Marseilles on the trail of Laurel and Hardy who went the opposite direction. Back to the site, leave a note, 'off to St Mouchel'. A quick beer and here come Stan and Olly; several heated words and 'A' team head on upwards. Down below, Stan and Olly have lost the car keys - di-di-di, de, di-di-di, didlidi - didlidi, di di.

Steve and Sirhc do a classic arete. Stan, Olly and me do a good line on the wall round the corner. First pitch is peg pulling 10 feet above the ground (for Stan and Olly), second pitch goes very nicely - great route.

Warm greetings back in Marseilles, and it's the 'Bouilabaisse' - the traditional Marseillan fish dish - this is the biggest dish any of us have ever seen. Sirhc thinks he is in heaven. What a night!

Next day, slow start. En Vau. My goodness, it's so nice. Into the cove - impressive. What a place. Towering limestone. And then the real En Vau appears. It reminds me of what I've read about Yosemite in the rush hour. Shit and climbers everywhere and everything that accompanies us. Basically, not the place we want to climb so we take a walk to Cassis. Unusually the party has managed to split!

We take a trip out to a la Ciotat. A real working ship building port. Great road over from Cassis and then the biggest cranes you'll ever see. Makes Tonka Toys look like Matchbox. What a meal. Needless to say, the fish soup was superb.

Morgiou, and the Ceunant international mountain signal comes into its own. AAG-GHH. Sirhc goes for it, 5c - tells Keith its soft touch 4C. The rest of us do a great line up the yellow wall. And then me and Steve 'go for it'. Six pitches, 5c, 5a, 5b, 5a, 5b, 5a. We are going well - so is everyone else. Its a different sport out here. First it's not raining, second it's safe - bolts everywhere - you can focus on the moves and enjoy the climbing totally. No doubts. I quite like it. The best day yet.

That night and it's back to La Ciotat. Stan and Olly drive back in the Alfa together. Olly (Joe) is driving, Stan (Tony) eggs him on. 'Give it maxi-pego'. Not one to ignore an invitation to give any motor some stick, he does. The frogs claim he glanced them as he bounced off the wall. I've never seen so many forms to fill in. Lets get out of here before la gendarmes arrive.

In the cold light of day we can only reach one conclusion - its broken. Six germans and a tin of isopon later we say our goodbyes and Alfa limps north for home.

Off to Sormiou. This is it. Paradise. Party down to six. We have a really nice day. Sex Wombat and the future Mrs Lund do a couple of routes, and then its back to fish soup for Steve and Lyssen. The rest hit the meat.

Final day and its Morgiou. The Ceunant mountain call fails us for the first time. AAGGHH. AAGGHH. The result is a long days walking for Steve.

Time to head home. We go via the Vercors. An hour off the South coast and we are back in bad weather. We make the Vercors as night falls. Up to the col and a light dusting of snow. The mountain cliffs look quite superb. I'm still in my swimming shorts and can't resist a quick snowball. The Swedish Sex Wombat is back in her natural habitat.

Through the tunnel and we haven't seen another car for well over an hour. We find out why! Blizzard and about ten inches of snow. On and down - slowly for a change.

We find a hotel and just make the cafe. Wot no fish soup! Next morning early start. We have a ferry to catch and Lyssen a train. Into Paris. Ah, gay Paris! And Gare du Nord. So long, farewell, bon voyage, hope to see you soon and we leave Lyssen. Two and a quarter hours later we join the queue for the ferry and miss it, by three cars. Its raining.

Another April weekend is in prospect, with the squall borne contents of an evaporated Atlantic about to be dumped on unfortunate, sunless Britian yet again. Roll up folks and see the water cycle in action. With a vengeance .

Where to go in these times ? The answer was obvious but how to get there less so. The only transport available capable of carrying five persons was mine but this had only been bought two days earlier and was not yet road tested. As it cost all of £10 net, reliability was not necessarily a built in ingredient. It was a Morris 1800, a relic of thick steel plate K Reg engineering and the legacy of a smashed Alpha Romeo in Southern France. But that is another story. 86,000 miles on the clock, possibly on the second lap. A real heavy metal job, melted down it could make at least six Nissans; a car to have a crash in.

Friday night and the other four all had to be collected from various pubs spread across the Midlands. Why do people not seem to live at home anymore ? Despite an early start it was 9.30pm and many glasses of the amber liquid later before we managed to wheedle Mynette out of his unofficial residence, the 'Cock Inn', Droitwich.

On the road at last with the Cruiser gunning along, flat out at 60mph. So far so good.

Steve: "Why is the oil pressure light on ?"

Me: "Is it the oil pressure light ?"

Steve: "I think it needs expert attention".

A hand reaches under the dash and violently rips out various wires. "There that's cured it."

A pause.

"Christ, what's all this liquid gushing out ?"

"Dickhead. You've ripped off the screenwasher tubes as well!"

Not much potential for a career in micro surgery here. A voice from the back: Tone, our on-board mobile mechanic; "Time for a swift half, what ?'

Bloody hell, we're only 30 miles from Birmingham. I think he is in danger of becoming an immobile mechanic on this journey.

They appear to have their own version of non-licensing in Tenbury Wells. It is the small hours and everyone is ratted. The locals are friendly (very) but unfortunately not likely to win any beauty contests. Not even Crufts. A band plays. Everybody does the Conga. Until, with an unexpected change of mood the landlady throws a wobbler and in a fit of screaming hysteria she gives us our marching orders. "I'll get the police. There they are at the end of the bar." The only apparent reasons were eating the band's food and peeing in the wrong places. Or was it vice versa ? Ah well. Its 4.00am.

"I can't drive, I've only just got my licence back."

Tone manfully takes up Captain's position, whilst the rest of us crash out amidst the ample upholstered spaces of the Cruiser. Sleep is no problem, what with fumes from the blown exhaust, the drone of ancient machinery and now the beer being converted to a gaseous state. Thus, onwards the limo cruises.

A free country allows its citizens unrestricted movement, without interference or harassment. The Welsh Constabulary swooped at 5.30am on the Brecon by-pass as we made our stately progress westward. Mynette, indulging a character trait, immediately leaps out and pees as near as possible to the police woman.

She eventually puts out her torch. The Constable stands bemused, looking at the Cruiser as if he has chanced upon the secret of perpetual motion. No we have no papers. Why are we travelling from Birmingham at this time? Officer we have a saga of misfortunes electrical, mechanical, hydraulic and pneumatic with which to regale you if you only had time. Jesus, the alcohol fumes could be smelt all the way back to the Worcestershire border. Must try to get downwind. At length, having satisfied themselves as to the non-felonious nature of our voyage, we are allowed to proceed. Amazingly, Tone was not asked to supply a sample of his breath. The lack of papers are going to pose a problem however.

Onwards we doze. It is 7.00am in deepest Cardiganshire and police are apparently more plentiful than petrol on Welsh roads. We have run out. Nothing for it but to wait until they open. Methinks the logistical planning of this expidition leaves a little to be desired. Must ask Bonnington to advise next time we plan a weekend in Pembrokeshire.

9.30am and the Cruiser the Cruiser seems to create quite a stir as it ploughs a muddy wake through the marsh that is Bosherston camping in the monsoon season. So many people gather to inspect and climb all over this wonderous machine that the roof colapses inwards under the weight. Luckily this is nothing that a few well directed kicks inside cannot rectify.

Wait. What's this? It has stopped raining. Quick along to the cliff tops. This is ridiculous. I'm still pissed. My head is spinning. Wonder if the others feel the same. Four of us abseil down Blockhouse Buttress. Trucker's Delight etc beckon although I don't think we are in a very receptive mood. Having waited until we are all at the bottom, the gods conspire against us, as the heavens open their contents into a bitter wind. Instant wetness and coldness delivered in a horizontal jet stream. The tide is on the way in. Rapidly. There is no easy escape route. This has become a watery type situation, with fresh water bucketing on our heads and foamy brine sucking at our feet. No one can climb even the easiest route. Nothing for it but to prussik. Four times 150ft equals a long, cold and wet time. Sirch and Steve selflessly volunteer to go first, moving swiftly to purlion the rope.

Must review my policy of not bothering to take an anorak on the grounds that if it is wet I am not going out anyway. After an epoch the top is reached and the two S's seem restless.

"How about the keys?"

"Piss off."

Good job they were not left in my rucksac, otherwise an even longer walk back would ensue. The two mountain friends promptly disappear over the horizon muttering darkly about wasting VDT (valuable drinking time) and just about making it. I ponder whether to leave Mynette, the last man up but decide against it as the chances of my abseil rope being brought back by anyone but myself would be pretty low.

Eventually, back in the car park an unexpected, even amazing, phenomenon unfolds. Sirch, the world's most reluctant driver, is at the Cruiser controls, driving round in circles, sacrificing even the pub this last hour. Gone are the white knuckles, the beads of sweat on the forehead. Instead a broad grin spreads across the Sirch face as he marvels at the incredible driving characteristics of the limo. The ignition lock is so worn it had been activated by a lollipop stick.

The rain still cuts in off the unprotected coast. Nothing for it now but some 'classic' games of snooker above the Pembroke Burtons and countless cups of free tea from the serving girls. Until 6.00pm and the time to renew acquaintance with Big Al, the landlord of the St Govans. God, here we go again.

Sunday dawns fine. At last, a chance to take advantage of all the aforementioned intensive training. The life of a rock athlete is a tough one. We try to find some climbs on a lower area of Stennis Head as described in the new Monty guide. It is discovered that the half-way tide is half-way up these routes, possibly the result of the guide book writer's inability to describe new routes unless accompanied by a photograph.

Eventually a large party congregates round the more traditional area of Stennis to admire Lund give a demonstration of the benefits of self denial and a strict winter training schedule by failing on a VS. Sirch, having been prised away from the wheel of the Cruiser, shows how it should be done; in secondhand hush puppies (edges badly worn). Henry arrives and reports seeing gannets. Charlie reports on everything.

And so, the reentry stage of our journey begins with the Cruiser pointed in a suborbital trajectory towards Brum. The odd near miss on the way could be partly accounted for by the braking system malfunctioning on three wheels, but the main reason was Welsh drivers. Nothing to do with me. After a few short stops in some rustic dungheaps along the way, we eventually settled in a watering hole near Leominster. After some rapid succession test samples of the local beverage, the landlord starts looking in our direction, beaming warmth and friendliness. Oh no, its happening again. Why is it always us ?

"Nice to see new faces lads. Havn't seen you before. Your welcome anytime. Don't feel you have to rush away, just because its Sunday night."

12.30am Monday. We stagger out on the last Brum bound stage. Steve takes the helm this time. Suddenly there is a frantic scrabbling as chunks of rotted carpet are ripped out from under the accelerator. Guptah, the previous careful owner was obviously economy minded, and had installed his own anti-heavy boot device. Freed from this inhitition, the Cruiser suddenly leaps to 95mph and the last leg is done in double fast time. First stop Chateau Mynette to releive him of his Easter duty frees. A cut price litre of Scotch is safely disposed of.

3.45am. Home.

9.00am . Work and the usual bright eyed, early morning Dallas fans.

"Climbing must be a tough sport Joe, you always look knackered on a Monday morning."

Postscript

For Sale

Morris 1800 K Reg. A car for the enthusiast. One careful owner up to 1972. 86,000 genuinely recorded miles. MOT until 29th May 1986. Extremely economical (100miles per pint). Coachwork of heroic appearance. £5 ono Exchange considered.