

I expect most of you know that this is the last Oread News to be edited by me. (Cheers all round!) I've just realised it's exactly nine years since I first became associated with its production! Now that does make me feel old. Little did I realise then, as a keen young batchelor full of new ideas, that I would be typing my final edition (or better trying to) with two young sons swinging from either arm! What did I do with my time in those days? (Less of those kind of comments Janes - you haven't written me one line in those nine years!).

I wish Pete Scot and Chris Radcliffe all the best as they take over the editorship and production of the Newsletter. I'm sure they will have more success in getting printable articles out of you shower - Pet's the tallest man in the Oread! I know all members who know Chris and Pete, who are perhaps two of the best mountaineers in the club at this time, will look forward to their fresh energetic outlook which will be reflected in the Newsletter.

One final appeal from me to you all is to do all you can to support them, keep the articles and news flowing, how about a letter of two? No matter how keen an Editor may be it is after all the members of the Oread who 'Make' a newsletter.

Here's hoping you enjoy reading this one. It's got some of the best mountaineering articles ever to be written for the Oread. Many thanks to the writers and also to the typists who so quickly responded to my cry for help. Molly Pretty and Kath Towel in particular.

As you know next year will be the Oreads 21st. Harry Pretty has taken on the important task of editing a Journal tracing the history of the club. Also next year sees the official opening of the Derbyshire Hut, which is to be called the Eric Byne Memorial Hut. It is hoped that Ivy Byne will be able to go along to the ceremony.

The New year kicks off in grand style with an informal dinner and social at Bakewell. There will be no speeches, you sit where you wish. Come along and enjoy yourselves.

See you. Geoff Hayes.

Twelve noon, on Sunday 3rd August. Our Saas-grund plans were to take us round to a doubtfully cloudy Zermatt. Then at 12.30.p.m. "Speedy" Smith and myself were off to what we hoped would be a sunny Italy, and the the dammed elusive Badile. It was a snap decision, that set us off on a 180 mile "bomb" in the Speedy Mobile. Over all those dreaded passes, to descend finally the "Splugen" into Chiavenna. We hopefully drove the final few miles, up the Val Bondesco. The road is normally banned to motors due to the massive Forestry activity, the main hazard being a 50 foot "Pit prop", on the bonnet. However at the head of the track the lay-bys were creaking with cars. Stimulated with a quick brew, and a lump of Lesley's Dundee cake (she bakes food, as well as body), we set off up the near vertical track to the Saas-fura hut, capped out. We just beat the Grand-daddy of all storms, to the hut door. The Guardian was pleasant, rough and ready, and surprisingly young. He was quite unmoved by the worsening weather, re-assuring us as we troughed our "Derby Stew" that tomorrow, the sun would shine all day. We climbed up into the loft, to find we were to be sharing bed space and tomorrows route with Graham from Ripley and another chap. Both were good friends of Peter Scott. Having established common ground, we turned in.

3.00.a.m. found us trudging through the boulder field towards the North Ridge, our fears for the weather being dispelled by the beautifully clear moonlit night. We were approaching the face by a new way. Above the second snow patch on the approach to the difficulties of the North Ridge is a prominent notch. A gully descends, then a line curves across the face, menaced at one point by large snow blocks, until a crack system leads to the top of the pillar, below the first difficult corner. Some doubt arose as to which groove was which. We roped up, and at the second go, got the right one - the third one on the left!! The route then followed a weakness across damp slabs, to the next series of difficulties. Speedy sailed up the 5 - 5 sup corners, in fine style, but we were regretting the fact that our guide to the route left much to be desired. It was rumoured that Midge had copied it out when drunk, most of the good gen. being ferried up from Graham's new Bregalia Guide book which to my dismay I saw falling from his pocket as he was laybacking round a bulge below me. So, we were back to the grubby bit of paper again. Some lovely traversing pitches led to a weakness through the overlaps which in turn open out onto easier climbing that finishes at the "Snow patch" which wasn't there.

We had a bit of "nosh" and gazed up at what was to come next. Above a Groove capped by a large overlap, nearly ruined my appetite, so I gazed around at the fabulous scenery. The

storm of the previous night had added to the usual dampness of the upper two-thirds of the face. So now, with babbling brooks splashing past, down the huge sheets of granite, back to work, and Speedy made the usual immaculate lead. I joined him on a one foot stance and he continued up the damp groove above, only to gasp on the bulge as the water entered his pants. Splendid climbing above, then some knotted slings indicated the artificial pitch featured in Rebbufat's book. The pegs were very welcome, but stirrups are not needed. The bulge and groove above make a great pitch, and two more run outs took us to the start of the final feature. A long groove line, deepening as it climbs the last 1,000 feet of the granite wall, to meet the North ridge. Two slabby pitches, up river, with a good trickle running off each sling runner, soon had us soaked. Out of the sun I developed a shiver. The water running down the rope from Speedy doing battle with the bulge above wasn't helping. Several of these pitches continued to give us quite a difficult passage, until a last gruelling waterfall landed us on Cassin's Traverse line. Here traditionalists move left into the snowy central couloir, but feeling more like "wet lettuces" than purists, we took the cracks above. I followed Speedy up this continuation, which was no push-over. Two more rope lengths placed us nicely out on the North Ridge in the sunshine. 7½ hours from the foot of the face, and being just 12.30.p.m. - 24 hours from Saas-Grund.

The four of us re-united on the summit of the Badile, descended the South Ridge into Italy, and the "Gianetti" Hut. We then followed the highly recommended return trip, over the Portilezza Pass, round a huge moraine basin, then over the Trubinasca Pass. This proved to be the ultimate thrutch at the end of a long day.

Four and a half hours from the Gianetti, of the cross country epic, to arrive at the Saas-Fura Hut at dusk and a celebration couple of litres of Chianti.

Nat Allen

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Indoor Meet by Ray College

The Largest crowd of oreads and guests crammed the Borrowas Scout Hall to hear Ray and see some fine slides of his Alpine Fortnight. Starting with the tale of his training climb, The Walker Spur! Followed by the Pear Buttress on Mont Blanc and then of corse the Eiger N. Wall. I'M sure that everyone who has seen Ray's slides will agree that they must be some of the finest ever taken on the Eiger. In the Words of the President "not a bad fortnight really Ray".

MATTERHORN NORDWAND

By Peter Scott

Saturday, 12th July, 1969

Arrived at Zermatt in the evening

Ron and I attempted to acclimatise by climbing the Breithorn (13,665 feet) by its North Face. No technical difficulty, but the combined effect of heat and altitude experienced on this very snowy and crumbling face was no laughing matter. I felt like death, and Ron was suffering even more because of a sore throat and querulous stomach. The sun was merciless on the upper slopes and the snow lay thinly over ice or rotten rock. We finally made the summit at midday and collapsed amidst the tourists and their guides. The descent to Zermatt is a dim memory of slushy, terrific heat and sore feet. For a day and a half we cowered away from the sun while our burnt faces and cracked lips oozed, dried and finally flaked. We eventually passed ourselves off as fit, caught the telepherique to Schwarzsee, and walked up to the Hornli Hut.

Thursday, 17th July 01.00 hrs.

Turned back after 30 minutes due to soft snow and water pouring down the face. Arrived back at the hut just as the Hornli teams were having breakfast. Went to bed.

Friday, 18th July 01.00 hrs.

The snow was still too soft but we decided to press on as far as the bergschrund at the foot of the face. The traverse under the North Face involved a slight descent (15 minutes), followed by a steep ascent mostly on snow and ice to break through the seracs and so up on to the upper Matterhorn glacier. An almost horizontal traverse under the North Face towards the Zmutt ridge led in an hour to the only place where the bergschrund was climbable. The first attempt at crossing the bergschrund ended in confusion when one of the axes in the upper lip flew out and I landed flat on my back at Ron's feet. At the second attempt I managed to establish myself on the bottom of the snow/ice ramp which leads for a thousand feet up into the wall. Ron joined me but the wall was not ready for us yet and we retreated back to the hut.

Saturday, 19th July 01.00 hrs.

We moved silently and quickly under the now frozen mountain wall. Our tracks from the previous day were very useful in the light of our head lamps and we soon reached the point at which we should have to cross the bergschrund. It was 03.15 hrs and still dark. We put on our duvets and had a bite to eat. At the first hint of the approaching dawn we started up the snow/ice slope, still climbing in duvets and by the light of head torches. There were no tracks but the snow was good and hard and the day dawned beautiful. Crampon front points bit well, could have moved together, but the weather was settled and we weren't taking chances; after each rope length a reasonable belay could be taken by hammering the ice axe into the slope.

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At 08.00 hrs we reached the top of the ramp and it was necessary to traverse diagonally right for several rope lengths over bands of hard ice and rotten rock. This section along the top of the ramp was very exposed to falling rocks and ice. The daily bombardment had now commenced, but our progress was slowed due to the necessity of having to cut occasional steps and belay to ice screws. We were never actually hit.

The couloir now came into view, a vague line of weakness and a streak of glassy ice threading its way tortuously down the right hand side of the tremendous precipice which supports the shoulder on the Hornli ridge. We found it quite impossible to judge the relative size, distances, angles or inclinations of features on the face except those in our immediate vicinity. We just aimed in the general direction of the line of weakness and the route resolved itself as we advanced. This was true of the route finding until we emerged on the upper slopes in the evening.

At the foot of the couloir we climbed a rock wall and on a convenient ledge enjoyed our third snack of the day. We were now about to climb the shadowed section of the face and throughout the rest of the climb little or no stonefall was encountered, save for that created by ourselves (which was quite spectacular at times).

The couloir feature which constitutes the climbing line up the middle section of the face is bounded on the left hand side (as one faces the mountain) by steep walls dropping down from the shoulder and Hornli ridge. Under these walls lies the ribbon of ice. This drops from the level of the shoulder, at first vertically and then less steeply for approximately 1,500 feet before shooting out down the snow/ice ramp. On the right of the ice are easier-angled slabs up which the route lies. Still further to the right are the steep walls of Zmuttpfeiler, the stage for Bonatti's solo ascent in winter. The slabs end in a bay backed by a steep wall slightly above the level of the Solway Hut; the wall giving a grade \bar{V} pitch.

This part of the climb was the most interesting. Slabs, rocky ribs, snow patches, ribbons of ice; we clambered from one to the other, hour after hour, sometimes moving together, at other times running out 150 ft pitches. Most belays were just passable, usually pegs, but the climbing was never too gripping, just continuous. The scenery was very impressive and the positions in which we found abseil slings awe-inspiring; rotting slings on rusty Stubai pegs above dizzy slopes which led nowhere but down over the icy precipice of the Zmuttpfeiler. The grade \bar{V} pitch looked hard and took some time to overcome. Green ice crawled downwards over the whole pitch from the slopes above, it was also extremely loose. Ron tip-toed in crampons, but had to take them off half-way up when the holds became too small. I had a trying time following in crampons, particularly since Ron's belay was very insecure.

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We were now able to break out on to the upper slopes which were easier. Long groove systems led upwards and rightwards towards the Zmutt Ridge and soon a line of steps appeared in the now powdery snow. This powder occasionally lay over ice or rock slabs and this was a little worrying since belays were now virtually non-existent. Daylight was fading rapidly, but pitch followed pitch and always those little illusory platforms which receded as we approached them, until just as darkness closed in we came to a ready-cleared bivouac ledge just big enough for the two of us to sit on. A good hot meal, a few hours sleep and then we climbed on up to the notch between the twin summits. We reached the Swiss summit at 6 a.m. at the beginning of yet another perfect day; not a soul in sight, not a sound..... We had climbed the face alone and we had the summit to ourselves.

Pete Scott.

OREADS IN SHORTS

During a recent classic ascent of Great Gully on Craig yr Isfa in wet condition the following two comments are printable.

"I thought I was slowing up with exposure but realised it was just the weight of water in my boots!"

On the final chockstone pitch Pete Scott was heard to remark "I expected to see a pair of hands grasp the jugs on the chock stone but all I saw was a pair of boots!"

The CwmEIgau meet was enjoyed by all. The spartan Hut was greatly appreciated after a wet day on the hills.

Roy Sawyer is the new Indoor Meets Sec.

Next Years dinner will be on Saturday November 28th 1970!

Harry Pretty has received a letter from Alf Bridge giving support for the Oreads 21st and Derbyshire Hut.

Two New Guide Books for the Peak District should soon be on sale. I'M not sure which guides they will be but think they will be the Gritstone Baslow area and Derbyshire Limestone. See Nat Allen for details.

Ken Hodge is now selling the Club Badge price 6/6d. Get yours now.

Camping is no longer allowed at North Lees farm Stannage.

For me, the saddest day of 196 started in a simple crematorium church yard on the outskirts of Leeds. Where climbers, runners and Folk singers from the four corners of Britain slowly gathered on this bleak November day. Then as a group moved sadly towards the church, mingling with grief stricken relatives. It suddenly became more terrible as hard men and white faced girls unashamedly wept for the memory of Beardy.

He was killed outright in a car crash on the M.6 Motorway on Sunday evening the 16th of November. This remarkable person, who packed such a tremendous amount of good humour, power, friendliness and fitness into his lean, almost frail, barrel chested frame, was one of Mountaineering's greatest character's.

My earliest recollection of Eric Beard was in the mid-fifties when Dennis Gray's Austin Van ground to a halt in the Llanberis Pass, the Back doors flew open, and out jumped a spiky haired character, blowing a bugle. This was typical, and I do not think he really stopped blowing his bugle. For Beardy was never happier than when he could entertain with his own brand of witty tales and well sung song's.

He was a member of the Rock and Ice for over 10 years. As a mountaineer he was good, and shon on both Rock and Ice. A member of the A.C.G. he did several great climbs in the Alps; The Comice North Face of the Cima-Grande and such routes as the Old Brenva and the Frontier Ridge on Mt. Blanc. The best in Britain have relied on Beardy's eternal fitness, and his ever present rucksac full of 'Jam Butties'.

Beardy lived in Derby for about a year, playing star parts in the Ilam Panto. To the eager chorous girls he lost his underpants in 'Swine Lake' when he played the Court Jester. It was in the Cairngorms that Oreads remember him most. Not only for his displays on the ski-slopes, but also for the happy nights out in 'Beardys Folk Club', when even a well cut Burgess crashing through the swing doors, in the middle of a lullaby, failed to cause Beardy to frown.

He was an outstanding Distance Runner, and held all the Records for British Mountains. Only this year he has Run John-O Groats-Lands End, Leeds to London, both for the Save the Children fund. The Roof of Wales. All hills over 2,000ft. Until we saw him recently in the Dovedale Dash, where, typically after finishing he retraced the course, encouraging the tail enders with a cheery word. Later that afternoon a group of us met him in Dovedale, out as usual on a training run, he soon had us all laughing with one of his epic tales, then jog trotted off towards Lion Rock. With a 'Cherio Pal', and we all said Cherio to Beardy the Alpine Clown.

HEATHY LEA COTTAGE, BASLOW - PROGRESS REPORT.

Work in restoring and converting the cottage is now well advanced and the acquisition of foam for the matrazenlage, electrical alterations, fitting out with curtains, and further redecoration are the only major items outstanding.

The Water Board's new pipe line and pump installation is also progressing and during the next four weeks or so work will be going on in the immediate vicinity of the cottage. Excavation and laying of large diameter mains will make vehicular access to the car park impossible for a time, and the space in front of the cottage is liable to be occupied by contractor's vehicles.

The terms of a seven year lease have now been agreed with the Estate and arrangements are now in the hands of the respective solicitors. There would seem to be no reason why the lease should not be renewed at the end of the period and we propose to work on this principle, though restricting any further development to the barn attached to cottage and pump house. Some fairly straight forward work could make this area inhabitable and increase the sleeping/cooking facilities of the cottage itself by nearly 100%

The Estate have accepted part of the timber stack as a gift and in return have had a few tons of the surplus sawn up for our use as firewood. Some of this is now stacked under the stairs, in the yard at the rear and in the lean-to porch. There is still a considerable heap in the open at the top end of the car park. Casual visitors are asked to assist with shifting the remainder under cover.

Hut books are now installed, and are kept in one of the drawers of the sideboard in the kitchen. Much of the revenue should come from day fees and members are asked most seriously to contribute their 1/-'s. if they cook or park their cars etc. A small strong box is to be built into one of the walls for collecting these fees.

The cottage is now a comfortable place to stay and will be even more so when foam is installed and we have fixed curtains, lamp shades, and hung up a selection of Cread photographs and records.

It is the committee's intention to formally open the cottage on the Sunday following the 1970 A.G.M. It will probably be the first formal event of the 21st Anniversary Year. The opening of the cottage will establish the first tangible memorial to the late Eric Byne and it will be something of an occasion.

A great deal of work has been carried out in the last twelve months by a very small nucleus, and I hope that members will now start to make full use of the cottage facilities. If you are out anywhere in Derbyshire it is a splendid place to drop into for a cup of tea and a natter. The cottage will provide what I think is one of its most valuable assets in this way. A place to encounter other Oreads at the end of the day, or when the weather is bad - a place to build a fire, and have a brew - a place for unplanned arrival and casual departure.

Harry Pretty.

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MORE OREADS IN SHORTS ETC!

There is now plenty of cut firewood at the Derbyshire Hut. An axe and saw is to be purchased.

The Welsh Hut Warden reports plenty of bookings coming along for next year. there will always be one room reserved each block booking week end for Oreads. A raffel at the Annual Dinner raised about £ 14.0.0d for the Derbyshire Hut. Mike Stone must be the first member to attend a club meet on his honeymoon. He looked most surprised to find his tent surrounded by Oread tents on the Saturday morning! Read your meets circular next time Mick!

The Irish Mountaineering Club announce that the restrictions on the use of their hut at Dunnywater Bridge have been lifted, and the Dublin section say that their two huts are now open. Details from Les Langworthy if you wish to use these huts.

VIA DELLA PERA

By Peter Scott

Ten minutes to midnight! Someone lights a candle in the tiny bivouac hut which clings to a ledge on Col de la Fourche. Unwilling bodies are forced into wakefulness. There is little conversation as tea is brewed and breakfast choked down. Each man is occupied with his own thoughts and the complicated business of lacing up boots and crampons in the confined space of the hut.

Ron and I are ready first. We stumble out into the night and abseil 150 ft from the hut doorway to a small ledge. 200 ft of climbing down well-frozen snow and then Ron leaps the gaping bergschrund.

"Come on chicken, jump!" he mutters as I hesitate in the darkness. I brace myself and launch out into the void. A second later it's all over and we trudge across the upper Brenva Glacier. Another bergschrund to cross and we climb steeply onto the narrow crest of Col Moore. We look back towards the frontier ridge. A dozen or more points of light can be seen dancing in the darkness as other parties descend from Col de la Fourche and the new hut under the Trident. There are many candidates for the Brenva today.

Col Moore! The gateway to one of the greatest Alpine faces, Brenva, plunging downwards from the summit of Mont Blanc. Far, far above us is the living ice, crawling imperceptibly down the gentle summit slopes before hesitating; awaiting the moment of its final cataclysmic slide to the Brenva Glacier; any hour, any minute.....any second. Two hours of darkness are left, the coldest of all. We must reach the lowest rocks of the Pear route before day break.

We agree that it will save time if we don't rope up for the long traverse across to the Pear. Ron runs off into the night and I follow, traversing gently downwards, relying mainly on instinct to show the way. We climb down into several deep ice channels; some have steep sides and we have to climb up or down in the bottom of them to find an exit on the far side. It would be nice to be able to cut a few steps in the hard ice, but these are dangerous places and there is no time. Crampons scrape and squeak on the glassy surface and then we are back onto snow again. Ron finds a north wall hammer lying in the snow and takes it with him, it will be very useful to him in the hours to come. We traverse more snow well below Red Sentinel, across the Main Couloir, under Route Major, crampons clattering and sparking on rocky outcrops, and then climb diagonally upwards towards the lower rocks of the Pear. A mistake in the darkness and we eventually have to rope up after traversing too far towards the Ekpfeiler. Two pitches on steep ice and Ron has nearly reached the rocks. Suddenly an exclamation from Ron 100 ft above me; his crampon has broken and fallen off. He slides a few feet on the ice but his other crampon grips and all is saved. He cuts a few steps, reaches the rock, belays and brings me up to him. We are still too far to the right and I crampon across another ice slope and belay on the rocks on the correct route. Ron simply pendulums across the ice and climbs the rope. We have arrived safely, nothing has fallen, we are lucky. Ray College and Dan Boone arrive shortly afterwards. Dawn breaks and we can now start our upward climb to the summit of Mont Blanc.

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We move together up an easy rock arete for about 800 ft to a point where it becomes horizontal and abuts the base of the huge pear-shaped buttress. Ray and Dan follow a few rope lengths behind. The ground becomes much steeper and we climb more or less directly up the centre of the Pear taking belays when necessary. About 400 ft from the top of the buttress Ron and I traverse left to the right hand edge of a snow patch, but the other two elect to traverse right onto the steep side of the Pear Buttress known as the "Curtain". It is the last we shall see of them for many hours, but we are too involved with our own problems to worry about them. I climb the right hand side of the snow field under a steep rock wall, an overhanging chimney then leads to a stance. Ron leads through and shouts for me to climb. I climb up and then round a corner to find our position to say the least, dramatic. We are about 100 ft from the stalk of the Pear but on its left-hand side. Immediately above is an overhanging wall of ice festooned with icicles which extend for hundreds of feet down the side of the buttress. The line of the route is, however, obvious and I climb the next 100 ft with alacrity and emerge suddenly on the stalk of the Pear at an altitude of thirteen and a half thousand feet. Ron joins me. I am able to lean over and look down the other side of the buttress and am amazed to catch a glimpse of Ray and Dan, two tiny figures hundreds of feet below, dwarfed by a most gigantic ice cliff suspended in the couloir on their side of the buttress. We push on up several more pitches of mixed ground and settle down to wait for them.

The view is magnificent; the Eckpfeiler of the Grand Pilier d'Angle and the long Peuterey arete on one side and Route Major in profile on the other. The Jorasses, Drus, the Matterhorn, all are there in one magnificent panorama. Big Bob appears on the middle snow arete of the Major towing a whole string of people behind him. Greetings are exchanged and the Brenva echoes with the shouts and laughter of our friends; (there are eight Yorkshiremen on the face today); it's great to be alive!

An hour and a half and three hours later Ray and Dan have not yet appeared, they are still battling up grade $\bar{V}+$ pitches on the "Curtain". We decide to press on as the snow slopes are becoming difficult in the heat of the sun and we are only half way up the route. Ahead lies a lot of mixed ground, snow slopes interrupted by rock rognons. Ron has only one crampon but does have an axe and the newly-acquired north wall hammer and we agree that I shall lead on the snow and Ron will lead through on the rock. After several pitches on soft snow and over easy rock staircases, the slope steepens and becomes icy. An added complication is a triple bergschrund and 170 ft of step-cutting is necessary. This takes some time and Ray and Dan eventually catch us up. Ron follows up the steps like an athlete on crutches with Ray and Dan hard on his heels. At last we are re-united but the difficulties continue. After another buttress a long ice slope leads up amongst the final seracs. Another two pitches of step-cutting and then Ray moves through into the lead. While he cuts delicately out to the right we have time to view our surroundings. A serac the size of a skyscraper dominates our position and I feel very small. It is now four o'clock in the afternoon and freezing. My leather over-mitts wet from continual contact with snow are frozen hard, and since Ray has taken over a lot of the drive has gone out of me. I am now lost in the party of four and balancing from one step to the next has become a real effort. We plod across a dangerous slope of windslab and arrive at the top of

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Route Major. We stop for a bite to eat but it is cold and we soon move off. Ray leads the way to Col Major, a nine hundred foot slog at over fifteen thousand feet in powder snow. I withdraw within myself and 'dog' Ron's footsteps. Ray and Dan stop to take photographs on Col Major but Ron and I press on over the summit of Mont Blanc and down to the Vallot Hut. Big Bob's Major team are all in a state of semi-collapse and have decided to stay the night there. Ron and I rest awhile and when Ray and Dan arrive we decide to carry on down to the Grands Mulets. The descent is tedious but we have now gained a 'second wind' and just as darkness falls we reach the hut, - tired, but happy.

Peter Scott.

PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION 1969

This meet is becoming the rival to the Annual Dinner of the social event of the year. By 8pm on the Saturday night the room at the Royal Oak, in Bakewell was packed to breaking. Among faces seen were Brian Cooke from the far North, Jim Kersaw from the South. The meet followed the recognised pattern with the Lanternist (Pete Janes) in an inebriated state but still capable of showing slides and our well known judge Douglas Milner on top form with his cutting comments and good photographic advice.

There were 157 colour slides entered in the competition and the placings were:-

Action Abroad

1. Hayes

2. Radcliffe

3. Hayes

Action at Home

1. Scott

2. Radcliffe

3. Nat Allen

Abroad General

1. Dave Williams

2. Hayes

3. Nat Allen

Home General

1. Hayes

2. Kershaw

3. Burgess

Club Interest (Judged By the President)

1. Radcliffe

2. Dave Williams

3. Handley

The result was Hayes 1st (9points) Radcliffe 2nd (7points) Williams 3rd with 5points.

After the showing of the competition slides Douglas Milner gave a short viewing of his own photography, this gave members at the back of the hall by the bar plenty of opportunity to add comments in a 'Milner' style.

A number of Oread's including the President spent the Night at Heathy Lea with Milner as guest. He could not be talked into stopping for the working party on the Sunday. However quite an amount of work was done by various members and time was also taken off for climbing on Gardoms and Birchens, in thick fogs. Other members camped at Curbar and climbed on Frogatt Edge.

THE FIRST ASCENT OF ALI RATNI TIBBA.

In the distance two tiny orange tents stood out against the snow, dwarfed by a superb ice-encrusted aiguille. This was Ali Ratni Tibba, my goal after weeks of preparations and a 6,000 mile journey half way across the world. As our companions came down from base camp to meet Dave and myself the events that had led to this moment flashed through my mind. It had all begun with a surprise 'phone call from Scotland early in February: Ian Clough had had to drop out of the Scottish Himalayan Expedition - could I make myself available? The Himalayas! I was elated, but a little bewildered as to how it could be arranged. Fortunately my company took a favourable view of the project and gave me a flexible six week leave of absence.

Preparations for the expedition had begun months before, but a lot remained to be done and I enthusiastically threw myself into the task of helping organise our food and equipment. Funds had come from the M.E.F., the Gannochy Trust and our own pockets, but as with all expeditions run on a "shoe-string", we still depended on the generosity of many firms to help us with supplies. I had a special problem in arranging my own journey to India as I could not be away from work long enough to join the overland party. Fortunately the R.A.F. agreed to fly me out to Bahrein and back. So on May 5th I set out on what must be one of the most rapid journeys to a Himalayan base camp on record!

An eight-hour flight in a Transport Command VC10 took me from our lingering spring weather to the tepid heat of the Persian Gulf. Two hours later I was off again on a commercial flight to Bombay and Delhi. Then an overnight train across the vast plains of northern India to Chandigarh, followed by a tedious twelve-hour journey in a ramshackle and crowded bus to the village of Raison in Kulu Valley. I found my way to Jimmy Johnson's prolific orchard which, as with so many earlier expeditions, was our valley base. Waiting for me was Dave Nicol, a friend from my University climbing days and a member of the party which successfully climbed The Fortress in Patagonia last year. We snatched four hours sleep and then set out on the three day journey to base camp to join the other members of the expedition - leader Fred Harper, a climbing instructor from Stranraer and member of the Edinburgh 'Squirrels', his wife, Marjorie-Anne, and Jim McCartney a printer from Aberdeen with an impressive list of the hardest Scottish ice routes behind him. Although they had left Britain a month ahead of me, they had set out for base camp only the previous day, accompanied by our two high altitude Ladakhi porters - Wangyal and Zangbo, both veterans of the 1961 Derbyshire Himalayan Expedition - and 25 local porters recruited after 3 days of haggling over wages.

From Bhuntar a few miles south of Raison we had a riotous jeep journey up the Parbatti Valley which after two successive punctures left us three miles short of our destination, Jari. Completing the distance

with monstrous packs weighing nearly 100 lbs. flattened us, so we recruited a couple of porters to ease the burden. The approach march lay up the Mallana Nullah, a long and incredibly beautiful valley rising steeply at first from the Parbatti and then twisting among the outlying peaks to the foot of the glacier that reached up towards our peak. The first day's march was up a magnificent gorge and the path zig-zagged relentlessly 5,000 feet up to the remote hill village of Mallana at 10,000 ft. It was this village community that had provided the porters who had carried the expeditions food and equipment to base camp. The older men and womenfolk who remained gathered curiously as Dave and I walked wearily towards the village. We remembered that Bob Pettigrew had been 'fined' for walking through the village in leather boots which broke the religious custom, so cautiously we walked round the perimeter. Nevertheless we received a very friendly welcome and were given pride-of-place in the headmans house which we shared with mice and sundry biting insects.

During the second day we climbed higher up the valley through pine forest, across 'alpine' pastures, frequently finding patches of winter snow that was lying late this year. We camped that night and next day climbed above the tree line and on to snow. Finally we saw base camp, perfectly sited for our attack on the mountain.

The camp was situated further east and at a lower level than the site chosen by earlier expeditions, directly beneath the west glacier of Ali Ratni Tibba. The Mallana river lay about 200 ft. below and then there was a steep rise of 500 feet to the more level part of the glacier which reached up for over two miles to a 1,200 foot ice fall. Above this was the col from which we expected to make our attempt to climb A.R.T.

I had arrived at base camp only 5 days after leaving Britain, but a reverse in the weather frustrated further activity. A continuous series of blizzards for the next four days kept us confined to our tents for most of the time, although in a lull on 13th May we laboriously ploughed a trail as far as the level section of the glacier where we pitched a tent and established a dump of gear. On the 15th we were able to start load carrying in earnest. The snow lay deeper than ever and of course a fresh trail had to be made. With 80 lb. packs and frequently sinking to our thighs in the snow it was difficult to absorb the grandeur of our surroundings when putting one foot in front of the other was a painful exercise. We spent the first day taking successive loads to the dump camp and on the two following we ferried all the loads to a camp established below the ice fall. The weather, however, remained unsettled with brief storms in the afternoon and on the 18th blizzard conditions returned for a further two days. Base camp routine was by now well established: conditions were cold enough to keep us in our sleeping bags most of the time playing chess, scrabble or just yarning. Days usually began with a grinning Zangbo, querying "Tea, Sahib?" followed a few minutes later with

chapattis and dahl - a lentil curry. Several times during the day we would clear the snow from the tents and finally in the evening trek across to the mess tent for Wangyal's further contribution of dahl, this time made with rice. The poor weather was frustrating, but we were in good spirits as enforced inactivity had its compensations.

May 20th dawned brilliantly clear and we were anxious to take advantage of the fine weather to press ahead with the pack carrying. The recent snow was avalanching off the peaks on either side of the glacier but our line seemed safe enough. Once again we had to force a fresh trail through the snow, although by now we were quite fit. Jim was fittest of all and he forged ahead while the rest of us rested at Dump camp. Suddenly a freak avalanche slid silently across Jim's tracks a few yards behind him and only 20 yards in front of us. It was a wet snow avalanche and would have offered little chance of survival had we been caught. It was a salutary experience.

The weather held fine and we were in a position the next day to press ahead from Glacier Camp up the ice fall to the col. Here we planned to establish an elaborate camp with an extensive snow cave which would offer us a retreat in case of fresh storms and a change from the confined space of the tents. From this advanced base we had planned to tackle the Manikaran Spires and also the peaks around the head of A.R.T. East Glacier as training routes before our attempt on A.R.T. itself, either by the south face or by the south face to the west ridge. The true right bank of the ice fall was so heavily banked up with snow that it presented only a simple snow slope and we encountered no problems. A short distance below the col we began work with a variety of shovels and an ice-saw to construct our ice cave. In a few hours a fair sized cave had been constructed and we dumped the loads we had carried up and then returned to Glacier Camp. We were extremely optimistic that we could now make rapid progress after the initial set back of poor weather. The following day, May 22nd, was however to prove a fateful day for the expedition.

Jim, Dave and I set out from Glacier Camp at 5 a.m. The intense overnight frost had stilled the avalanches and made the going on the glacier quite straightforward. In spite of 60 lb. loads we made excellent progress, although at 14,000 ft. we were feeling the effect of lack of oxygen. Dave was making the tracks, Jim and I brought up the rear. Suddenly Jim broke through a crevasse and fell from sight. The crevasse was vast, 10 or 15 feet wide in parts. Jim had fallen 80 feet on to snow bridging a narrowing. Below him the crevasse reached unseen depths. The others following behind reached us in a short while and we set about bringing Jim out of the crevasse. He was in some pain and struggled to prevent himself blacking out. Nevertheless, he spurned the use of prussickers and chose to climb out using his gully axe. The final few feet were overhanging so he simply pulled himself up the rope. Marjorie-Anne administered pain killing drugs and the Ladakhis escorted Jim back

to camp, while Dave and I retrieved his pack.

Jim had been relatively lucky, but he had nevertheless fractured ribs close to the lung which caused him considerable pain. He spent a day in camp but it was clear that it would be necessary to evacuate him down to Kulu Valley as he would soon suffer from the rigours of camp life and, anyway, he could take no further part in the expedition. We contemplated a stretcher carry without enthusiasm. However, Jim insisted that he could walk out with just the two Ladakhis to help him. Fred decided that he and M.A. should also accompany him. This left only Dave and myself high on the mountain and in a position to go for the summit. Morale was low. Where a few hours previously we had been confident of success, now a successful ascent seemed unlikely. We discussed the situation at length and finally decided that it was feasible for the two of us. Nevertheless, when Jim went down on May 24th accompanied by the other four members of the expedition, Dave and I were more than a little apprehensive.

During the day we collected all our gear together with food for three days. As the col camp had not been established we prepared different plans for the ascent. Running diagonally across the west face was a vast icy ramp that led to the point where the west ridge steepened to a vertical wall over 1,000 feet high. It was an obvious line but we had previously rejected it because it appeared threatened by avalanches. Now it was our only hope of reaching the summit.

Late in the evening we saw two figures returning up the glacier to our camp. We were surprised but pleased to find that these were Fred and M.A. They had accompanied Jim to Base Camp where he had insisted on continuing without their assistance. As the arduous part of the ascent was behind him they had let him have his own way and returned to join Dave and myself.

At 4 a.m. on May 25th we set out across the hard frozen glacier. Soon we reached the foot of the ice ramp. We moved in ropes of two and steadily, pitch after pitch, we climbed the ramp 4,000 ft. to the point where it joined the west ridge. Below us vertical granite walls dropped to the glacier; above us ice-plastered walls. We crossed frequent avalanche runnels and had no doubts about the consequences if an ice-field should break loose from the walls above. Dawn arrived and revealed a new panorama of peaks, but we pressed on and encountered no problems so that by 10 a.m. we had reached the notch on the west ridge. Here we rested and enjoyed the view. A fantastic sight greeted us. These rock and ice aiguilles seemed to belong more to Patagonia than to the Himalayas. Facing the east ridge of A.R.T. across the Pass of Obelisks, one aiguille presented a face as big as the west face of the Dru. All seemed more serious than the training peaks we had expected of them.

Above us 4,000 feet of climbing separated us from the summit. A series of granite buttresses were separated by snow fields. The climbing was superb: Chamonix type granite gave us the familiar strenuous type of crack climbing, frequently slippery with ice. The difficulties were appropriate to an Alpine Grade of D-sup. but now we also had the insidious effect of altitude to contend with. Every move demanded a special effort; we gasped breathlessly over even the easiest moves. We had only one thought in our minds - to reach the summit. But as the shadows lengthened it was clear that we were not to reach the top that day.

Now we started looking for a bivouac site, but on this mountain they were hard to find. Pitch followed pitch and still no ledge appeared big enough to accommodate us all. Eventually we found a site. It was well enclosed on three sides and would afford us some protection in the event of a storm, but the main disadvantage was that we had to sit on snow. We donned all our down gear and after an unsatisfactory meal settled down to bivvy at 17,500 ft. So far we had been lucky with the weather; there had been no afternoon storm, but now thin wisps of cloud were sweeping round our bivouac place and we were apprehensive about how the weather would turn out for the following day.

We were very fatigued but we slept little as the cold penetrated our clothing. However it remained fine and as soon as the sun reached us the next day we hastily prepared for the final ascent. Five hundred feet to the summit and no great difficulties in our way. Two hours later only a thin blade of rock remained to be climbed - a fine summit to a fine mountain. There was not room for all of us, so one at a time we climbed to the highest point to be photographed in turn. The time was 10 a.m., the date May 26th. Ali Ratni Tibba had finally been climbed.

There was no great feeling of achievement. The views were breathtaking, yet not perhaps so fine as lower on the mountain where there is nearby perspective. There was no time to relax as the storm clouds were building up and we had no wish to be trapped on the mountain. The descent began uneventfully as we descended by an interminable series of abseils. We followed the ridge as far as the notch, but we had no intention of reversing the ramp because of the objective dangers. Instead we descended the south face by yet more abseils. As we feared a storm broke over us, but we reached the site of our half-finished col camp safely. After collecting the gear we had left there several days before, we descended the ice fall. The surface of the glacier was in a terrible state after the effect of the sun and it was wearying work crossing it. We finally stumbled into camp at 8 p.m. Our ropes and gear were carelessly dumped and we collapsed into the tents totally fatigued.

At 18,031 ft. Ali Ratni Tibba is no Himalayan giant, but we had nevertheless succeeded in our aim of climbing it in Alpine style without

the build up of supplies on the peak itself. Other unclimbed peaks were waiting to be climbed, but with the expedition 3 men short and with the anti-climax after our ascent, we had little choice but to return. Eight days later we arrived in Kulu having evacuated our camps and then walked out over the Chandra Khanni Pass, leaving Wangyal to organise porters to bring back our gear. Chores remained - collecting the gear, paying off the porters, reorganising the van for the return journey. But for me the expedition was soon over. I motored to Delhi with the others and then after a few days enjoying some of the night spots and tourist attractions, I returned to Britain by plane via Bombay and Bahrein.

Chris. Radcliffe.

WALKER SPUR

and

EIGER NORTH WALL 1969

By Ray College

For several years I had been hoping to get on the Walker Spur of the Grandes Jorasses and the North Face of the Eiger, but the chance of finding the right weather in a short holiday seemed remote. In particular my climbing companions, being married men, were not interested in what they considered the dangerous Eiger Face climb. This year I felt certain the weather would be kind, but my expected climbing companion, Eric Wallis, had already told me that his wife did not want him to attempt the Eiger. I hoped he would change his mind if the weather was good, but in the event he was unable to travel to the Alpes.

At Chamonix I met Dan Boone equally without a partner. He was so fantastically fit he said, that he was ready to tackle the Grandes Jorasses by the Walker Spur as a first climb. I believed him, forgetting the possibility of youthful enthusiasm, and eventually decided it was a chance too good to miss. Another lesser warming-up climb would be preferable, but could we afford to risk the weather remaining fine? On July 21st we walked up the Leschaux Glacier and set foot on the lower rocks of the Walker Spur. A long upwards traverse on easy ice and rock, crampons on feet, took us to a delightful pitch of V, then darkness forced a bivouac on tiny ledges. Above us was the good bivouac ledge we wanted, but this was fully occupied.

Next morning we climbed the Rebuffat crack and the big diedre, finding that we were not as fit as we thought. Or was it because we had unwisely overtaken some very fit climbers in their bivouac, and pressure from them now inclined us to climb these two pitches faster than our relatively unfit bodies could manage? From then on we climbed at a slower rate, allowing all the fitter parties to overtake. We enjoyed every moment, every bit of rock seeming to offer a different problem, and our only regret was that we had not been able to do a training climb to make the effort easier. By the time we reached the pendule and the Black slabs, we had recovered from our too hasty efforts on the two main pitches below, and the Black Slabs and the Grey Tower gave numerous pitches of delightful rock climbing, although in our untrained state it was a long time before we arrived at the top of the Grey Tower.

We rested for a while, then carried on to the foot of the chimney which splits the Red Tower. Two other climbers were having considerable difficulty here, and so fearing to be caught by darkness in the chimney we settled for our second bivouac at the foot. It was a very cold and uncomfortable night.

Next day we climbed icy rocks to arrive at the summit at 12 noon. Dan had revised his early estimate of his fitness, and by now was having difficulty in lifting one foot above the other. We both agreed we should not have gone on the Walker without doing previous training climbs, but as the weather now worsened we felt glad we had done so.

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The weather continued uncertain, even though we snatched a route on Mont Blanc. However, a chance remark raised the Eiger question and made me examine the excellent weather chart in the Chamenix tourist office. It seemed to offer better weather, with only short thunderstorms, in Switzerland. Was it worth risking a long drive to Grindelwald? We thought it was, and so off we went through heavy tourist traffic, arriving late. Next morning we made a much too hurried visit to a food store before setting for Alpiglen by mountain railway.

The walk to the foot of the Eiger north wall was a leisurely affair, as was the ascent of the first part of the face above the rimaye. The Difficult Crack however was a waterfall. Arriving at the Hintersteisser Traverse we passed through a curtain of water for several yards. Thus we arrived at the Swallow's Nest bivouac quite wet. It was August 1st and so that evening was enlivened by the usual display of fireworks in Grindelwald far below us.

Next day we commenced the serious part of the route. The first icefield was easy but the rocks and Ice Hose which followed, were not. The second icefield was also easy, with soft snow under which we inserted icescrews for belays, and wide bands of bare ice giving wasy crampon work. Unexpectedly Dan proved to be inexperienced at this sort of work and progress was surprisingly slow. Our arrival at the Flat Iron was the signal for a considerable bombardment of stones. We had had the odd stonefall all the way, but this was very heavy, with all sorts of screaming, whining stones hurtling past. The ascent to the Flat Iron was not easy and we found it best to rush from bulge to bulge in between stonefalls. By the time we arrived at the Death Bivouac the mist was so thick we could see nothing, and we decided against feeling our way across the 60' third icefield looking for the Ramp, whatever that was. The mist continued and we decided to bivouac in the company of two Swiss who had caught up with us. The mist lifted just before sundown to reveal th Ramp as an unexpectedly steep gully. A cold night seated on snow in my case.

The Swiss climbers, dispensing with a brew of tea, were away first. Following later we crossed the third icefield to a peg belay in the rock wall. Dan then descended the ice to where he could move up the initial snow and ice in the Ramp. Unfortunately he missed a peg belay, ran out all the rope and then pulled up on a leave of ice, which naturally broke. The force of the jerk when he reached the limit of his fall, knocked off my helmet. From then on I was not so brave whenever a stone fell, as I had only a beret for protection.

The Ramp went very well with Dan making short work of the very difficult wet chimney, with rucksack on. After that fatigue set in and he slowed down considerably on the snow slope at the top of the Ramp. He picked to make a good lead of the pitch of V to the Traverse of the Gods, which we found free of snow. Care was needed though, on loose scree on narrow ledges. The exposure was exceptional. On arrival at the Spider we felt a quick dash was essential, but Dan was not able to make a quick dash.

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Thus we took rather long and the weather was quite gloomy when we arrived at the top of the ice slope. We were able to make the foot of the Quartz Crack when a tremendous snowstorm occurred with lightning. White waterfalls of snow were funnelling down the gullies.

After half an hour or so it stopped and Dan made a fine lead of the crack in the icy conditions. At the half way part he tension-traversed into another easy groove. We made our third bivouac shortly after that, seated on a snow-covered ledge, with only soup, tea and sugar to sustain us. But for the snowstorm we would have made the summit that day.

Next day, with no food, we had to battle with severely iced-up rocks laden with new snow and thus it was 5 p.m. before we reached the summit. We slept that night in the Kleine Scheidegg, after a hot shower.

Ray Colledge

"THE DRU"

By Ray Handley

The first time I visited Chamonix, two English climbers had just made the first English ascent of the North Face of the Dru - these were Bourdillon and Nicol. Ten Year's later we met Whillans and Bonnington at Montenvers after their success on the Bonnati Pillar. To climbers that visit Chamonix, the Dru always beckons like a finger, it's so beautifully symmetrical and full of different moods. I, personally, have always wanted to do the North face, it always beckoned but never seemed possible - at least to me.

This year things were different - firstly we never considered the weather, even from England - we viewed the weather as being perfect which when we set off, it was - fitness we would get on the route, besides it was a pitched route and rests could be taken on ledges instead of that dreaded moving together. So it came to pass that July 20th, 1969 one of my climbing ambitions was to be realised - "THE NORTH FACE OF THE PETIT DRU".

We left Chamonix at mid-day under a cloudless sky and creaking shoulders. It was pleasant making our way to Montenvers by rack railway, but between Derek Burgess and myself, light-hearted banter was difficult. We crossed the Mer de Glace and without difficulty ascended the stream in the Glacier bank. The views, usual to Chamonix, were magnificent, but the whole effect was heightened by the Azeleas and luxurious heather.

Before us towered the Dru, it changed shape as we moved around until the North Face with the Niche was directly in view - we had our target and on we strode.

The bivouac near to the foot of the face was pleasant - arrayed behind a boulder with smaller stones as a low wall to complete it - I felt slight altitude sickness which passed with time while Derek prepared our meal. How pleasant it was not to be alone after all - two English lads arrived, (brothers from Bradford) fresh from the Cassin route on the Piz Badile, also 5 Frenchmen and 1 female, this did not stir me as it might under normal circumstances. At 4.30 the French moved up the small Dru Glacier, we were not far behind and our English companions trailed us for a time.

We all moved up to the foot of the Ryan-Lochmatter couloir, only to find the only way over the rimaye was via its right or left bank. We attacked the left - this was a steep pitch of 150 ft which brought us into the couloir which we climbed for 3 or 4 rope lengths without any difficulty.

Above the couloir the rocks jugged out merging here and there into overhangs, our line moved right, across ledges and up cracks and chimneys until we reached the Rate au de Chevre crack - I always wondered what this meant- it means "rat up a pump" because this is what it felt like forcing one's shoulders and rucksack up a chimney choked with ice and just shoulder width. Derek said it was strenuous, this I felt was an understatement, as I rolled out at the top onto a narrow exposed ledge, flaked out.

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Across this narrow ledge we traversed to the foot of the Lambert crack. Here we caught up with our French friends who were descending owing to their rope being cut by falling stones from the Niche. We lost a vital hour here waiting - the English lads had disappeared far above - the French had not finished rappelling from the Niche - our spirits were low - should we go down? Just then far above, a shout drifted down "Will wait for you on the edge of the Niche". Burgess started up the Lambert, which was pegged where necessary, except for stepping on to a sling to surmount the bulge and dodging stones - it wasn't at all bad. We landed in a very loose couloir, this was where the stones were falling and Derek was belayed on the right wall under an overhang when I arrived.

Pete Scott had advised us to exit right - it looked formidable - twin chimneys like cracks choked with ice - a slippery hard traverse - a difficult swing round a corner and up into a crack, 20 ft above a difficult step on to a vertical wall - very exposed - a swing up on a peg into a groove - pant, grunt, groan and the top - 150 ft of the best. This pitch wasn't even described, certainly a good VS - we moved up to the Niche in hazy conditions, it was deserted - a small dinner table of rock flew over my shoulder.

We crossed the ice of the Niche in 2 or 3 rope lengths passing above the edge of the West face. The verticality of a route like the Dru tends to press on one after a while - our spirits were a bit low, particularly as it was raining and we had the major difficulties to come - I cannot remember all the pitches now, but they were certainly strenuous - some more than others - one pitch that does stand out was a slanting diedre with layback finger crack for 30 ft., then swinging round a corner from a wooden wedge - a finger traverse and snatching at a corner crack before my fingers opened. This followed by the Martinette crack - this again was very strenuous. I had difficulty stepping into it as it was bottomless - above, one swung on jams, pegs and anything else one could find.

Time had flown during this steep section of the Dru - it was 7 o'clock and our new rope was tangled - we would never reach the bivouac sites near the summit.

The main thing however, was that the most difficult climbing was below, but a storm seemed imminent and Derek made one of those momentous statements "this is the most serious position I have ever been in, on a mountain" - hearing something like this from Derek made my spirits go down to my boots. We took stock of our situation - we were at the foot of the exit chimneys, an overhang to our right, a 6" wide ledge underfoot about 3' long covered in ice, but we were optimistic as we thought we could excavate a decent ledge, cover it with Digger Williams green plastic and dangle some over our heads. If it did not do anything else, it blotted out the drop - the best we could do with the ledge was about a foot wide - the rest worked okay - we put our feet in slings, had a brew and existed. I nearly pushed Derek off when I turned sideways to get my feet up to release strain on my cartilage, it was a long night - we smoked and occasionally stuck our heads out like ostriches - far below twinkled the lights of Chamonix. I'm sure we both wished we were there. Morning came, it was fine and cold - our gamble in England had paid off.

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We made our way up the chimney for 400 ft or so - it was pretty icy but this did not deter us - we were near the top which is what we came for -..... Voices! below an aspirant guide and friend who had gone off route, they came up while we waited - it was suggested we rappel down together which we accepted gladly - they had a thick rope. The descent is very labourious, rappel after rappel - we reached the Charpous glacier at about 6 o'clock very, very tired. We decided to descend to the valley stopping for a brew a few hundred feet above the Mer de Glace. I did not realise then, but this was going to be the difference between sleeping snug and warm in the valley and my 3rd bivouac of the route.

We kicked our brew over accidentally and then followed it by kicking over the soup - most depressing- so we pressed on without any food or drink. Crossing the side moraines of the Mer de Glace at this point is very difficult; we did not realise how much, until Derek went one side of a boulder and I the other, and that was the last we saw of each other until arriving in the valley the next day. Time was disappearing fast and I had already slipped.... base over apex, when I realised that if I did not get on the glacier soon I would have to bivvy in the moraines.

I made a determined effort and cut directly for the highest point of the glacier that was visible - at about 8.30 p.m. I emerged. It had obviously been raining recently as the ice was like glass - in the half light most unpleasant. After an involuntary dive across a crevasse, I cramponed up. This made quite a difference but the shades of night were falling fast. I eventually came to a crevasse under the Dru that split the glacier from side to side.

I made repeated efforts to get towards the Montenver side but in the dark and torchless, I could not make a go. A spoil heap under the lip of a crevasse was my pillow. I arranged some plastic again, got out my Piede and Duvet, which were both wet from the previous night but it was heaven to be lying down. I was very tired - I lit a cigarette and spotted high up on the glacier wall a torch - it was Derek. I shouted and struck matches but I could not hear what he was saying - I knew he could not return.

It was not too bad at first and I probably dozed for a few minutes and all sorts of thoughts passed through my head - but above all there was the warm feeling of having scaled the North Face of the DRU. These thoughts were unfortunately thrust from me as I became colder and colder, for hours I pressed my knees together and did press-ups. Eventually, I sat up and watched the grey dawn appear over the Aiguille Rougess. At about 5 o'clock I was up stamping my feet, the exit was easy. I reached Chamonix at 7 a.m. tired, hungry, but very happy.....

Ray Handley.
