



CEUNANT

CEUNANT MOUNTAINEERING CLUB

NEWSLETTER - DECEMBER, 1966

Cover photograph -

Skylon, Carreg Wastad,
by Ken Wilson.

EDITORIAL . . .

This is the first newsletter since June. Not wanting to write the whole thing myself I have had to wait until I could gather enough suitable material. The reader will find very little news on the home front and while I do not wish to make this editorial into the traditional editors' plea for articles it would be helpful to receive a meet report now and again. Any information which concerns The Club or its members is prospective newsletter material.

Perhaps a more cosmopolitan issue such as this one is only to be expected at this time of the year when climbers, eagerly awaiting their next visit to the Alps, seek to escape briefly in reflections and reminiscences of last season.

I have received two articles from Tony Daffern who was always a keen supporter of the newsletter when he was in this country. One of these articles is reproduced here, the other will appear in a later issue.

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LOST . . .

One Map of the Otzal.

Someone was given the map which was lent to Pete Hay on a Club Meet. It belongs to Ron Bearman, 10 Coln Close, Northfield, Birmingham,31. who would welcome its return.

TYN LON . . .

Owing to the difficulty, of late, in collecting hut fees from guests and obtaining accurate hut lists, the Committee has decided to revive the old system of each Member signing in his Guest(s) as soon as possible after arrival.

The Member must then accept responsibility for the guest(s) by invites, including the collection of hut fees.

Prospective Members may not invite guests but must come to some arrangement with a Member who will be present on the particular weekend and will be willing to sign in the prospective Member's friend as his own guest. The Committee do not think it desirable, in the interest of the Members, that persons should continually visit the hut as guests.

A well-bound book is now in Tyn Lon for the purpose of signing in guests and the co-operation of all Members, Prospective Members and Guests is urged in keeping this conscientiously maintained.

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THE NEXT NEWSLETTER . . .

I hope this will contain many articles on climbing in Britain, written by members.

Please let me have your articles before March 1st, 1967.

M E R R Y C H R I S T M A S and good climbing in 1967.

Roger Lavill.

E d i t o r

CLIMBING ON THE DORSET COAST . .

The Chairman has received information from the B. M. C. concerning restrictions in this area and anyone contemplating a visit should contact him for details.

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THE CLUB LIBRARY . . .

There has been a number of additions to the Library recently, including "I Chose to Climb", by Chris. Bonington, and "Rockclimbers in action in Snowdonia", by John Cleare and Tony Smythe.

For further information contact John Daffern.

Editor

It was quite a memorable drive from the valley up to the Catinaccio. I was sobbing pitifully as my tyres were slowly being ripped to pieces, whilst Pete and Neil suffered the same fate only with their feet, as they had to walk most of the way.

"It is not too bad" they had said but I thought it comparable to the P.Y.G. track. At every hairpin - which was quite often - the beams from my headlights shone to their full extent into the blackness, which made me alarmingly aware of the void that dropped away from the road. Now, first and second gear for two miles is very good for a new car so they could'nt understand why I did'nt leap about with wild enthusiasm with the remarks "if you think this is rough, wait until we go to Tre Cime. That goes on for miles - it's great!". I was just about to light my fourth fag when we suddenly arrived at the Gardeccia Hut, which looked just like one of those little musical boxes that can be found on the mantle-pieces of any tourist who has been to Switzerland or Austria. So after weeks of planning and two days travelling, we had at last "arrived" in the very heart of the Dolomites.

The first thing to do was to find Roger, who by now should have arrived from Zermatt after his epic conquest of the Matterhorn. This was soon accomplished and, with his help, the tent was soon up and a nice old brew-up well on the way. After a fairly long natter, we decided to retire and, as I had very little sleep in the last two days I was looking forward to a nice long sleep - in a short while I was "away". However, this blissful state was abruptly terminated at the unearthly hour of 4.30.a.m. by the excited proddings of Neil. This horrible little man was sitting there, all healthy like, with the tent flaps open joyously exclaiming "look at the dawn over the Alps, isn't it wonderful ?" Anyone who has seen me about before 10.00.a.m. can imagine my reply!

Next morning when we eventually got up (I say morning but it was more like afternoon), the clouds parted the sun shone revealing my first view of Dolomite rock, which to me was completely overwhelming as the vast east-face of the Catinaccio reared up majestically to a height of 2,000 ft. whilst the tips of the Vajolet Towers - which were just visible presiding over the Punta Emma - glowed with the reflected glory of the morning sun. I had the Crew guide for some time before the holiday and so was able

to pick out the lines of the Steger and Di-Francheschi on the east-face and marvel at their height and verticality. Little black dots showed that the "whack and dangle boys" were hard at it on the Francheschi. Whilst outside many tents there stood 'Whillans' sacks and a profusion of pots and pans with the remains of yesterday's beans and egg clinging to the bottom which usually signifies that the occupants are British. After generally lazing around for the rest of the day we all adjourned to the Gardeccia Hut to make with the vino and song. Before going to bed we sorted out our gear ready for the next days climbing although it was not really necessary as tomorrow was just a warming up day and there was not a call for these early Alpine starts that I'd been having nightmares about for months before my holidays. Looking at Roger's gear, it was evident that he was prepared for any eventual-ity with his ice axe, snow goggles, crampons, sunglasses, beechams pills, long woollen combs and, of course, not forgetting his Rhubarb life-savers *

After breakfast we decided to go up to the Vajolet Towers, which unfortunately necessi-tated tugging up the Gartleshutte, which is similar to the scree slope up to the Gromlech, only about five times as long, which to a low crag man is absolutely ridiculous but one must not let the team down - so off we went. I sweated so much on that thing that I had to tighten my belt up a couple of notches to stop my breeches slipping down. Oh to be fit! It was not surprising that, by the time that I reached the foot of the Delago, Roger and Pete were already engaged on the first pitch of the S.W.ridge, which was to be our first route. As soon as they were well on the way, Neil and I roped up and set off.

It turned out to be quite a pleasant route of grade IV up the knife edged arête, which overlooked the tremendous sweep of the north wall, As there was no need to hurry, we lin-gered on most of the pitches, absorbing the wonderful sense of exposure and admiring the terrific view spread out before us, so by the time we reached the summit, the only climbers around were a party of Germans, who cast incredulous glances at our double No.2. as one by one they roped off on their $\frac{5}{8}$ " diameter perlon.

The descent was made by a series of pleasant abseils down the gully between the Delago and Stabeler towers. We were halfway down this when we met up with a party from some obscure climbing club known as the 'Birmingham Cave and Crag' !

We felt terribly guilty as we lazed in the sun munching our apples whilst Roger and Pete were negotiating several overhangs on the VI up the Winkler, so we thought we would compensate by getting the meal ready and, with backward glances at our noble companions, we descended the dreaded Gartleshutte to the welcome delights of the food store.

* see the Editor

Next morning the weather made a turn to the worst so we took the opportunity of going shopping in Vigo di Fassa, where large quantities of cheese and apples were purchased. Fortunately the next day dawned clear so we turned our attentions to the S.E. face of the Punta Emma, which was recommended to us by Roger. Neil led off on the first pitch, which was around 140 ft. up a series of cracks to a ledge which ran across the face. The next pitch was 130 ft. diagonal traverse with just one peg in for protection, which I found quite alarming, but one gets used to this sort of thing, or so they keep telling me. I find mathematics very useful when climbing as Neil always seems to be landed with the crux pitches which, in this case, was the next one. So cowering down into the belay I waved Neil bye-bye and off he went up a slightly overhanging wall, which sprouted pegs here and there. After a relatively short time he informed me that he was belayed and I set off. The pitch entailed climbing up the wall to a black bulge from where it was possible to do a sort of hand traverse to a good ledge and peg belay. All that remained was very pleasant bridging for about 300 ft. up the exit chimney.

Sitting on the summit it was difficult to believe that the little specks that crawled in and out of the boulders and up the yellow towers opposite were climbers and were not termites, bent on repairing their crumbling homes.

We awoke next morning to the steady drumming of rain on the tent walls and after several games of chess we decided to move on to Tre Cime, where perhaps the weather would be more charitable. On the road we passed the Cinque Torre which looked like huge blocks of firewood perched on the hillside. On arrival a curtain of grey mist hung gloomily over the camp site, which oozed mud whilst the cows chewed nonchalantly at the tent poles of unsuspecting climbers as they drowned their sorrows in the nearby Lavaredo Hut. Duvet clad climbers stumbled restlessly about from tent to tent, with hands in pockets and heads bowed. Not altogether inviting but here we were so up went the tents and each one of us crawled into the warm retreat of our sleeping bags.

"Get up you lazy, we're going climbing". I couldn't believe it - the sky was clear from horizon to horizon so, after a hurried breakfast, we set out to climb the classic Preuss route on the Piccolissima. Whilst about 500 ft. up this, Neil apparently decided that he didn't require his camera any longer as he let it drop 80 ft. on to the head of Pete before it plunged down to explode into a thousand pieces on the screens below. At the summit we smoked and ate our goodies whilst gazing at the north face of the Cima Grande, which even from here soared up unbelievably before us. Looking across to the

Anticima we could just make out a party of climbers engaged on the last pitch of the Spigolo Giallo (the Yellow Edge) which from our view point looked quite exciting. "That looks great" remarked Neil "let's get up early tomorrow and have a go at it". I shuddered to think what he meant by early.

Arriving at the foot of the climb at 6.45.a.m. we were rather disappointed to find a very incompetent party already trying desperately to do the first pitch. Having waited about half an hour and still no advancement we decided to turn our attention to the Comici Fabian on the Punta Di Frida, which, according to the guide, was grade V.sup. The first few pitches went quite easily until we came to a forbidding looking wall, up which our route seemed to go, as there were a fair amount of pegs and slings in place. Neil led off moving from peg to peg until he came to a long sling that was attached to an old peg on the lip of an overhang. From here one had to do a pendule movement across the wall until you could jam your left foot to a vertical crack and lever yourself round to a small ledge and peg belay. As there was quite a long stretch between the pegs, by the time Neil reached the last one, he was extremely fatigued and so decided to come down and let me have a try; with the security of about 6 pegs behind me, I launched myself across the wall. It was with great relief when at last I was able to clip into the peg and shout "I'm there". Upon reaching me, Neil agreed that the pitch was definitely worth a fag! After this brief rest we set off on the next pitch, which was a superb 130 ft. diedre; this we found a bit of a struggle as we were both shattered from our efforts on the pitch below. All that remained now was about 400 ft. of easy ground and the route was in the bag. We found out later that the pitch we had found so difficult was a sort of indirettissima put there for the sole purpose of getting gullible English climbers gripped up.

Sitting in the Lavaredo Hut we discussed what we should do next as we only had one day left of our climbing holiday. We were both very keen to have another try at the Yellow Edge, so with this in mind we sorted out our gear and retired for the night. Unfortunately, the weather once again turned for the worst and as it was a fairly long route there was no nipping off to Wendys if it turned really bad, like one would do in Wales. We decided, therefore, to call an end to our stay at Tre Cime. As hard-working? Pete and Roger had another three or four weeks of their holiday left we bade them farewell and set off for three days festering on the sun-drenched shores of Lago Di Garda.

It was unfortunate that the weather should have been so bad on my introduction to the Dolomites but, nevertheless, as is usual with the first time it will always remain in my memory while I patiently await next year's season.

Ken Hipkiss

A modest vintage tainted by indifferent weather.

During August a party of 7 visited the Brigaglia region staying at the Sciора and Albigna huts. From the former hut, which can be recommended, it was hoped to look at the Piz Badile but because of the weather that's just what we did. On a more modest scale 3 of us (Hay & Holden & Lowery) set off on the West Ridge of the Ago di Sciора, following the Alpine Climbing Group guide to the region. This describes the route as a 'short training climb', it also says that ice axes and crampons are unnecessary. Disregarding this later directive we took both and found them essential from the start.

We had difficulty in finding the route and so set off on the normal way following two other climbers. Once again both ice axes and crampons proved essential.

Unfortunately the day was prolonged by taking the line of greatest interest which happened to lead to ice filled, loose gulleys and this meant that by the time we reached the summit it was rather late. We immediately set off from the summit following the A.C.G. recommended way down, which soon began to look unlike an easy way off since there were no abseil rings etc. The descent was impeded by a break for sleep and refreshment and continued later. On continuing we found large numbers of new abseil slings obviously left by people expecting to find pegs in place, this was profitable we had to admit; perhaps the A.C.G. do an end-of-season collection. The continuation down the couloir took hours on soft steep snow; we did use axes despite the guide book recommendation. Eventually we reached the hut to hear the Warden comment that the Ago seemed to be the 'Englishman's bedroom' since most of them stay the night on the way down.

We found that the two people in front of us had reached the hut on the first day, having followed the locally accepted way down. This being to descend the Ago towards the Albigna Glacio and then follow a track round towards the Passo Cacciabella and so home.

We suggest hypercritical interpretation of guide books which suggest shedding ice-axes and crampons in such surroundings; perhaps it's OK to do so in a vintage year. We also suggest that the ^{coul}~~coul~~ between the Ago di Sciора and the Pioda di Sciора be disregarded as a way down in poor snow conditions.

This year has been the worst alpine season for years, probably since the ice age. Because of this the lower mountain groups have been visited by more than their normal share of British climbers in search of more clement conditions.

The Kaisergebirge is one such group, situated north of Innsbruck and south of Munich near the picturesque river fortress town of Kufstein. In view of the bad season it was perhaps fortuitous that the A.C.G. in this years "Alpine Climbing" issued a supplement to this area and two other north Tyrolean groups, the Wetterstein and the Karwendel.

Of the three groups, the Kaisergebirge is the most compact and easily approached. The rock being clean limestone also dries very quickly. Thus it is an ideal alternative to Trieste sunbathing for a quick visit by "cheesed off" climbers from the Dolomites or the Engadine.

Both this season and last we have approached the group from Kufstein via the Kaisertal. Although this involves a long but very scenic walk - four hours to the Stripsenjoch Hut - it is the most sensible for those without their own transport. The approach from Griesenau, which is suggested in the supplement, is only convenient for those climbers who come by car; but beware of the three-quarters of an hour walk. This time is only feasible for the Munich hards who do it every week-end.

The best hut in the area is the Anton Karg. It lies on the path halfway in time between Kufstein and the Stripsenjoch. This hut is a large converted hunting lodge and much of the easygoing genteel atmosphere remains. The friendly warden and his family provide excellent food and drink, notably the large gluwein. The three single beds per room matrezzenzlagen also add to the comforts.

The north-west wall of the Kleine Halte (V-), the longest, 3,000 ft., and probably the best mountaineering route in the area, is best attempted from this hut.

Route finding is difficult and the warden, who is also a guide, is only too pleased to give advice, unfortunately only in German. It is a pity that the supplement does not contain this route. It takes a very clever line up through the large overhangs, which make this face appear impregnable to the casual observer. This route is one of three classic lines put up by Hans Dulfer in 1912-13. The other two, the east wall of the Fleischbank and the west wall of the Totenkirchl, have been included and are best approached from the Stripsenjoch hut. These latter two routes contain exposed tension traverses together with some very severe free climbing, an indication of just how advanced German rock climbing techniques were even at the beginning of the century.

The facilities provided at the Stripsenjoch hut are in sharp contrast to those at the Anton Karg. The matrezzenzlagen are spartan and overcrowded at weekends; the food, though adequate, has a speckled appearance due to the unpleasant and ubiquitous presence of the caraway seed. Nevertheless, owing to ease of access, the hut is very popular, both with climbers and tourists. It is definitely the best centre for climbing in the Steinerne Rinne.

The gorge of the Steinerne Rinne is a hanging valley formed by the steep massive slabs of the Fleischbank east face and the pillar buttresses of the Predigstuhl west face. The rock in the gorge is grey-white, very compact and looks as though it has been poured down like icing on a cake.

On the righthand side, after the scramble up the gorge, is the Fleischbank Ostwand Dulferweg. It is a magnificent sustained grade (V) route involving, surprisingly, mainly crack climbing. This is characteristic of all the climbs from the Steinerne Rinne because the slabs are in general too smooth and steep to offer any lines of weakness. These expanses of unclimbable slab on either side heighten the feeling of exposure, which is very apparent on all the routes on this face. The supplement description of the Dulfer route is good but the guidebook time is for a very fast party and the diagram is wrong. The route R1 shown is the Dulfer crack (V) which is not described.

The Feichle-Weinberger (V+) and the Schule-Diem (VI-), on the other side of the gorge, are both very recommendable routes. The description for the Feichle-Weinberger is short but adequate except for the start. This can be clarified by a glance at the German guide book diagram. The Schule-Diem is one of the climbs that Rog Lavill and I did this year. We found it quite demanding for its grade. In general the climbs in the Kaisergebirge are half a grade higher than similarly graded climbs in the Dolomites.

Although the Schule-Diem is not described in the supplement, it is well worth doing. The route starts in the obvious gully right of the west face of the Predigstuhl north summit. After some easy scrambling up the gully two pitches of (V) lead leftwards to the bottom of a big corner 50.ft.. left of the gully. The corner is then climbed free at first, until it overhangs, then on pegs with some hard free climbing on jams. The main difficulty lies in the constant transitions between free and artificial climbing, which lead to difficulties in recovering etriers. From the top of the corner a peculiar semi-circular traverse on sparsely placed pegs is then made into the adjoining gully, which is followed to the col between the Predigstuhl north and main summits.

The descents from all the summits are marked and well described. Though since they all involve long traverses on grade II to III rock, it is best to allow plenty of time. The descents from the Predigstuhl, Totenkirchl and Kleine Halte are particularly devious.

Besides the excellent climbing, this area also offers other attractive features. The Austrian beer is cheap and very good and Kufstein is a most pleasant place to fester. There are numerous inns where, in contrast to Italy, good meals with plenty of meat can be had at very low cost. The camp site, ten minutes walk towards Innsbruck from the station, is also very habitable when not flooded. Finally, if the weather is bad even in this area, one can always enjoy the free organ recitals which can be heard every day at the Helden Orgel tower in the Castle.

CLIMBING IN THE ROCKIES

Tony Daffern

We have now spent several week-ends in the Rockies, touring, trail walking and a little climbing. So far I have climbed two peaks, both fairly low, namely Roche Pedrix and Mount Colin. Snow conditions this season have prevented any attempt being made on the higher peaks.

However, first a word about the Rockies and the climbing problems they present.

Most of the Canadian Rockies are National or Provincial Parks. In Alberta the Banff and Jasper National Parks are the main ones, stretching from the Alberta foothills to the Great Dinile. On the other side of the border, in British Columbia are the Yoho, Kootenay National Parks and Mount Assinibourne Provincial Park. These five Parks cover an area of 8,000 square miles; mountains, glaciers, long broad valleys, fast flowing rivers and the most difficult of barriers to progress, the vast areas of forest and bush.

The purpose of the National Parks is to protect wild life and to ensure that the area remains unspoilt for everyone to enjoy. Much the same as the British National Trust.

The main advantage that the Canadians have is that their areas are so large that the inevitable tourist facilities are hardly noticeable among the great wealth of natural scenery.

The parks are scattered with campsites for tourists and most of these campsites are excellent; all but the most elaborate are free. The largest of the campgrounds cater for both caravans and tents. Caravans are able to connect up to water, sanitation, and electricity. Tents can be pitched on wooden platforms provided for the purpose. Many people carry nails instead of tent pegs. These campgrounds have washrooms, cooking shelters and laundry facilities. The cost, 50 cents (3/4d) per night per camping space occupied. The smaller, free campgrounds have a water supply and sanitation, cooking shelters and each camping place has a table with bench seats and a fireplace. Logs are supplied free of charge. What we like about these sites is that, generally, each camping space is well separated from the next one. None of the crowding dozens of tents in the same field as in most British or Continental sites.

Each campsite has its resident squirrels, some so tame that they will eat out of your hand.

Of course, as with all national parks there are a number of rules and regulations. For instance, there is no camping allowed within one mile of the highway, other than at the designated campgrounds. However, a permit can be obtained from the wardens to camp and light fires off the highway. These camps must be more than a mile from the nearest highway, thus discouraging the average tourist from camping anywhere but the set campgrounds. A permit must also be taken out for walking or climbing off the main trails. These are more for the protection of the climber than to prevent people from climbing. These can be obtained only from the Warden of the area in which one wishes to climb and lists the party the route up and down and the expected time of return. The permit must be returned to the Warden, by the end of the stipulated period. Many of the Wardens are skilled mountaineers and with their knowledge of their own area can be very helpful sources of advice and information. Most climbers make an attempt to get to know, and to stay, on friendly terms with the Wardens in the main climbing areas.

The major mountaineering problem here is access to the mountains. There are few roads and access to the majority of mountain groups is by backing along trails to the upper valleys. The lower valleys and mountain slopes are usually covered by forest or bush in British Columbia by very dense forest. Bush whacking is tiring and very slow and avoided whenever possible. Occasionally open, windswept ridges will give good access but mostly the climber has to rely on man-made or game trails. Distances are tremendous and many areas require a week or more backpacking before the mountaineer is in position to attempt a the mountains. Some climbers hire helicopters to fly them, and a couple of weeks food, into an unexplored range, and climb from a base camp. This can save many days backpacking and is fine for those with plenty of time and money.

There are few mountain huts in the Rockies. The Canadian Alpine Club owns several huts in the main valleys and is gradually establishing bivouac huts at selected sites high in the mountains. Climbing is not yet popular enough for huts of the Alpine type to be economical propositions. As far as I know none of the huts have permanent guardians. This year, the Alpine Club hopes to place, by helicopter, a small fibreglass bivouac hut at the traditional bivouac spot on the normal route up Mt. Robson, the highest peak in the Rockies.

"And what were thou, and earth, and stars, and sea,
If to the human mind's imaginings
Silence and solitude were vacancy ? "

(Mount Blanc - Shelley)

Caves and mountains - if you explore the one, you intend to avoid the other, so many say; possibly a hiraeth for the one tends to produce the opposing acro - or claustrophobia of the other. But apart from their diversity they have kinship also - both are marvels of nature, which have taken millions of years for conception and growth; they are also symbolic, an inspiration for poets and writers of every age, and in this symbolising is perhaps contained much of their fascination.

We may climb for adventure, or challenge, perhaps for a mystic union with facets of life only to be found in such settings, but they convey also an overwhelming stature and permanence, so far surpassing human levels, that there is a sort of ultimate security; by their very nature they cannot be attacked - tunnelled through, depth charged, changed like clouds by natural forces - but never, in the whole sense, destroyed.

Their challenge promises to would-be travellers, but it also demands -

"A loud lone sound no other sound can tame"

pervading all. This is the power of nature in the metaphysical sense, as of God - source of human thought - autonomous - and, at the heart of all - the permanent reality.

Is in this the answer why climbers risk injury and death, exert to the point of exhaustion, driven by a drive which appears to successfully combat the instinct for self preservation?

Perhaps we can't fully know why; there are always chains of reasons, so psychologists tell us, which run from the future into the past, and like time itself, bring some knowledge, integral to all action, but with no final solution. It seems there is some need to stop or break free from the futility of "the Wheel", and that mountain climbers, cavers and walkers find this freedom, or try to - to stand apart and reflect, and not just, with head lowered, live from day to day without purpose or direction, drifting in banal trivia from birth to death. To consider that confusion and uncertainty may be man made and that there is an eternal consistency, and that somewhere in the infinite winter challenge of mountains is a Pantheistic answer. Their physical nature conveys a sense of permanence, the feeling that time has stood still, and to meet their challenge becomes a venture beyond the very small, rather specialised area of knowledge so highly regarded by our rational 20th century to the great lost continent of things apprehended (and a thing apart is the satisfaction for the physical endeavour) in a way, a journey of faith through intuition (or instinct?) paradoxically attracting otherwise rational people into a world where -

"A motion and a spirit that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thoughts,
And rolls through all things "

(Tintern Abbey - Wordsworth)

This power to attract extends to caves which contribute their own symbolism. Vaulted caverns or a muddy tangled maze - its a strange old world with an Hitchcock suspense of unknowing - unseen eyes - if there is any God on Earth, why should he not be in such a place, watching the stumbling mortals who see him and are yet blind to his existence ? Made more conscious only that they and their kind constitute a microdot in an infiniteness of time and space; absorbed but still numbed by the spectacle of immortality.

Is somewhere in all this an end to mutability, the way to conceive the meaning of eternal life, birth and death, the rejuvenation and existence of a spirit that was never dead, though born out of death ?

So exists an experience which even the darkness of a cave cannot shield, nor the mountain mists obscure. It flames with meaning about life which could defeat centuries of time and yet survive - a world born out of nothingness.

Patricia Knights.