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It was a great... I was a great... I went down to... turned up... justified in...

Strangely enough... however, a... VOL. 5, NO. 2 DECEMBER 1957... It seems that his...

CAVING MEET, NOVEMBER 16-17.

ERNE PHILLIPS

This Meet resulted in a magnificent turn-out of Club members; five of us moved into Derbyshire on the Saturday morning, and a further straggler was roped in on Sunday. It is difficult to decide whether this was due to general apathy, or a result of the rival meet in the Chiltern Hills organised by certain characters who shall be nameless. No doubt the latter function had a much better attendance due to the lavish supplies of liquid refreshment available.

We went out via Matlock, where we had a look at a place that I had noticed before, but never investigated. It led into an extensive underground system from what appeared to be a man-made entrance (Ah! The Municipal Conveniences! - Ed.) and there were signs of the removal of considerable quantities of fluor-spar. Ronni found a nice calcite crystal, and I saw the first lead vein I have ever seen in spite of the fact that I have looked into quite a number of old lead mines on other occasions.

From here we moved on to Snitterton and walked up the wooded gorge on the far side of the valley. This is quite an interesting feature in itself, with limestone cliffs which might form the basis of a future whack-and-dangle expedition, and in addition about seven cave entrances which we intend to investigate later on. By this time the shades of night were falling and we moved off towards Brassington and Rainster, where we camped at the usual place. The cows seemed to have been unusually generous and it was with some difficulty that we found clear spaces to camp.

After a rapid trough we were away to the Gate, where quantities of Owd Roger and other similar foods were consumed, until we were eventually kicked out. After an abortive attempt to procure more solid nourishment at the local fish-and-chips emporium, we finally had to make our way over to Wirksworth where we managed to satiate ourselves, and so back to the camp site.

The Hooleys had triumphantly produced two lilos recently acquired from the Allen menage, but in spite of repeated warnings that the pressure required is rather critical it seems that something must have been a trifle wrong. Margaret had nightmares and woke up shouting, "Where am I?" while Chuck dreamt he was on a ship and was nearly sea-sick.

Dawn eventually broke, or perhaps one should say gently cracked, and we struck camp and proceeded towards the Manifold having collected J. Norman Millward en route. It was a great wrench to pass the George at Alstonfield ten minutes before opening time on a Sunday lunch-time, but duty called and Ronni and I went down to Weags Bridge to see if any Sundays-only members had turned up. The place was completely deserted however, and we felt quite justified in joining the others at the George.

Strangely enough we left voluntarily before closing time with a much more benevolent outlook on the world in general, and travelled back towards Matlock. This volte face was brought about by the tales Nobby had been telling of the vast underground systems he had discovered in the Heights of Abraham when a callow youth, he having been a resident in the Jewel of Derbyshire at the time. It seems that his memory is not as sharp as he thought, because he now finds that he is unable to stand upright in places that had seemed of gigantic

proportions when he made his previous visits. However we found one or two interesting places which we shall have to look into further when the opportunity presents itself.

Nobby acted as our guide and mentor to several other interesting features in the locality, which it would probably be rather indiscreet to mention here, but the sight of steaming hot water issuing from the living rock was rather astonishing, and with the possibility of it being the waste from the local slipper bath already excluded, gives one to wonder precisely where it does indeed come from.

-----cOo-----

DERBYSHIRE WEEKEND, NOVEMBER 30-DECEMBER 1. JIM KERSHAW

Four Nottingham Oreads gathered in Leek late on Saturday afternoon having arrived by public transport ("My dear, the frightful people one meets on buses nowadays - the car is off the road at the moment, you know"). The four of us, Geoff Hayes, Roger and Beryl Turner and myself, whiled away the time before the arrival of the Polish special to Blackshaw Moor Camp in a local juke-box joint, having been unable to determine how a fine-voiced Leek citizen had managed to get himself into such a condition at 5-45 p.m.

Leaving the bus at the Three Horseshoes we climbed steadily towards the moonlit jagged skyline of the Roches, wreathed in mist under a frosty sky. Tents were pitched at Golds farm in a bitter N.E. wind, and the evening was spent in the barn talking and brewing up.

The night was as cold as it had promised to be, followed by a fine Sunday morning which didn't turn into the usual wet Sunday afternoon. It was warm out of the wind, and Geoff Hayes led the Pedestal Route, Spiral Staircase and Black and Tan, older members of the party leaving their bath-chairs and crutches at the bottom of the climb to place a senile hand and gouty foot on the rock.

Tents were packed at 2 p.m. and we followed the ridge of the Roches for some way, descending to the Dane via Blackbrook. Three Shire Heads was reached across country with an interesting diversion in the river, and the site of S.C.C. roadman's shelter (Five Inns, '54 - see Gibsonian folklore) pointed out. A lane running along a somewhat rusty stream was followed to Orchard Farm and a track past some old mine-shafts led on to Axe Edge.

The sky was cloudless. We watched the sun sink behind Orchard Farm, ridge on ridge of low veldt-like hills silhouetted by the warm smoky glow of the last daylight. In the East the moon had risen, faintly illuminating our path to the Buxton road.

It was one of the finest December days I can remember. For the rest, we met the Nottingham University M. C. returning from Castle Naze and were kindly offered seats to Nottingham, a pleasant hour being spent in a pub between Ashbourne and Derby.

-----cOo-----

News items concerning mountaineering techniques and equipment.

When using a snaplink in conjunction with a sling as a running belay, it is preferable to arrange the link with the gate hinge below the opening catch, and to keep the gate side away from the rock, so that in the event of a fall, the gate is not opened by side pressure against a rock projection, and in the event of the link opening out, the teeth of the gate tend to cut through the sling and not through the climbing rope.

It is now considered rather unsafe to lead on nylon "medium" rope, because of the susceptibility of nylon fibres to being cut through easily on sharp pieces of rock. A well-known maker of nylon rope recommends in a booklet on climbing safety that "extra full weight" should be used. Very good business - if all climbers could afford it, and wished to climb on such heavy rope. The majority will agree that "full" is the ideal weight and strength.

Some climbers, knowing that there is plenty of life left yet in their old "medium" nylon ropes, have climbed on two lengths of that. Advantages are: (i) in the event of encountering any artificial pitches the second rope is already available; (ii) in the event of a fall a leader has a second chance if one rope breaks or is cut, and (iii) to protect himself after an initial traverse the leader can use one of the ropes on a running belay before tackling a vertical pitch. From the top of the vertical pitch he has the second rope free to protect his second man on the traverse. The disadvantages are fairly obvious: there is twice as much troublesome rope to look after. Try being middle man on a double rope system, even if it's limited to the two leading climbers. There is also the danger, in the event of a fall, of nylon running on nylon, especially if one rope is appreciably longer than the other.

Prior to the use of running belays and even nowadays leaders generally seem to push the rope round to their backs out of the way, regardless of whether it would be an advantage or a disadvantage in the event of a fall. When using running belays however, it appears to be safer to keep the rope in front. If a leader falls on a runner directly below with the rope at his back, there is a danger of the tightening rope turning the leader upside down and bashing his head against the rock.

Eric (Byne ? - Ed.), Geoff Hayes and I did a climb on a gritstone or sandstone crag near Ambergate (Grid ref. 346532), which might be called "Chasecliff", a 40-ft. buttress which has at least this one good route up the middle. The difficulty is to reach and establish oneself in an isolated crack and corner a third of the way up; then one follows a pleasant upward traverse to the right until an easy 15-ft. slab is reached, leading to the top. Geoff did the leading; I thought it was quite Severe, and would be interested to know if it has been done before. There is not much further scope on the crag, but it is worth a visit on a summer evening if you want something fresh. A pleasant situation overlooking the Derwent to Shining Cliff woods.

(It is not intended to run this column as a regular series, but if you have any suitable items, please send them to the usual address.)

CORRESPONDENCE

The following is a letter to the Club, and does not necessarily express the views of the Committee; it does express the views of a considerable group of members.

"A point has now been reached where further discussion, negotiation or search is pointless unless there is an immediate response for a loan (in connection with a new hut). The North Wales district has been scoured several times, many houses and buildings have been investigated and owners interviewed. Our need for a Club hut has been made known in any quarter where it was felt to be profitable. All with little success. The result is that it is now considered that the immediate purchase of a house or suitable building is the only solution, and that renting or leasing is impracticable. One house is under consideration; that is by the church in Cwm Pennant, the probable price being in the region of £500.

"However, obviously no approach can be made to the owner without something in the kitty, and it is imperative that this is done in the immediate future, for two reasons. First, the owner is undecided whether to sell or retain the house for renting to visitors on a weekly basis, and second, when the nuclear power station project (at Trawsfynydd) gets under way all the available accommodation will be absorbed and a demand created which will place prices beyond our reach.

"The Club membership exceeds 90, and even allowing for disinterested members and those abroad and in H.M. Forces the average loan required is only £7 - £10. Consider. For a loan of £7 - £10 you can secure permanently a place in the hills. It would cost this amount to rent a house or even a caravan for one week in high summer, and you most certainly wouldn't get it back. A very few visits would repay you for the inconvenience of the loan. The actual terms of the repayment will be made clear by the Committee if any actual progress is made.

"In my opinion if the appeal is unsuccessful any further with regard to the hut would be fruitless.

"If anyone knows or can find a suitable place where the owner will come to terms, please come forward at once. The furniture from ByW can be transported there."

L. H. Burns, Hon. Treasurer.

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SITUATION VACANT: TYPIST REQUIRED to cut stencils for Newsletters. Peggy Urmston, who has been doing this job for many months now, is no longer able to take it on. The Editor doesn't mind doing it once in a while (as this month) but won't do it regularly. Please send details of age, experience and vital statistics with a copy of a recent photograph to the Hon. Ed., D. C. Cullum, 4 Longnor Road, Hazel Grove, Cheshire.

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ADVENTURES ON A NEEDLE (Conclusion)

CYRIL MACHIN

Nine or ten feet obliquely above there was a piton. This must have been the place that C. F. Meade mentioned in his book, "Approach to the Hills", where Pierre Blanc stood on his shoulders so that he could reach out sideways to the right; and higher over the thousand-foot precipice the very spot where an Austrian Professor of Gymnastics, after surmounting the overhang and driving in pitons, found his strength failing, lost hold, slipped backwards, the sudden jerk snapping the rope, and was dashed to pieces at the foot of the mountain. The leader's ruminations about the route were suddenly interrupted by a loud clap of thunder. The party had had their faces so glued to the rocks that that they had failed to notice thunder clouds coming up the valley. We shed the pitons, karabiners and piton hammer, placed them under a distant overhang and retired to crouch under another overhang to await results. There was not long to wait. The heavens opened with a deluge of rain which soon turned to snow, the thunder became incessant, reverberating from wall to wall of the precipitous peaks around. Lightning zig-zagged down adjoining pinnacles with vivid blue flames. It was a most impressive sight from an impressive position; we were right among the storm. It was well over an hour before the storm ceased and we were able to creep from underneath the overhang and retrieve our equipment. Time was getting on; the party were a little white about the gills and said, "Let's get off this terrible place!" The leader thought that if only we could surmount the remaining 150 feet we should be out of the wood. He rather half-heartedly prospected the opposite side of the terrace, all very exposed and not hopeful. To add to the difficulties a thick fog was now developing. Visibility became only a few yards, so reluctantly a sling was made with spare rope carried for that purpose and an abseil started down the chimney, the sling being conveniently affixed to a suitable bollard. Later ringed pitons offered themselves and whenever they were located they were made use of. We groped our way along the County Highway, abseiled down further chimneys and made our way towards what we hoped would be the final abseil point, but in the fog it was an hour before we found the cairns placed in the morning and made our last two abseils.

The next chapter starts a season later. The Party are on the Sun Hotel Terrace studying notes for the final 150 feet. From the overhang on the S. W. edge a traverse is made to the North Wall by Gabari's Terrace. This traverse goes outwards, upwards and across a wall to the edge of all things, (Thread belay), followed by a crawl along a narrow, sloping shelf over as sheer a drop as any seeker after the sensational could wish to experience. Then one lowers oneself on to some footholds and in spread eagle fashion edges round a corner on to the appalling North Wall. We are now on the Terrazzino delle Re Belgio, which is left by a very exposed traverse to the beginning of the famous Gabari Wall, the last difficult part of the climb. The route goes upward by a cleft Diedre or open groove, extremely exposed on small holds, five pitons in position and a sling being used to safeguard the leader. Then the rocks become easier and the leader is soon stepping on to the spacious square top of the Campanile.

The other two members of the party were soon brought up and we lay down to bask in the sun and rest our jaded nerves. It was a glorious day. The views were magnificent, the breath-taking towers and walls of the nearby

Dolomites, and in the distance, over green valleys and forests, ranges of snow-covered mountains. There was still, however, one problem left - having got up, how to get down? Peering over the sides of the Campanile, everywhere there were vertical walls dropping down into space a thousand feet or more. The ringed piton mentioned in the notes for the first abseil could not be located, so a sling was made and hitched around a convenient bollard, the two 120-ft. climbing ropes were joined together and threaded through the sling, and the first abseil commenced. About 20 feet down the piton was noticed; we were on the route off. The abseil became interesting. For the next 100 feet it was free, and as the climber twisted slowly round he would first have a close view of the wall, just beyond reach of his feet, then a moment later an uninterrupted view of the valley thousands of feet below, and in the distance the snow-covered mountains. The landing was a nice pulpit with a piton to hang on to, and a ring piton at base level to thread the abseil rope for the next drop. There are eleven abseils before the ridge is reached. The Campanile is the type of modern rock pinnacle which is climbed out of sheer love of adventure and for the sake of experiencing the delight of overcoming great physical difficulties.

AN ANTHOLOGY OF OREAD VERSE - II

MOUNTAIN NIGHT

Frost-dusted, crystal-crueted
 Snow, glistening white;
 Soft-glowing heaven-light;
 Silver-silken cloud-fleece;
 Stillness; peace.
 Buttress and pinnacle, ice-black, upward-leaping;
 Blacker slopes beneath them, downward steeping
 Into jewelled, jet-black depths;
 Above the silent height,
 Stars, fire-bright,
 Set in the satin-smooth sable sky,
 Canopy of night,
 Winking, a million angel's-eyes;
 Darkness;
 Starkness;
 Paradise.

D.C.C.

Ruth Welbourn sends a cutting from the "Scottish Sunday Post" of a week or two ago, which describes the ordeal of one Sammy McNeill, who volunteered to carry a supply of coal up to the C.I.C. Hut on Nevis. As Ruth points out, this should provide food for thought for those members who complain of the inaccessibility of present and future Oread huts!

COMMENT

NEW BLOOD Unpleasant stories have been circulating recently whose general burden is that more than one newcomer has been turned away from the Oread by the lack of welcome he has received; by the fact that members were so engrossed in their own little cliques that he could find no-one to climb with. If these stories are true (which I hope is not the case) they reveal a very shameful state of affairs indeed, and one which would have been inconceivable two or three years ago. The Oread has always in the past opened its heart to strangers; it was in fact its remarkable feeling of camaraderie that attracted me to it, and I am certain that that goes for a lot of other members too. One of the most valuable contributions which small clubs like ours have to offer to mountaineering is to provide a training ground for aspiring climbers, who are, at the beginning of their climbing careers, ineligible for membership of the senior clubs. Such youngsters are the next generation of mountaineers and the next generation of Oreads will be drawn from their ranks. If there is no welcome for them in the Club, there will not be a next generation. It is as simple as that. Anyone who cold-shoulders a keen young novice is damaging both his sport and his club. In this season of goodwill we should every one of us resolve to see that no newcomer is made to feel "out of it". If you are the type of person who does not want to mix with others of similar interests and is not willing to tie a novice on his rope once in a while, you should never have joined this Club, for it is of no use to you. And what is more, you are of no use to it.

D.C.C.

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The Editor wishes you a very Merry Christmas and hopes that you will enjoy reading this Newsletter so much that you will be moved to send a contribution to the next issue, even if it's only a couple of lines.

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Ronni and Ernie Phillips, Printers and Publishers of this august Journal hope that Members and other readers will enjoy the best Christmas ever, with unlimited supplies of Wine, Women (or Men), and Song, followed by a bright and prosperous New Year and a new Hut to go with it.

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Ruth Neilson sends a cutting from the "Scottish Sunday Post" of a week or two ago, which describes the arrival of one Gerry Whelan, who volunteered to carry a supply of coal up to the S.I. hut on Kinnaird. He had brought this valuable provision for himself and the other members of the Inaccessibility of Kinnaird and Kinnaird Club!