



CEUNANT

C E U N A N T
M O U N T A I N E E R I N G
C L U B
N E W S L E T T E R

JUNE, 1969

N O T E S

I have dispensed with writing an editorial for this much overdue edition of the newsletter, mainly because I have no club news that I can think of to be conveyed to the members in general terms.

Meets so far this year have had good attendances, and the job of producing an interesting and ambitious list of meets has been done with enthusiasm. The duel post of Meets Leader seems to be working well. The meeting to Skye was particularly successful.

D. A. IRONS

F O R T H C O M I N G M E E T S

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|--------------------|-------|----------|--------------|---------------------|
| J U L Y | 2nd. | Evening. | ROACHES. | Leader, D.GRIFFITH |
| J U L Y | 13th. | | AVON GORGE | Leader, R.HAY |
| A U G U S T | 17th. | | STANAGE EDGE | Leader, C.PAYNE |
| S E P T E M B E R, | 5-7th | | WASDALE | Leader, M.CUNLIFFE. |

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Cover Photograph -
Skylon, Carreg Wastad,
by Ken Wilson.

MEET TO ST.DAVID'S HEAD: 19th-21st June 1969

As this is an area that the Club has not visited before I have assembled a few facts concerning the area in the hope that they will persuade members to attend the meet.

The main climbing area is the north coast of St.David's Head itself which may be found on the Ordnance Survey One Inch to the Mile Sheets 151 and 138.

The cliffs are to be found within a mile of each other stretching from Craig Coetan (724282 -- Sheet 138) to Trwyn Llwyd (733287) to the north east. The climbing is on sea cliffs and all standards are represented, from Difficult to Extreme and varying in length from 100 feet to 400 feet. The majority of the climbs are in the V. Diff. to V.S. range.

Details of the climbing in this area are to be found in "New Climbs '67 and '68" and a guide book, edited by Colin Mortlock, is promised for this year. Of these cliffs Colin Mortlock has written " . . . this was followed up by several climbing trips which gave good climbing. This is especially true of the north facing cliffs, where the steepness of the rock makes the routes comparable to the more serious routes of North Wales. "

For those people who do not possess or do not wish to buy the "New Climbs" I am preparing a small pamphlet covering the area which will be available two weeks before the meet.

We will be camping near St.David's Head within walking distance of shops and staggering distances of pubs.

This will be the first of a series of meets to unusual places by the club and we hope that the response will cause a demand for more meets of this nature.

R. J. F. BENNETT

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RECENT DEVELOPMENT IN THE AVON GORGE

Year by year climbing in the Avon Gorge becomes ever more popular. Routes are continually changing with the tramp of many feet, and the more popular routes have become polished to an alarming degree. Ward-Drummonds routes mark a significant step forward in standard and have almost brought the cliff to maturity.

New routes have appeared thick and fast recently. The pink wall left of the Unknown Wall has yielded the Blik, possibly the hardest route here. Unknown Wall and Buttress have both been girdled at H.V.S., the former taking a particularly frightening line. The large right wall of Unknown Buttress has been climbed, a steep route called M.I.; another possible line here has seen two falls but no ascent as yet. Two more pegging routes have been forced up Roozleboom Wall - Hazel's Flat, A2 up the centre, bolted for the first thirty feet, and the indefinite crack just left of Roozleboom itself.

Sea Walls have received attention, especially at the right hand end where ivy has been stripped off to reveal several good routes. The blank wall between Puke and Morpheus has been bolted, Bisector, an exposed but relatively easy and safe climb. Jasper, H.V.S. takes the big groove right of S.O.S., and Jumping Carrots the slab right again also H.V.S. Unfortunately the bottom 30 ft. of Jasper have recently collapsed and it may be harder. The two grooves flanking the groove of Lasp Slip have been free climbed; the left hand is extreme, Ffoeg's Folly. Just left of Jasper is an easier route, Styx, H.S., starting up a short crack.

The little quarry between Sea Walls and Main Area has given a few routes, but this will never be a pleasant place.

The flood of new routes on Main Wall is drying up now for lack of lines, though a few obvious unclimbed ones remain. Two new extremes are The Lasp Gasp between Choker and the Corpse, and Bogeyman just right of Bon Bogies. Lich Gates now has a H.V.S. direct start, Goth, which takes the only break in the continuous overhang below the crux of the first pitch. The very steep wall between White Elephant and Pink Wall Direct has been climbed direct - a true eliminate, and very impressive! Suspension Bridge Buttress has given Rock and Two Veg., V.S., up the grassy walls of Hell Gates.

The quarries on the Somerset side of the river have seen recent activity, and there are two new routes so far; Fast and Loose H.V.S., and an unnamed H.V.S., both are on a 100 ft. wall of surprisingly firm rock, the whereabouts of which is being kept secret. There is a vast amount of potential here.

Mambo Jambo has been repeated, but it is inadvisable due to its position immediately above the road. Piledriver, formerly A2 now goes largely free at H.V.S. The overhanging A2 crack variation to pitch three of Giant Cave Buttress has been led free - a spectacular pitch.

cont..

The limestone of the Avon Gorge is friable in places, and consequently routes are easily altered by passing climbers and even heavy rain. Gronk on Sea Walls has suffered a major rockfall and is now good H.V.S. The peg mentioned at the foot of pitch two, Last Slip has gone together with the block supporting it, and the entry is now apparently harder. Maltravers has lost some blocks and ledges of the traverse (pitch two in W.D.'s guide), altering it considerably. A large block pulled off the White Elephant as a leader laybacked it, and this may now need extra aid. Two holds have gone from the top part of Clarion, and now the route is now V.S., Recently a leader broke both legs on this route. Further up the gorge a huge flake has gone from the first pitch of Suspension Bridge Arete, rendering it somewhat harder.

The 300 ft. impending wall just left of Unknown Gully, loose and with no apparent weaknesses, has not yet succumbed despite repeated attacks although Fred Bennett has reached a point twenty feet below the top using mixed free and artificial techniques. This vertical slag heap is truly the "Last Great Problem" of the Avon Gorge and must eventually provide a superb route ideal for the climbing masochist.

Interest in pegging has revived recently with the drying up of free routes. The old short classics are being surpassed by much longer mixed free and artificial routes, for example: Pink Link A2 & V.S. and Main Wall Eliminate A2 and H.V.S., There are undoubtedly more of these to come.

The aura of impossibility surrounding Ward-Drummond's hardest routes has rapidly diminished. Spinor especially has been cleaned up during several ascents, and is apparently well protected now. However, some of these routes are among the finest and hardest in the country; notably Last Slip and the Preter, which have repulsed some very strong parties.

Simultaneous with the growth of interest in the Gorge, accidents have become far too frequent - hardly a week passes without someone sustaining injuries. The end result of this, coupled with the careless attitude of a few climbers and the wear on the park fences on top, may be another attempt by the police to stop climbing this summer. It should be noted that the cliff is privately owned.

For all that, the Gorge remains a superb climbing ground. The delicate open style of climbing is unique, and most routes have the length and character to raise them above mere "outcropping". Bristol winters are mild enabling high standard climbing all year round. The place has a friendly atmosphere provided by the proximity of the road, the ships passing majestically up and down the muddy Avon, and the green park on top. Avon Gorge is one of the best limestone cliffs in the country and well worth a visit by any party.

MATT PEACOCK

6B AMIDST THE HOPFIELDS

Having been forced to live in a society that one well-known Sunday newspaper has been trying desperately hard to bring under control, and as I had been getting fed up with the vast number of demonstrations and all-night orgies that one feels obliged to attend; I decided once again to turn to the drunken revelries of the climbing scene. So, to start an interest in my college, I formed a climbing club (true!), got a 10% discount on all gear purchased at the Y.H.A. sales (Frank Davies please note), gained some new climbing friends and set off down to the "climbers mecca" Harrisons Rocks, that well known "killer wall" on the Kent-Sussex border.

Harrisons comprises of "nearly half a mile of boulders and compact buttresses nearly 30 ft high situated in a delightful part of the Kent countryside.

To somebody who has done most of his climbing on familiar igneous rocks, ones first reaction is one of "Christ, it makes Pontesford look like the bleedin' Eiger".

Quite true, but as I soon found out there are some very hard climbs at Harrisons. The grading is numerical; going up to 6B, which the author of the latest guide optimistically refers to as "the ultimate difficulty at the time of going to press." It must not be forgotten that the climbs are graded on technical difficulty only, which leads one to say: "Sod off. I aint leading that" The fact is that hardly any of the climbs graded over 4A are ever led, due to the fact that because of the friable nature of the rock, the climbs are liable to subsidence, which is no joke.

The usual system for climbing is to pass a sling and karabiner round a suitable tree at the top of the climb and arrange it so that the second man is at ground level. This gives better protection than you may think. The second usually locks the rope and then walks back to take in and walks forwards to lower his mate to the ground (the latter being the most usual).

Because of the nature of sandstone, most of the so-called easy climbs have been worn away so much that they are quite hard and usually not very interesting nor very enjoyable. Most people who don't feel too energetic simply find a short hard problem and commence to lay siege upon it until it is climbed. Thus, with breaks for food and fags one can manage a realistic three or four climbs a day, although some idiots do as many as twenty. Our argument is that we are lumbered with the place and as it has 180 routes, what's the point of doing them all in 9 days.

There is little doubt that sandstone climbing is very strenuous and after a day there you really feel that it has done you some good. This is all fair enough but there is still the much talked about "Harrisons attitude". Many people go there every weekend and rave about the place. Some of them have never climbed anywhere else except Harrisons and the other sandstone crags that litter this part of the country. Although it is not the majority some really do consider it the only place where "important" climbing is carried out. To them, North Wales is where the lads from the north go (i.e. north of potters bar). Obviously this attitude does not include anywhere near everybody, so to some Harrisons is just a training ground.

Whatever your feelings towards sandstone and sandstone climbers, I can guarantee that anyone who goes to Harrisons will have an entertaining day out.

PETER LANGLEY.

THE EAST PILLAR OF TROLLTIND

The route on this pillar is reputed to be the longest rock climb in Europe, over 6,000 ft. of climbing with an overall grade of VI. The first ascensionists were Ralph Hoibakk and Arne Randers Heene, two of Norway's most notable climbers and they made the ascent in the unbelievable time of 12 hours from a bivouac below the inverted 'V' quite an achievement. At the time this ascent was described as a solution to the last great problem in Romsdal - the year was 1958. How things change now ten years later this route is fast becoming a classic of the valley and other new routes are being made each year ranging from traditional classic ridges to the hardest wall climbing that modern technology and climbing technicians can achieve.

Regardless of the modern developments the East Pillar still has quite a reputation and until the beginning of the 1968 season, only five parties had managed to climb it, and all of these had bivouaced at least once and some four times; other parties had retreated and there had been at least one big rescue from the pillar when a British party were eventually taken off by a helicopter, a brilliant rescue undertaking.

During the season of '68 the pillar was climbed five times, two Norwegian, two British, and one Polish. The latter ascent was a particularly fine effort by two young Polish girls with two bivouacs. One of the Norwegian ascents was made by a party of five young climbers in the pouring rain with one bivouac, a very determined effort considering the size of the party. The other Norwegian party was Ralph Hoibakk and Arne Randers Heene who made another remarkable ascent to commemorate the tenth anniversary of their first ascent. They made this ascent without a bivouac, the only party to have done so, a considerable achievement when one considers that Arne Randers Heene celebrated his 68th birthday this year. The two British parties were Tony Howard and Bill Tweedale (Rimmon M.C.) with a Norwegian client, and an ascent made by myself with Dave Irons, both parties bivouaced once, the first taking 20 hours climbing time and the latter 14½ hours.

The guide book describes the route as being not particularly steep, but with difficult route finding through overlapping slabs and I feel this latter statement is the major cause of the many bivouacs which have been enjoyed or endured on the pillar.

The pillar itself is the left hand supporting buttress of the tremendous 5,000 ft. north face of the Trolltind, and is very broad and steepens at the top into a wall split by the huge summit gully. There are many grass ledges in the lower hay although they are not usually helpful at all in gaining height, but are a superb instalment for bivouac ledges. The route zig-zags across the pillar and then follows an easy natural line on the left hand side above, the obvious inverted 'V' feature, then by way of a grass ledge which leads across the pillar just below the prominent cave to the right hand side where the most difficult climbing begins. The route here follows some very hard grooves and exceedingly compact slabs and a variety of ways have been taken. Eventually a natural line of grooves and chimneys is followed to the base of the summit gully which is climbed to the summit ridge or alternatively the left hand ridge of the gully can be climbed but is reputed to be loose.

After a certain amount of deliberation Dave and I decided that we ought really to attempt the climb, after all it was a superb natural buttress, tremendously long and by all accounts provided some excellent climbing. Accordingly after returning from the West Wall of the Stighorn (2,000 ft. V inf) we decided that night to begin the pillar the next afternoon - allowing ourselves 1½ days for the ascent.

Thus at 11.a.m. the following morning we left Fiva Farm and walked along the riverside through the woods towards the climb. At first there is a path and the walking is pleasant with views of the turbulent river racing by, the waters leaping over one-another in their haste to reach the sea - and in contrast there was the occasional phlegmatic fisherman standing amidst this raging torrent - thinking - who knows what.

Eventually, the path became strewn with fallen trees - victims of spring avalanches - which proved a great hindrance to our progress. But this was not the worst for we had to leave this path (for what it was worth) and made towards the snow patch at the bottom of the route, fighting our way through dense trees and tangled undergrowth getting extremely hot and sweaty and frustrated. What a relief to break out of the trees and reach the snow which we plodded up and at the top had an awkward jump across the rimaya to the rock. The time was exactly 12 noon and we had 5,000 ft. of vertical height to gain the summit ridge. We were now on a vast expanse of extremely compact slabs which form the left hand side of the lower part of the pillar, and we began to solo up these and became very impressed by the faith and friction methods required to gain height making the exposure well felt. As we moved up we espied a new line which would take us to the first large grass ledge on the pillar (we hoped) and decided to try it. This turned out very successfully and we managed to solo all the way to this ledge up pitches of II, III and IV with great exposure at one point.

Above this ledge is the huge inverted 'V' which is a barrier of large overhangs, split on the left by two obvious weaknesses - the correct route being the well defined vertical crack which had repulsed all of the early would be first ascensionists. Our own route finding went a little haywire here and we found ourselves negotiating the second of the weaknesses and this proved to be very difficult indeed and provided us with two superb pitches before we regained the correct route. From here the line was obvious and generally rather easy following a long series of cracks, chimneys, ramps and ledges on the left hand side of the buttress until one was forced to follow another huge ledge right across to the right hand side of the buttress, passing beneath the enormous cave feature of the pillar.

Here the easy line peters out and the rock rears above in huge compact slabs and overhangs very impressive. When we reached this point we were uncertain where to strike upwards and eventually chose a magnificent corner crack, which was absolutely holdless but just sufficiently wide to hand jamb - a hard pitch and we were relieved to find a very old belay piton above it. Where now ?

We tried to the right and eventually came to another superb groove with a piton in the bottom. The groove was overcome after some very hard climbing and one sling for aid. Another short traverse right then straight up to a piton on the skyline - above this - perfect granite, magnificently compact being absolutely holdless to the right, though less steep, straight above fifteen feet away, was the lonely head of an american piton (a 1½" Bugaboo) - had it grown there? It looked unreachable, so much so that I decided to tension traverse to the right - very frightening - retreated - tried again - frightened again - retreated again. Now I looked questioningly at the piton - who placed you? I tried to climb to it a number of times but could not manage it. Alternatives were contemplated - depressing to think of retreat. The piton had to be reached - I pushed myself upwards again - no retreat this time I reached the piton, clipped in thankfully and then had to stand in a sling on it - my God it had to hold! It held - but now where to? Tension from the peg - crabwise friction moves a solitary foothold is reached - an overlap - side holds - a poor peg in a dead crack for aid in desperation and then a small ledge and belay. All over. Dave followed in a commendable manner and climbed on past to ledges as dusk descended. Awkward ledges which did not really provide a good bivouac but we ate and settled down into our "poly" bags as the wind force rose and the rain came down.

After a very blustery and wet night a grey dawn came and the rain stopped - breakfast was served and then we set off up the wet, cold rock making use of the occasional sling to ease stiffened muscles and joints. After the first difficult pitch the climbing became easier, breaking up into grooves and chimneys and we began to move quickly again - pitch followed pitch and then a particularly difficult, steep, loose crack brought us to the bivouac ledge at the bottom of the summit gully.

It was there that we were surprised to find the names of Ralph Hoibakk and Arne Tanders Heene in a bottle dated the previous day.

The first few pitches of the gully were mixed tot and pleasant III and IV climbing on solid rock. Then we were faced with a steep bulging chimney which we assumed was the A2 climbing and thus we got out all the necessary gear. In actual fact we managed to climb the chimney direct, as it was dry, without resorting to artificial means or pegs and enjoyed some really good grade VI climbing. One more difficult chimney followed this and then it was a matter of climbing the remaining chimneys and grooves as fast as our weary bodies would allow. The animal instinct had taken over and we were pressing upwards without rest with one eye on the rapidly deteriorating weather now moving once again into the mountains.

Eventually the gully opened out into easy ground a few hundred feet below the summit ridge and we thankfully plodded on weary legs up to this before resting, eating and stowing away the gear. It was 12 noon, exactly 24 hours after setting foot on the climb the previous day - 14½ hours actual climbing time - we were shattered and relieved to have got out of the summit gully before the onset of the coming storm.

Once more we plodded down the broken ridge, across the snow slopes, weary work, then picked our way down the steep boulder field, occasionally stumbling and cursing, and then across the valley and down the path to the Stigfoss. Once more to be stared at by the tourists, and to be photographed surreptitiously, were they ashamed of their actions or embarrassed by our condition or did they perhaps see the trace of a smirk on our tired faces and understand the look in our eyes ?

We were three hours early for the rendezvous with the transport and after failing to thumb a lift before the weather broke we sat sheltering under the canopy of one of the vacated "SOUVENIR" stalls.

We gazed with interest at that interesting species homo sapiens as they disgorged themselves from their autocars and strutted about in their plastic macs, then bought their "proof of arrival postcard" and then religiously followed each other to the viewing platform to gaze at the cascading river and down to the Trollstig road winding up in spectacular hairpins from the valley.

The punishments for our feelings of superiority were a failure to beg a lift in a homo sapiens conveyance and thus ensued a long walk down the Trollstig road and all its hairpins whilst the rain washed us down.

Eventually our transport arrived and we thankfully climbed in and were whisked away to hot tea, food, dry clothing, warmth, luxury and bed - such are the weaknesses of homo sapiens-thank God to be back in the herd !

PETER HOLDEN

LIKE ALL TRUE CLIMBING STORIES

Like all true climbing stories only the facts have been changed in order that a long established tradition remains unbroken

If you thought you glimpsed through gaps in the successive sqalls of lashing hail and rain driving in from a grey stormy sea, five tiny figures fighting against the wind, precariously struggling to dislodge an enormous boulder with a piece of railway track from the crest of a knife edged ridge overhanging the raging sea 700 ft. below, have no fear; what you smoked was not affecting your faculties on this occasion.

The piece of British Rail had to be hauled laboriously up the hundreds of feet of old quarry face, leading to the ridge at the top. From one jittery hand to another it was passed, over each successive difficulty on the decomposing face, until at last the intrepid trundlers with fanatical and crazed gleams in their eyes reached their beckoning objective. Earlier we had crash landed at the bottom of all this lot in Irons's German flying vehicle.

To the west, nothing could be seen from the ridge except the sea far below.

At one time an uninformed seal poked his stupid head above the waves; but not for long as a few boulders were playfully hurled in his direction. A large grey bird flew out from the cliffs below. With a brilliant display of deductive reasoning our ornithological expert, eliminating seagulls and pigeons, concluded it was a cormorant. It too escaped unscratched, much to the annoyance of the assembled sadists above. With a concerted effort applied to its underside, the boulder could be made to rock back and forth. We applied ourselves to the task with mounting excitement at the prospect of creating the biggest splash in the Irish Sea, since a certain little tablet was thrown overboard leaving the natives across the water to carry on going forth and multiplying (Its the end and not the means) chirped the voice from the south, counting his chicks before they have been hatched)

Minor feats of destructional engineering were performed round the base of the boulder. The path of descent was prepared by our demolisher hanging out over the sea, belayed by his expensive bootlaces. Courtesy of S. Bonatti. With due regard for the mechanics of the thing, the level was placed under the Boulder and its fulcrum point positioned so as to effect the maximum leverage. Gargantuan shoulders were applied to its bulging profile whilst the heaviest of us leaped up and down on the end of the lever which inconveniently projected out into space above the quarry floor below. And yet the bloody thing

would not tip over ! Further probings and prisings and what were not frantic efforts to remove some of the monster's supporting and lesser blocks were of no avail. All that it could be induced to do was to rock back and forth grotesquely on the tip of the ridge. With tears of grief in our eyes and blood streaming from our torn hands we moved back along the ridge, finding poor consolation in hurling off stones to left and right. The noises crashed and echoed out across the ruined and deserted hovels down by the beach. Industrial slaves weren't quite so well treated in those days. No leisure time, dreamy weekends rushing out and sitting in the nearest traffic jam for hours.

At one stage British Rail was jammed behind what seemed to be a detached boulder. A mighty heave the boulder remained perfectly still, and as the section of the ridge on which we were standing tilted over and out towards the sea, my whole life flashed before me in the form of fifty thousand barrels of Guinness. ..

Approaching through the mists of antiquity, there entered onto the scene an old dear with gentle smile on faded face bearing tea and crumpets. On the walls were equally faded photographs of her in her former glory. The hat was typical of the natives dungeons hereabouts, unchanged in scores of years, reflecting their static lives. Poor old dear; the only thing to have changed in an unchanging world was her appearance. We drank the tea and ate the muffins, slowly dripping

water onto the original hand knitted carpet, listening to the rain lash across the quaint corrugated roof whose colour scheme was a supple blending of flaking grey and rusty red. All the slates must have been for export. In a far corner was a small organ, untouched, unused dust covered. Land of our practically celibate fathers. Perhaps we would have another look at Phantom B when the weather was kinder - at least there is always the shelter of the tea shack.

Back at Tremadoc the weather was improving. In the car park we mingled with the rest of the climbing multitude, shivering in the cold wind wondering what to have a bash at this time. Someone even suggested climbing. Full-kitted gladiators climbed back and forth along the tarmac displaying a range of equipment almost as wide as their gullability as consumers. F.D's dream came true. A transistor squeaked the latest nursery rhymes to the ever adoring army of faithful.

After starting off on The Brothers, on completion of the first pitch we decided to join the rest of the population on Shadrach where the rock was not quite so evil and green. Hours later I managed to overcome my fixation complex with the Shadrach pinnacle to arrive at the top a shaking, sweating, steaming, trutching blob of heaving jelly - a quiverous return to Welsh Rock after months down in the smoke.

Later, a large verbose party on Oberon were further upset as five of us soloed past, clambering all over them in the process. Amidst a stream of unadulterated saxon we were informed that we were making things even more difficult for the poor spreadeagled creature clinging to the rocks who happened to have the misfortune of leading them up the climb.

At the top the evening was finishing fine, with the screamed obscenities of climbers in difficulty below drifting up to us in the still air.

Quote from that responsible mouthpiece of the Socialist movement, "The Sun" from an article about skiing in the Cairngorms. Describing the weather it said " skiers are at any moment liable to be by a kind of frozen scotch mist bursting down from the peaks above " (True)

So be warned: don't go to the Cairngorms.

JOE BRENNAN.

TRANSITION IN MIND

Fifteen years in concrete wilderland of phallic beasts of stone and sponge
lead in muddled procession of existence working the daylight life till dark end.
For all are bound in traps by dark-aged men in power of time ahead. Trample
small and wins veneer of happyland. Small pennies bets no little bread. And
why stand sound and bear all ? Why I say ?

Seven years greener berries than red I found upon a stone hedge of grey slab
leaves. Wire netting trees abound in circles on ridge and pond that fall down
into bigger mines of eyesight. Round knights discuss blood from hands of
sinking swords upon texture silver blue. Twin pyramids of days grown old.
But steel brings successors off to place of golden eagle, old man.
Hidden and idle remain for time short and good and ogle snips away. Wander
down strewn granules of glacier weather to torrents of winking eyes up open
dusk tween highs and back to traps, trampling and sound.

ROBIN KIRKWOOD.