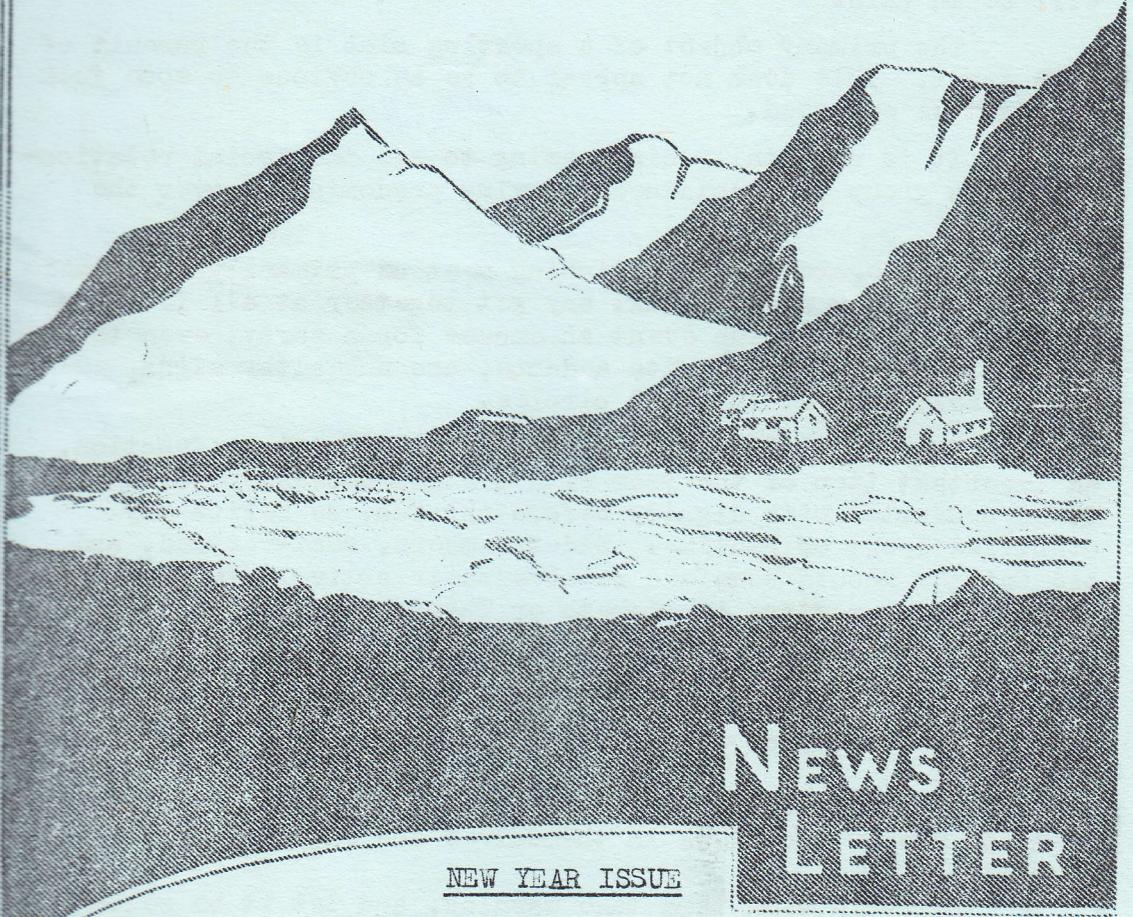


Dec 59

The Ceunant

MOUNTAINEERING CLUB



NEWS
LETTER

NEW YEAR ISSUE

Nineteen Hundred and Fifty Nine - Nineteen Hundred and Sixty

E D I T O R I A L

Naturally enough, the first message of this issue is Seasonal Greetings and all good wishes to you all for nineteen hundred and sixty.

As mountaineers specifically, may all your plans and ambitions for the coming year materialise in pleasure and lasting memories.

Apart from our individual aims, however, let us be aware also of this club of friends to which we belong and the responsibilities to one another. The club continues to grow in stature and activity, but if tolerance and friendliness fail us all else will be in vain.

The primary object of a sporting club is the pursuit of that sport. This does not appear to be as obvious to some folk as might be supposed.

It is especially distressing to see the social relationship of a group of mountaineers having predominance over the climbing.

The regarding of a climbing meet as primarily an excuse for the Saturday night drink; any get together at all fetching up at the bar; any club event an excuse for a party, even the 'annual dinner' coupled with a dance, are unhealthy signs, regrettably evident in local circles.

The annual dinner of a club of any sort is a function, an important item of the year with certain necessary formalities to be conducted with dignity before the fun, as befits any dignified sport or pastime. Elder members, semi-retired, and old friends should come and re-live their active days, and whether the event takes place in Digbeth or Thyangboche its primary object is its association with the sport and the participants of that sport. Any circumstance tending to relax appreciation of the object of social gatherings in favour of an excuse for a party - (possibly for a particular group) - should be rigorously withstood.

Social functions and dances have their place elsewhere as separate events, complete in themselves and enjoyable for themselves.

Let this club then take warning, and let it be self-evident to the observer that we, at least, have always the sport

of climbing mountains in the fore-front of our thoughts and activities, however limited by circumstances they may actually be.

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UP A STANDARD. This early part of the second half of the century has seen an age of mountaineering standards of its own. This has brought a greater difference between the average climber of to-day and the 'Tiger' than ever before in the history of the sport.

In the days of the brothers Abraham, experts like them, of whom there were very few, climbed their hardest at a standard approximating to the very mild standard Severe climbs of to-day. Reference to Rock Climbing in North Wales shows climbs such as Central Gully, Glyder Fawr, by present day grading just Severe for a few feet and Central Route, Lliwedd, Very Difficult, classified in the top grades of that day. These old grades were based on O.G. Jones' standards of Moderately Difficult, Difficult and exceptionally Severe only.

Thus the expert climbed at a standard of technique only a little higher than the average, such that it was not so much a technical competence as steadiness that carried him up the hard routes of his time. To-day the average is perhaps just below that of the expert pioneers, but is miles away from the 'Tiger' standard of 1959 - in theory!

We say "in theory" because one fact springs at once to mind. The fact that to-day people of immature experience are finding little difficulty in leading apparently hard routes, or if they find difficulty, are nevertheless getting up them. Why is this? One explanation is that a reasonably gymnastic person with strength in the arms and a good power weight ratio, can quickly overcome the mental strain involved, by the relatively easily acquired principals used for protection of the leader. Whether these methods too quickly picked up would bear the literal strain of calamity is questionable, for the best men of to-day have mastered a cunning anticipation of anything going wrong, coupled with an engineers understanding of the strains on their equipment.

The possibility of danger in the unwise use of intermediate belays, however, is completely outweighed by the psychological effect on the daring leader of less experience. It could be argued that these 'tigers' of negative experience are exceptions, climbing hard by stimulant from others and are 'naturals', but the

effect of the realisation of real as against apparent exposure is thought to be entirely responsible for the success of comparatively inexperienced people on the brutish, short and yet highly serious routes by which the modern rock climber is judged at the height of competence.

At the same time, however, the reduction of exposure by supplemented protection is more and more widely used in every grade of route, and we are not going to argue the principals of this era of Dutch Courage in climbing. What we are concerned about here, is that, despite the advantages of modern methods and equipment which we have been at such pains to emphasise, there are mountaineers of experience reluctant still to embark on climbs of any severity. Good climbers, climbers of promise, ruled by a sometimes false concept of standards, awed by the unknown, are losing great reward to technically inferior leaders with a little more courage and a lot more cunning.

All climbs are possible and there is too much emphasis on the standard and none on the route - the route gives the pleasure not the standard. There are holds on severe climbs just as there are severe moves on a number of standard 'difficult' climbs. In fact many 'difficults' have moves of an annoying awkwardness, awkward to anybody, their effect only lessened by lack of position. There are several routes in Wales still graded Severe, little above standard Difficult in technique, their classification derived from any combination of position, rotten rock, long leads and exposed belay stances. A careful lead of routes of this nature can do much for confidence and help to bring severe climbs within the scope of many people, some of whom climb at the easier standards, recurrently, and with an enormous margin of safety.

Rightly or wrongly there is no classified list for Wales as yet, but advice on "grading" routes can be obtained from the right quarters.

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Opinions expressed in this NewsLetter are those of the Editor and are not necessarily endorsed by the committee.

M. N. KING
3/61 Leamington Road,
BIRMINGHAM, 12.

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"...the resilience of man is great, and his ingenuity. So I was not done yet and on the way back setting myself to work I soon picked up my pride in this way, by thinking, to-day the victory has been to the devil, but to-morrow is not to him yet, also by thinking, it has been said that the secret of life is in detachment from it, good."

MENLOVE EDWARDS.

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CLIMBING NOTES

The Climbers Club have decided to re-arrange the Snowdonia guides in view of the great number of climbs of one sort and another in the district which have been recorded. The Snowdon side of the Llanberis Pass including Clogwyn d'ur Arrdu is well ahead in preparation, Hugh Banner having completed most if not all, of the J.B. routes during the fine summer.

Nant Gwynant the Aberglaslyn Pass and Tremadoc are being arranged in one volume and there are 140 routes mostly in a high grade of great technical interest.

The Moelwyns, Moel Siabod including the crag in the Lledr Valley and Bettwys-y-Coed will be in the form of a third book. Anyone finding unclimbed rock in the area is advised to keep it a secret!

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Erosion Groove has been led in nails during rain.

Cader Idris failed to yield anything worth while to the Rock and Ice when visited earlier in the year. The main lines tried were either rotten or too hard!

Club members at Cader in December found Cyffrwy Arete quite friable and exploration, very tentative, on adjacent crags of the face was hair raising.

Exploration at Tremadoc for the new guide resulted in scratched hands, frights, falls, exasperation, the use of a piton and nothing worth recording except the acquisition of a good standard of jungle practice. The easy routes had disappeared beneath the foliage. It is safe to say that there are no good routes at Tremadoc for anyone who has not a margin of safety at Hard Severe standard.

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TONY DAFFERN REPORTS. - The wet autumn has practically brought a stop to any serious climbing activities. The October Llanberis meet with the Stoats was the third wet weekend in succession since the fine weather ended and practically no climbing at all was done.

At the beginning of November a pirate party took a Dormobile to Stange for the day, and quite a number of good routes were done. The Dormobile used just for the Sunday had to be hired for the whole weekend and proved rather expensive.

Members had a good day's climbing at Froggats Edge the next week-end and some of the more difficult routes were top roped.

The Tremadoc meet at the end of November was held on one of the drier week-ends, but very little constructional climbing was done. Ascents were made of Great Western, while a party started on Pincushion rather late in the day.

On Sunday the Pincushion party resumed their "Whack and Dangle" act supported by a photographic party on one side and plenty of encouragement of a questionable nature from above. They were defeated in the end by lack of suitable equipment, (and wobbly pegs - Ed.), and the spectators had some more fun watching the pegs being taken out.

The Avon Gorge meet was only attended by three members who climbed many of the Diffs and V Diffs in the rain. However, there is quite a bit of good steep and firm rock in the Avon Gorge which should give fine climbing in good weather, and the place is well worth another visit.

Little climbing was done at the Dolgelly meet the following week-end. Two parties did Cyffrwy Arete and enjoyed it. Saturday was a fine day and the summit rocks of Cader Idris were sheathed in delightfully patterned ice. A large party covered a fairly large part of the main ridge in fairly good time, though there are no details offered. Sunday was wet, but some members did a low level walk. Only four climbers had conventional accommodation, the bulk of the party idling in luxury.

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COMMITTEE NOTES AND CLUB NEWS

The Committee wishes to remind members that hut keys should not be indiscriminately lent out to non-members, and that anyone doing so without sanction of the hut warden is entirely

responsible for the conduct of the visitors and for the collection of fees. Guests, visitors and friends of members are naturally enough welcome, and of course in times of need rules are waived, but other paying members are entitled to consideration in terms of circumstances.

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Peak Committee - British Mountaineering Council.

The Club is now affiliated to the Peak Committee of the BMC. This meets once a year or as necessary, and a representative will be asked to attend.

Landowners are doing their utmost to prevent climbing on the edges without proper control of the public, and litter and hooliganism aggravate the position. The necessity for the Peak Committee is obvious.

Hut and Climbing Records - (with or without a rope)

The committee agree that members should be encouraged to keep the hut log books up to date and as interesting as possible. Modesty should be overcome in favour of providing interest for others and for posterity.

Committee members are elected by the club as representatives in true democratic tradition, and should be approached personally more often to promote an individuals point of view.

Annual Dinner. As only two objections have been received from members and a majority of the committee have agreed to the Annual Dinner being held in Wales for 1960, this is being arranged.

Notice Board. Permission has been obtained for this to be exhibited in the Cambridge Arms.

Hut Bookings. A booking list will be posted on the Notice Board and as the letting of the premises is now fairly regular, members are advised to refer to it before making private arrangements.

Parking. As has been expected complaints have been received about the parking of cars both in the space before Nant Peris Church and in front of Tyn Lon. It has been decided to build a hard standing in the field beside the cottage, but in the meantime, members are earnestly requested to avoid causing any inconvenience to the local people.

New Members. The following have been elected to membership of the Club.

Miss Joan Gabriel.
Mrs. Mary King. (Joint)

Glen Brittle Memorial Fund. This fund for the erection of a climbing hut in Glen Brittle in memory of mountaineers killed in the wars has been donated £5 by the Club funds and, additionally, members will be circularised separately by the BMC.

Meet Leaders. It should be noted that any excessive expenditure incurred by the leader of a club meet can be offered to the committee for consideration of re-imburement, on the merits of the particular case.

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EQUIPMENT NOTES.

It is now generally recognised that pitons fitted with a loose ring are unsafe.

Further detail is still being sought regarding the marketing of the Jumar Clamp in Britain.

The Scott karabiner is still not generally available and it is thought that some pressure might be sought by the BMC Equipment sub-committee for British made climbing equipment, which should prove to be cheaper.

It may be of interest to note that two Midland firms of toolmakers have gone into this fairly deeply and have made prototype karabiners. The sales possibilities have been explored and emphasised, but space for new tooling is the problem in one case.

Nylon Rope. Little notice has been taken of BMC recommendations associated with the Standard Specifications and people continue to purchase No. 3, that most convenient to handle.

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"In mountaineering there is only one principal: that we should secure on any given day the highest form of mountain adventure consistent with our sense of proportion. All else is more a matter of practice than of principal."

G.W. Young.

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NORTH WALES MEET - 23rd -25th October '59

I should like to thank all those who turned up.

In view of the RAIN on Saturday, some of us spent the time cementing walls and things. About ten o'clock at night, however, a significant event occurred in that a well known 'lady' voice was heard to say to an equally well known male 'listener' - "Let's go to bed!"

We had luck on Sunday, however, for the rain stopped and a party of no less than eleven went up to the Parson's Nose and all climbed it. The rock was wet, it was cold and there was quite a high wind. Half way up we had a nice shower of sleet to cool us off a bit more - it was just like Arctic conditions.

Six of us continued up the Arete and descended the Railway Track with the aid of a large flat stone placed on the centre rail. Some of us had a go but fell off.

This was the largest party I have seen climbing together from this club and I myself would like to see more of it.

We left at 4.30 p.m., just as the skies opened up again and by the time we arrived up the Pass people waiting there were wet through. So to the delight of the 'Stoats, we had a 'changing scene' at the back of the coach.

P. WILLAN

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YOUR ANSWER PLEASE

Was the courting couple disturbed by the sword play on Harlech Castle walls ?

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HAVE YOU CRAWLED ACROSS ANY GOOD RIVERS LATELY?

Report of the Meet - 27th -29th November '59.

Weather prospects for the week-end were not very favourable when, on Friday, nine members set off for Bala in fog.

Happily, however, this was left behind quite suddenly at Oakengates and the rest of the journey was under clear conditions.

We were greeted at Plasteg guest house by a friendly lady who referred to the Meet Leader as the manager. Why this was so we never found out, but the 'manager' and his mate got the best bedroom. The room was very warm because the airing cupboard and

hot water tank were in one corner, and, naturally enough, came in useful for 'sock drying'.

On Saturday the party motored round the lake to Talardd, from where we walked onto the Northern end of the Aran mountains. Before ascending into the cloud at about 1,800 feet we had excellent views of Bala Lake and the Dee Valley. The traverse of the Aran mountains (Aran Benllyn 2,901 feet and Aran Fawddwy 2,972 feet, was very enjoyable in spite of the generally cloudy and cold conditions with only occasional views. A spur known as Drws Bach led us off the Arans and eventually to the Llaethnant River, running rather full.

There was no bridge.

Most people, wishing to keep dry boots and socks, took them off. 'Pat' carefully tucked her socks into the boots, tied them together and threw them across the swirling river. It was not a good throw, in fact it was a very bad one and the boots were fished out further down stream. The retriever, Alan, then threw them back, equally unsuccessfully.

Moral No.1. Don't tie your boots together by the laces to throw them across a river.

Eventually, however, all the party crossed, re-booted, made their way back to the cars and thence to Bala. Adequate hot water to warm the feet and a good hot dinner to assuage the hunger satisfied everyone.

Two more members joined the party at Saturday evening dinner.

Moral No.2. When in Bala get to the local early. They close at 9.30 p.m. We hardly had time for two drinks and a packet of crisps.

Sunday's ascent of the Arennig mountains was curtailed by very poor weather conditions during the morning. However, a fair compromise was managed which included the small Arannig, Arennig Fach, which has quite an attractive lake beneath its North East precipices.

After the ascent, in order to return to Arennig Fawr side of the valley where the cars were parked, necessitated crossing the main river, the Afon Tryweryn. A footpath marked on

the map was thought to be the best route. Half a mile across very marshy ground led to a footbridge, which, to put it very mildly, was in a bad state of repair. Though the main wooden girders were still in place there was no handrail, only two very rotten posts and the planking ceased half way leaving a large gap. The girders were rotten too, wet, mossy and with large nails protruding where planks were missing. The river ran fast and deep below.

The only 'safe' way across was to crawl along where there were planks and then "a'cheval" (mind the nails) along the girder until one could drop off onto the opposite bank of the river. The success of the crossing was due very largely to the first passage of John Knight, (it's useful to have an engineer in the party,) who crawled across with a small boulder and eased some of the difficulties by knocking the nails down.

Moral No.3. Always carry a hammer.

The camera men were disappointed. No one fell in the water.

Before returning to Bala and whilst sheltering from a hail storm, Geoff made us a very welcome brew of tea in his 'mobile kitchen'.

The weekend was satisfactorily completed by a good meal at the guest house before the journey home.

EDMUND WEBSTER.

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PHOTOGRAPHY. Once again, members adept in this medium are asked to pass on some of their useful comments and hints.

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S A F E T Y M E C H A N I C S

by "Trevor Morgan"

The breaking strain of the most commonly used climbing rope is 3,200 lbs. A 20 foot waist line wound say six times round the waist has an approximate breaking load of 4-5000 lbs. Very good.

Yet, time and again we link these together with a standard Austrian karabiner having a possible breaking load of only 1,500 - 1,700 lbs.

If any engineer designed a crane utilising a hawser of double the breaking strain of the hook, he could find himself back sweeping the shop floor in no time at all.

Naturally there are other considerations, but let us stick to the principals, for the time being, of figures.

An abseil sling, used double could provide for holding a load of 6,000 lbs, given equal distribution. When used as a running belay, for instance, this adequate safety margin is reduced by the main climbing rope load at 3,200 lbs and made ridiculous by the karabiner load of a possible 2,000 lb or less.

Let us go further and consider a line belay. It is not safe to rely on a load strain of more than 2,000 lbs on the line lengths with less than six 'strands' behind the flake. With a protective sleeve this might be increased, but in places where only two or three 'strands' can be forced into position no more than the 1,000 lbs breaking strain of each length should be considered. This represents a very short fall indeed, and it is generally accepted that these runners are only used for hard moves immediately by the belay position and are quite often removed immediately afterwards if still within reach. The fact that the line is joined by a steel link with a possible load of at least 1,700 lbs. is itself consistent, and serves to emphasise the inconsistency of protection provided by a firm flake, and a full weight sling reduced to that of a piece of $\frac{5}{8}$ " nylon line by the use of a standard karabiner.

It has been recognised by the BMC for some years that the karabiner is, literally, the weak link in the chain, and efforts are being made to standardise matters more consistently. In practice, however, things work quite well as we know. A runner is largely phsyccological and all that is required is some form of pulley to allow the rope to run freely. A standard form of pulley therefore, is conveniently supplied by the average 1,700 lbs minimum load variety of snap link, and this item has no application necessitating a smaller unit. Yet, when it becomes the weakest part of the system, that is when used with a rope or sling very much greater in carrying capacity, it can be argued that it is useless to carry slings at all on a climb, least of all full weight. Certainly the intelligent use of various weights and types of sling is practiced by a number of climbing technicians, but the significance of what they are doing is lost on a lot of people.

Ideally perhaps, we should proceed as follows for hard climbing. A waist line of at least four turns of 1" hemp rope should be suitably knotted round the waist. This, as should be well known, is to preclude of the possibility of the main nylon rope running against the now conventional nylon waist line, in the event of a mis-hap and melting it. This hemp waist rope could bear a load of 6 - 7,000 lbs and should be linked by the strongest karabiner - (and the one normally available and purchased by most people is only rated at 3,200 lbs anyway,) - to the main climbing rope with a dynamic knot. The main rope will, of course, be the largest and most suitable for the route.

The karabiner is, therefore, still the weakest part and will continue to be so as long as the snap links available are the only items with a variable breaking point by virtue of the greater differences of the individual manufacture.

Reverting to the procedure of setting up equipment for a hard route, let us consider 'runners'. These should be set up with the largest karabiners on the full weight slings and standard karabiners need no more than $\frac{1}{8}$ " slings to support them. There should be no need for more than two line slings - to be used intelligently.

With the full weight slings used for anchors and a proper perception of the effectiveness of intermediate belays, the limitations of the present equipments available can be overcome with adequate safety margins on the hardest climb, given expected prowess of the performers.

It could well be recollected at this point, however, that with good anchorage, which in the writer's opinion means a full weight sling dropped over a flake, passed under and round the waist loops twice and dropped over the flake again (i.e. no karabiner), in a good position, seated, a leader can, by dynamic techniques, be stopped from falls of up to 70 feet beyond the belay point - a possible 140 feet in all. Suppose, however, an intermediate belay is in use, then this distance of 70 feet above the 'runner' is not as safe. If the breaking strain of the intermediate belay is similar to that of the remainder of the set up, the leader is still limited to advance beyond his runner no more than $\frac{3}{4}$ of the length of rope the belayer still has on hand, thereby allowing adequate handling rope for a dynamically effective brake.

Considering this principle for a moment; a leader with 100 feet of a 120 foot 3,200 lb load rope run out, leaving 20 feet in hand, should not advance more than 15 feet, but must in any case reach a stance by then. With a 60 foot advance from the second climber, however, a further 45 feet is the limit; which is feasible. But again, after a run out of only 20 feet, the leader by these principles, can press on for another 75 feet without worry. By another principle, however, a fall of 75 feet, onto a good direct belay can result in rope breakage.

Thus if a leader cannot foresee protection in the middle of a long pitch length, he is better off not to use anything available in the first 30 feet. In the last 30 feet, conversely, the principle need not be considered.

Again, if, as is normally the case, the runner loading is weaker than the main rope, and this is dependent on the size and stability of the flake as well as the slings and karabiners, then the leader can, except, as we have said, in the last few feet, be worse off than without any additional protection at all. This is due to the sudden jerk weakening the effectiveness of the dynamic brake before there is sufficient movement for it to be applied. Most seconds will, by reaction, lock the rope solid instead of letting it run, and this is much easier to do with an indirect force - which is all obvious, but emphasised.

It can be said then, that within 20 feet of a runner the leader is safe enough, but beyond that he could be better off without it.

It is due to this heavy 'jerk' strain on a climbing rope used through indirect belays that very heavy ropes are used on hard routes, and usually more than one, for on these climbs 'runners' are liberally necessary for most mortals and the strain on the main rope, even if the belay gives way almost at once can be sufficient to brake a 3,000 lb rope. More so, consider, than if the leader, in the right circumstances, fell further onto the much more resilient brake of the second and a running rope. This theory, it may be said in passing, has been put forward in favour of weak belay slings which can, if the leader is so far beyond them that they are going to effect the dynamic belay, snap off one by one without too much stretching of the main rope. Note weak "slings" not karabiners, because weak karabiners can

cut the rope as they open, especially if left the wrong way up. It is significant to note, however, that to ensure this extraordinary theory works, we need only ONE length of $\frac{5}{8}$ " nylon waist line if using the "standard" karabiner.

If we have left our reader in some confusion we have made our point, because it is a rapidly growing opinion that apart from ease of handling and as aids to the mind, karabiners as now available, can be a dangerous delusion, and it is considered by the writer and others to be only good climbing that has prevented this opinion from terrible confirmation; although accidents involving karabiner failure can be brought to mind.

The dis-proportionate weakness of these steel units is disturbing to a practical mind, and it is high time the manufacture of snap links for climbing was brought more in line with the strength of the rest of the equipment, and readers might well consider what the breaking strain of the Scott karabiner available for the Ministry of Supply has been proved to be.

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KARABINERS. Relative to the above article, here are some figures of units tested at random by the BMC Equipment committee.

STUBAI (Oval - weight $8\frac{1}{2}$ oz - screwed sleeve)

ONE tested.

HINGE BROKE 5,400 lb.

STUBAI (Oval - weight $4\frac{1}{2}$ oz).

NINE tested.

Three KEEPER slipped	1,700 lb. only
One HINGE broke	2,500 lb.
One withstood	2,800 lb.
Four HINGE broke	3,300 lb.

(continued over...)

AUSTRIA (Pear shaped - weight 4 oz.)

THREE tested.

One KEEPER slipped	1,500 lb.
One HINGE broke	2,800 lb.
One CATCH sheared	3,300 lb.

PAT AUSTRIA (Forged - weight $4\frac{1}{2}$ oz.)

ONE tested.

Withstood	2,800 lb.
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ASMU (Forged - weight $4\frac{1}{2}$ oz.)

ONE tested.

HINGE broke	2,240 lb.
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P. ALLAIN (Forged aluminium alloy - weight $2\frac{1}{2}$ oz.)

TWO tested.

ONE opened slightly	1,100 lb.
ONE opened wide	1,700 lb.

It will be noted that, with the exception of the heavy 8 oz. Stubai none of the above karabiners is as strong as full weight climbing rope made from nylon.

Karabiners of sound design and high grade materials are now being developed in Britain. Pending the availability of good quality British karabiners, climbers are recommended to use the better of the karabiners listed above or others for which dealers can guarantee comparable performance. (BMC Publication)

EDITOR'S NOTE. The 8 oz. screw karabiner made by Stubai is rated by the manufacturer's catalogue at 3,200 lb minimum strain. This could mean that examples have begun to fail at this loading.

The fantastic, miraculous performance on Nanga Parbat of Herman Buhl has been nominated by at least one newspaper as the greatest example of human endurance in the last ten years of sport.

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"Nationalism in mountaineering is distressing."

Robert Bates - American Expedition -K2.
1953.

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OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

There is a meet to Lanberis at the week ending 8th January. Members transport will be used as far as possible but it may be necessary to hire additional transport. Tony Daffern leads the meet.

A day visit to Pontesbury is planned for 24th January, which will be organised by Mike Kerby.

The meet to Langdale on 19th February will be led by the present Editor himself. Private arrangements will be made for transport and accommodation will be at the Achille Ratti hut, Bishopscale. This is situated about a quarter of a mile before the New Dungeon Ghyll Hotel, and just past the Fell and Rock hut. There is room for ten ladies and fifteen gentlemen(!) The charge is 4/- per night and, as all cooking and light is by electricity, members are advised to take plenty of 'bobs'.

Alternatively, parties may camp, more conveniently, near the Old D.G. Hotel.

The Oriad hut at Rhydd Ddu is nearing completion and we have sanction to apply for its use.

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"The essence of sport ... consists in the creation of an artificial problem for the fun of solving it." ARNOLD LUNN.

"it is certain that no one climbs
for the sake of amusement."

(?)

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INDOOR ACTIVITIES

The next indoor event will be the Members Evening on January 27th. Once again members with slides to show are asked to contact Tony Daffern in good time.

The Annual General Meeting is on February 10th.

Details of the Annual Dinner, as already announced to be held in Wales, should be available for the next News Letter, which it is presumed, will be immediately following the A.G.M.

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BOOK REVIEW

The White Spider. by Heinrich Harrer.

(QUOTE). Translated from the German and with 59 photographs, this book unfolds the history of the North Wall of the Eiger.

The author was in the first successful party in 1938, and describes all the previous attempts.

"Herr Harrer drives home to the imagination the quite exceptional preparation, care, resourcefulness and courage demanded of those who accept this challenge."

He apparently says much to justify this controversial undertaking of excessive danger.

A N E X A M P L E

by M. N. KING.

EDWARD WHYMPER. Edward Whymper never rested.

"The modern mountaineer with motor cars and mountain railways could hardly hope to do much more than Whymper achieved in a fortnight's mountaineering. The distance covered in that period is astonishing."

F. Smythe.

This tremendously significant pioneer of British Alpine climbing carried out during the period mentioned in Smythe's biography, the summer of 1865, a feat of mountaineering which has had few equals, bearing in mind particularly the elementary equipment and facilities of those days.

Whymper kept in training for his Alpine holidays with a routine of tremendous walks, working up to 50 miles a day by the eve of going away. No one then thought of the British hills as training for greater mountains in rock and even ice craft!

On June 13th, 1865, Whymper was in Lauterbrunnen in the Bernese Oberland and on the 14th was out for 19 hours attempting the first passage of the Elneflujoch. The party was unable to force a direct line, and the whole mountainside appeared infinitely more complicated than they had thought.

Nothing daunted, however, Whymper walked across the Zmeiden and Forcletta passes on the 15th, to Zinal. The following day he ascended the Grand Cornier and was out 16 hours.

Over June 16th and 17th the party travelled to and climbed the Dent Blanch, the latter part of the climb and the descent being in a raging blizzard which caused Whymper to suffer a certain amount of frost bite, hardly surprising with windproof clothing unknown! On the 17th Whymper was climbing for 18½ hours on the Dent Blanch and, frost bite and all, descended all the way to Abricola, arriving at mid-night.

The best part of the following day was spent walking round in circles on the Col d'Herens in thick mist, the climbers returning disgusted to Abricola.

Better weather on the 19th enabled the passage of the Col d'Herens to be easily made, the journey being afforded amusement by recollection of the previous day's wanderings and the foot-prints still visible going in the most curious directions. The walk to Zermatt took $6\frac{1}{2}$ hours. Anyone who has been this way should be impressed at least with the time.

On June 20th Whymper crossed from Zermatt to Breuil by way of the Thyeodule Pass. In the course of his perambulations around the Matterhorn looking for a way up, he must have traversed this pass a dozen times at least.

The weather still holding reasonable, June 21st was spent in an attempt on the Matterhorn by a most extraordinary route which those who have read Scrambles will know all about, and, with experience in these things, will have raised their hands in alarmed disapproval. We must hasten to defend Whymper's judgement therefore, by impressing that this route looked as though it might well be more over snow than is usual with the Matterhorn, and it was for that reason only that he had any followers, albeit reluctantly, at all. Few guides wished to have anything to do with the mountain and the inevitable rock fall which took place while the party was feeding, on some rocks, fortunately, to the side of the gully, led to a prompt retreat. Whymper went on a little way to have a look, the deformed porter Luc Meynet, who had been alone with Whymper on one of his attempts on the Italian side and who had a great love for the mountains, only climbing with him.

During the remainder of June 21st and to the 23rd, Whymper travelled from Zermatt to the Val Tournanche and then walked down to the Aosta valley, up it and round to Courmayer - quite a distance to say the least.

On the 23rd, then, his party ascended Mont Saxe, a magnificent view point, from which they wished to examine the South Face of the Grand Jorasses. On the descent they were carried some way by some unstable snow, an incident alarming in any circumstances, but passed over with typical brevity in Whymper's diary.

This concluded nine days of continuous activity but on the 26th this remarkable man was again on the move and this day made

the first crossing of the Col Dolent. This pass, in the direction, Courmeyer to Chamonix, involves the descent of an exceptionally steep ice slope of over 1,000 feet. This, to-day, is still an ice expedition of a high order, and is almost always done cutting up the slope. It can be remembered too, that early ice axes were the most unwieldy objects and weighed pounds more than the modern tool.

Whymper left Courmeyer at 12.40 a.m. and arrived in Chamonix at 10.5 p.m., a total time of 21 hours, 25 minutes.

The next day, Whymper rested in Chamonix, "only" popping up to the Montanvert in the afternoon, which as many who missed the last train know, is no end of a slog of 3,000 feet or more through the woods.

An ascent of the Aiguille Verte, with a bivouac at the Couvercle stone, was made on June 28th and 29th, the party climbing for 18 hours on the second day.

Four days rest in Chamonix, punctuated by odd walks to the Montanvert and the Glacier de Bionassey, were followed on July 3rd by the first passage of another pass to Courmeyer, the Col de Telefre a day of 13 hours.

On July 4th, Whymper walked back to Aosta from where he traversed the Col de Fenetre to Chermontane.

The first ascent of the Ruinette (12,727 feet) was made on July 6th; an easier climb than was anticipated.

By July 8th, Whymper had travelled over the Portons Pass, (first ascent) and then the Col d'oren to Praraye and the Col de Valcourner to Val Tournanche.

These eighteen days completed over 100,000 feet of mountaineering, much of it in a high grade for the day and almost all of it breaking new ground. This unforgettable performance was followed by the tragic series of events, the doubts, arrangements and preparations which led to the first ascent of

the Matterhorn on July 13th and 14th and its disastrous sequel.

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"The line which separates the difficult from the dangerous is something very shadowy, but it is not an imaginary line. It is a true line, without breadth. It is often easy to pass, and very hard to see. It is sometimes passed unconsciously, and consciousness that it has been passed is felt too late. If the doubtful line is passed consciously, deliberately, one passes from doing that which is justifiable, to doing that which is unjustifiable."

Edward Whymper.

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Together on the ice-glazed wall,
Numbed by the slow snow breath,
Oft have we heard the instant pace
And locked intent upon the face
Of our rude comrade Death;
And our clear hearts have leaped to feel
Muscle and will braced tense as steel
To wrestle one more fall.

Arnold Lunn.

In this short span
Between my fingertips and the smooth edge,
And these tense feet cramped to a crystal ledge,
I hold the life of man.

Consciously I embrace,
Arched from the mountain rock on which I stand
To the firm limit of my lifted hand,
The front of time and space;

For what is there in all the world for me
But what I know and see?
And what remains of all I see and know
If I let go?

Arnold Lunn.

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