

CEUNANT

MOUNTAINEERING

CLUB

zero.

NEWSLETTER

March 1974

Moan One This issue is long overdue, for which many people are responsible. I do not include myself among them. It should have been out last October. Considering the number of people who had promised to write an article, it appears that the word of the average

club member is about as empty as the Vaynol Arms on a Sunday night.

I am sure there is a lot to write about. For instance, the majority of the active element of the club went to the Alps this year. One assumes that they did something when they got there (although at least one party

having initially set out for Chamonix, finished up in Tyn Lon--- therein lies a tale in itself). The number of articles from all this? Absolute

What is it that prevents people from translating their experiences into writing? Perhaps it is the sight of the glint of ice in the sun or burning granite spires soaring into the heights that strikes them dumb. It is a strange business. What is the use of climbing as an activity if you cannot boast about your exploits afterwards, suitably embellished, to the widest possible audience? Take a leaf from Bonnington's books.

Apart from one or two of the same old names, the springs of inspiration seem to be drying up in this club. Or perhaps a lot of people are just plain frightened. Unless a few more make an effort, there will not be another newsletter.

Perhaps we should make it a condition for full membership that all prospective members must write at least twenty articles before they can be accepted.

For some months past, an all too common sight has been the stumbling careworn figure staggering up the stairs, his hair falling out with worry, spasms of trembling seizing his shattered frame as he lurches into the Prince of Wales pleading for articles and in desperation drowning his sorrows in the last of someone else's beer.

Moan Two

All the worst that could happen is coming true. The beaming

Mr. Rippoff, Minister for scorched earth, spreads his peculiar brand of environmental responsibility across the land. The man who
could never say no, except for one proposed scheme which just happened to

to be in his own constituency. Apart from this, I cannot think of one single major scheme which has been turned down in a National Park.

The Dinorwic pumped storage scheme goes ahead. The A66 trunk road, complete with stilts across the end of Bassentwaite Lake, goes ahead. The Shell oil pipe on the surface of the sea-bed off Anglesey goes ahead, despite promises during the planning stage that it would be buried. Get yourself a deep natural tan on your local oil slick. Roll around, have fun. Available evidence suggests that atmospheric pollution from the Holyhead smelter is four times higher than that promised in the original planning application. Local skin divers in the area also insist that there has been a marked deterioration in underwater visibility caused by pollution. Extra powers have just been granted by the Government to procure land in connection with North Sea oil. This means that the public enquiries about sites in the Highlands are a charade. They will get what are at the moment unspoiled sites. Crude economic arguments always win. If these organisations cannot play by the rules, why should they expect those who are opposed to their schemes to always play fairly? Perhaps the granting of official approval should be the signal to start resistance in earnest.

Moan Three I have just obtained (limited supplies only) a brand new Viking 150ft. 11mm rope, in perfect condition, not substandard in any way, for £10.90. through the trade. The price for the same article in your local friendly climbing shop? -- £19.60. As bulk buyers how much do they pay for them? --- Never mind, if you talk to them nicely you might get 5% off. No wonder they smile when they see you walk through their heavy plate glass doors.

OUTDOOR MEETS - Dave Irons

Cwm Cowarch was a successful meet in that it was well attended, the weather was dry, the camping good and cheap. A fine 400' V.S. called Doom was ascended by nearly everyone. Sunday saw some harder routes ascended; not always as ethically as the guide would have them climbed.

Dow Crag I was unable to attend myself, having to work on the Saturday. Some members did attend however and thought it a good place for club meets. Unfortunately it was rather a wet weekend I am told although some easier climbs on Dow were ascended.

<u>Wasdale</u> Disappointing attendance. Joe Brennan, John Pettet, Jon de Montjoye, Elaine Hindle and myself. Joe and John made a long weekend of it going up on Thursday evening and on the Friday did the Mosedale Horseshoe (Pillar Fell etc.). Saturday was grey and

extremely windy. The party walked up to ogle at Scafell Crag and were duly impressed. All the cliffs were, however, very wet and it was too cold to climb. On Mikledore the weather became very wild and wind and rain swept us over Scafell Pike and deposited numbed, wet bodies at Sty Head. We soon warmed up running down the flanks on Great Gable back to the valley. Saturday night at the campsite was a disturbed one. Mighty winds threatened to demolish tents. The army, scouts and various civilian fell walkers spent all night annoying campers trying to sleep organising a 10 peaks - (the ten highest in Lakeland) fell race.

Sunday was a fine day. Jon, Elaine and I climbed five routes on Wallow-barrow Crag in nearby Duddon valley. Joe and John went walking.

FORTHCOMING MEETS - Scotland this winter :

If there is sufficient interest additional long (3 days) weekends in Glencoe can be arranged for snow and ice climbing.

March 29 - 31st. Grange, Borrowdale
May 3 - 5th. Loughrigg, Langdale

June 7 - 9th Cwm Cowarch

June 28 - 30th Wasdale

GOODIES OR BADDIES - Jon de Montjoye

When it comes to gear there would appear to be two distinctly separate groups of climbers. Firstly those with an excess of gear, who adorn themselves with it, strutting round the foot of crags, pointing and talking loudly; the "I'm a climber" type who wears a sling plus karabiner round his neck in the pub as if it were an olympic medal, a status symbol. Secondly the other group who appear on the crag equipped with the bare essentials, just a few tatty slings (the grubbier the better, if necessary rubbed in the dirt to make them look old) who have either done the route before and know where every runner goes or just like the appearance of long unprotected expanses of ropes 'cos it looks good from the ground, and so afraid of people thinking they found the crux move hard.

The two groups seem to despise each other. They both regard the other as incompetents and unsafe, one for needing too much gear, the other for not daring to use enough.

There is perhaps a third - the genuine climber who climbs for pleasure, but being usually quite inconspicuous does not really rate in the flying circus.

Whilst not wishing to pick sides or agree or disagree with either of the first two groups, a number of events recently have led me to believe that there are quite a few people on the crags who shouldn't be there, ego

trippers who not only keep the Mountain Rescue busy but endanger themselves, and everybody else.

Whilst doing Arctic Circle at Tremadoc at Whitsun I noticed an abnormal amount of 'tat' hanging from the Pincushion overhang after a "group 1" climber had abseiled off when his second had announced that their train left in half an hour. An abseil from the top of the crag rewarded me with brand new crab and four slings and nuts. More recently upon arrival at the top of the West wing of the Mot I found a horde of sparkling new unused goodies. Having shared them out with Elaine and Joe we raced off down Jammed Boulder Gully as fast as possible.

It strikes me that people who leave valuable gear around, usually new gear, are not just careless but in fact not used to carrying it or using it. If it looks good and rattles nicely - wear it.

But who are we to criticise? Crabs have got ten legs and you can eat nuts. Can't you?

HOW DO YOU DRU ? - Bob Milward

Three days in Chamonix and now't down saw me flogging up some track-less hillside with all the enthusiasm of a wet lettuce. The clouds were coming in as they had done every afternoon so far. Grumbling to myself that it was a big route for the first of the season, and that really the weather was not right, I was driver on by Phil's grim determination not to give me any excuse for retreat. After a brief shower and an exhausting struggle with an immense vertical patch of man-eating cabbages, we started the mindless grind of scree which eventually led us to our bivouac site below the N.F. Dru, predictably several hours after the guidebook suggested. From information gleaned in the National, we unearthed a five star bivouac cave, and settled down for the night.

A clear sunset led me to consider the possibility of actually climbing, so the joke book was duly consulted. To Phil's amazement it revealed that we had just climbed some 3500ft. up to nearly 9000ft., twice his previous highest point; and to my horror it revealed that the face stretched out for 3000ft. above; not 2000ft. as I had imagined.

Half a knockout drop and a vile stew drove us to fitful sleep, until an annoying clear sky forced us into the endless routine of porridge, brew and getting ready.

Away at 5.30a.m. we arrived at the Bergschrund at 6.00a.m. and started off with a big mixed pitch of steep rock, rubbish and bullet hard ice.

lengths to some easy ledges, and across a slope of old ice by some broad axe slashes where Phil joined me and reversed the one way flow of gear by doing some leading. About 600ft. above, a British pair fought their way on, while the same distance below an Irish pair followed. Pitches of 4 came thick and fast including a few of the usual joke pitches - 30ft. of chimney (4), which extracted pints of sweat and a few inches of skin from knees and elbows, and left us

spiritually uplifted to the extent that is only experienced when one reaches a stance, grovelling and insensible, with a heartbeat like a

Next came a pitch of so called 5 which would not have been out of place

Moving together with the odd runner, we continued for about 5 rope

on Flying Buttress, hotly pursued by a full ropelength of iced up grade 4, which actually went at about 9 sup. After some easier ground we found ourselves skirting the great icy thumbprint called the Niche.

Honda 50.

A little after noon we took our first break of the day on a ledge at the top of a huge corner, looking down the bottom half of the West face. 1,500ft. without a bounce. We sat gasping whilst the afternoon mist stealthily crept upon us like an univited guest at a party. The mist flowed in, overwhelming us in a sea of absolute and total dejection. Stifling, bone-crushing apathy washed over us, and only some dim memory of habitual stubbornness eventually produced a move: but with movement the spell was broken.

We pressed on, now finding the route, now losing it, always peering forward into the greyness for an obvious line. In answer to a prayer, a crack appeared well over 100ft. long, bristling

with pegs and leading straight up, worth three or four more roundabout pitches. In the style of the true aplinist I got my head down and clubbed it to death, fists flailing and boots kicking into the ever steepening cracks.

It was a complex engineering problem : 1) The pitch became steeper and more strenuous in proportion to the height gained (it even overhung near the top)

2) The climber becomes more tired in proportion to time spent since the last belay.

3) The climber climbs faster near protection

4) Protection proportionately increases time taken.

1) The number of crabs available

The constant factors are :

2) The fitness of the climber

- 3) The weight of the rucksack
- 4) The length of the pitch

There are three possible outcomes:

- 1) Success
- 2) A fall
- 3) An intermediate state where time taken exceeds stamina and leaves the climber dangling insensible from some point half-way up, presumably condemned to rot.

Ten feet from the belay where the cracks began to overhang, my situation became critical. Strength and number of crabs were rapidly approaching zero, difficulty was at its peak and the equation was only solved by rapid acceleration ignoring safe stress limits, and running severe risk of burning up.

I eventually made it to the overhung belay foothold with no crabs, and even less strength. Tied direct to two wilting prehistoric pegs, I brought Phil up. In the best tradition of seconds the world over, he arrived at the stance in that state of near collapse which a leader finds most gratifying. With one foothold and a hanging belay our efforts to change the belay over would have done credit to a double-jointed trapeze artist.

The next pitch was a very thin groove with pegs at about 8ft. centres, and we climbed it like a ballet - "Beauty and the Beast." The female lead, I balanced up for a couple of moves and pounced on the next peg and then repeated the step again and again. The beast (guess who) followed in a snarling frenzy of power swarming from sling to sling. "That was the Fissure Allain," quoth I :- no answer. "But don't you realise those two pitches of 6 saved us three 5's at least." "Big deal," mumbled a rather shattered beast.

Nothing harder than 4 now I thought, and flung myself forward, at last beginning to feel that our pace had quickened again, but about three pitches on I ran into the biggest time-waster of the whole climb. The pitch had a flying start when everything I was holding onto fell off and I with it. There was some rather furious grabbing and I didn't actually go anywhere, but it was exciting while it lasted. I then climbed about 250ft. running out some 100ft. of rope. It involved some hair raising maneouvres in several directions, including part of the West face and an abseil. It very nearly included spearing Phil with a long thin loose flake. I never told him how close he came.

When I was finally belayed, the light was fading and Phil resembled

an icicle, having stood at his belay silent for over an hour. All went well until he stood facing me about 30ft. away, gazing across a steep traverse at the single tatty runner between us. As a statement of pure fact, he informed me that he could not feel his hands, and would fall off about half way to the runner. I said nothing - there was nothing to say. In the event he managed to stay on, and we set off again into the gloom.

Only two rope lengths on, we ground to a halt for the night, stopping in the middle of nowhere. A projecting rock formed a table and we cut ourselves seats in the snow.

The business of tying on, dressing up, cutting a stance and settling down for the night is very lengthy, and the longer one can spin it out the less one has to sit and shiver. After several minutes Phil said, "You - er - You have done this sort of thing before?"

"Yees - of course", I replied, exuding confidence, "Once, and I got frostbite".

By the time we had settled and brewed, the mist which had enclosed us since midday had cleared and revealed a sky promising fine weather, so we took our knockout drops without any qualms. At least, they accounted for half the night. In the moonlight, distance becomes very difficult to judge, and so as dawn came up and all vestage of drugs and sleep melted away, I gradually became aware that the snow arm-chair I had cut in the dark had one side missing. In fact, under my icy elbow lay 2,500 feet of bumbs and grinds to a permanent icy bivouac.

cold water, having run out of paraffin. Seven delightful runouts up dazzling Persil snow and granite, gold in the sunlight, led us, with just the right amount of difficulty to the summit, where we basked in the sun on the south side, revelling in its warmth. We stripped off the remains of our north side clothes and lay with our feet up, guzzling food and relaxing, wearing imbecillic grins that lasted long after the cameras were put away.

However, a brilliant day dawned, and we set off with a few mouthfuls of

It was now afternoon, and we set about the descent. The instructions, loosely translated, read, "bomb down the ridge to the Flammes de Pierre ridge below". So we bombed over the edge, and found ourselves on a vertical wall sweeping down to a solid fog far below. Fate smiled, and before we had wasted too much time, the voices of a party climbing the route led us to slings by the dozen, and an endless series of dizzy abseils.

About 1,000 feet later, we arrived at the ridge suffering acutely from "Campanologists's Cramp" (bellringers' biceps). We ignored the guide-book in favour of descending straight down an easy angled couloir below,

as there seemed to be plenty of abseil slings in place. This led to a depressing series of abseils through water falls, over loose rock, and through slushy snow. It was then that one of the major grawbacks of the Whillans Harness revealed itself. When using a wet rope, the descender or crab, creams off all the water, and every ropelength provides an intimate and icy showerbath. Time was getting on and the angle eased, so we moved together in a

sort of controlled fall. It must have been controlled, because one of the larger avalanches down the couloir (two tons?) did succeed in passing us.

When we hit the guidebook route again, I started to suggest the possibility of a bivouac as it was getting late. The effect on Phil was devastating! Phil turned round and bellowed "NO" I am definitely NOT spending another night on this mountain. "NEVER AT ANY PRICE",

and with that he tore off at terrifying speed, dragging me rather bewildered, in his wake. I made a mental note to try this ploy at

Tremadoc. With all the determination of a Japanese Lemming he uttered a few pointed grunts at the guidebook and dragged me over the first and steepest cliff he could find, cursing my slowness and reluctance to leave the palatial bivouac ledges. This put us a clear half mile off route, but miraculously a used trail of abseil points appeared down

the last vertical step to the glacier.

A little later, in total darkness, I led and reversed a pitch of about 4 sup to retrieve an abseil rope, and rejoined Phil to find that he had conceded defeat. Overjoyed at the prospect of any sort of rest I gleefully arranged my 18" ledge for the night ahead. No water, no primus and no snow, but I was happy. The route and survival were in the bag. Way below any lightning danger, we only had a small glacier to cross to safety.

Phil sat on his 12" ledge and stared morosely at the hut, level with us and only a quarter of a mile away. "I'll fix that "B" Kendell" thought and gave him two knockout drops on an empty stomach. Having taken none myself, I immediately slept for twenty minutes and spent the rest of the night watching the world go round, while Phil lolled grotesquely against his belay like a badly stuffed Guy Fawkes dummy.

By dawn I was shaking with cold, not just shivering, but bodily shaking, quite out of control. For several hours Phil had not moved, and with the light I shouted to get up, and received a twitch in reply. Letting him sleep on I got up and packed. I became a little alarmed when after thirty minutes nudging I only got another twitch in reply, and very alarmed, when after a further ten minutes pummelling, all I got was a grunt. Eventually an eye opened and the beast was aroused.

From our bivouac peg a 130 feet free abseil (about our 21st) landed us on the crisp glacier, and two hours later saw us solemnly shaking hands on a worn tourist path.

For me the whole thing ended on the Mer de Grace. The Dru was behind us, aloof and unchanged by our efforts. Then, after three days of sweat and squalour, I beheld the most beautiful young woman I have ever seen. I stared in dumb worship as she walked by. Beauty and the beast. The mountain like the woman, has faded with distance and time, and I am left straining my mind to recall the beauty that has passed.

'THE SEARCH FOR THE RIDGE' - G. C. Orme

or the continued saga of the Ceunant club's attempts to conquer the North Ridge of Skye.

The team: comprising of four ruthless men. One ice expert; one rock expert (brilliant); one all round mountaineer, and a tea brewer.

These were the men who were determined to make an all or nothing

attempt on this sensational scramble.

Bivouac! This word echoed around the campsite as ponful after ponful

of food was consumed to combat the effects of a night out on the mountain.

The dice was cast. Rucksacks were overflowing. The aspirants were ready.

Four climbers left the security of their tents and wandered into the hills,

stop them now.

A good bivouac site was a must for an assault on the ridge, but unfortunately a dark cloud passed overhead, and they all scrambled into their pits too soon. (They had 8' pits because it was going to be a long night).

each equipped with a polythene sheet and two toilet rolls. Nothing could

The rest of the events were a 'comedown', although it must be put on record that a brew was made on Scurr-a-Te (new peak), covered in verglas, over a drop of 3000ft.

Meanwhile at base R. Ellis was organising the rendezvousat Scurr-Dubh-Wytharest, and had to be physically held back from taking essential supplies.

Failure was, the team said, inevitable due to 200mph winds, ice, snow, and damp rocks. One said "It was sheer hell up there". Another was heard to say "I'm not climbing with him again".

It was time for everybody to begin cuillin off !!!

THE LYKE WAKE - Dave Irons

On the moor top ahead of us torch-lights flashed about in the predawn darkness, and we could hear voices shouting directions to other voices; lights and voices. We headed through the bracken in their direction looking for the trig point on Scarth Wood Moor, the starting point of the Lyke Wake Walk. When we reached it, shortly before 5a.m., they had gone, and at 5a.m. exactly, we set off in pursuit on our forty-mile way across North Yorkshire to Ravenscar on the East Coast.

We, John Rooker, John Bartlom and myself, had the previous evening drove two cars round to Ravenscar and left one there, returning in the other car -- all we had to do now was to bogtrot across the 40 miles of the heather moors of North Yorkshire.

It was a murky Sunday morning and by the time we reached the road in Scarth Nick dawn was creeping up drearily. A sign with the coffins and candles motifs indicated that we had covered the first mile. crossed the road and headed along a track through forestry, pausing a mile ahead to check the map. A large party came past, moving with the speed and confidence of people who know where they are going, so we stowed the map and followed them. We headed across fields, across Hollins Brook and out onto the road again, then up into the mists on the first moor. The pace seemed fast for so early on such a long walk, but the walking was easy. The moor top along Carlton Bank had been levelled for a gliding club. We checked our position at the trig point then raced downhill to another road where we came up with a large sponsored party and their support parties. We continued across marshy ground and as suggested in the guide-book when the tops are misty, took the miners track along the northern flanks of Cringle and Cold Moors .. although the route goes over the top. The walking was interesting and after some miles we climbed up into the murk, and had a second breakfast under outcrops of gritty sandstone known as the Wainstones. We had been going for about 2½ hours, but looking at the map we seemed to have covered but a fraction of the route. It was too chilly to stay long so we clambered up through the rocks and over the top of Hasty Bank then down to the lane below. Ahead of us lay a climb up to Botten Head, the highest point on the walk, on the largest of the moors, Urra Moor.

The mist lifted and about us was endless purple heather. John Bart and I waited at the trig point for John Rooker to catch us up. We noted the Face and Hand stones pictured in the guide, then paced downhill to the old Rosedale Ironstone Railway, long since torn up and providing 3 miles of soft cinders winding across the mcors between Westerdale and Dovedale.

so we concluded that stops, if necessary, should be short to avoid stiffness. We headed on above the head of Westerdale and followed intermittent tracks between South Flat Howe and Flat Howe. Another ½ mile saw us at old Margery, an ancient standing stone on the Hutton-le-Hale to Castleton road. The sponsored party were close behind us, and at the road were met by their support parties. I was rather envious to see cups of hot tea

Our legs, calfs in particular, were beginning to become painful. At 10am we stopped, but on rising again, felt stiffness creeping into our legs.

being handed out to them, but maybe if we had been supported on our crossing, the temptation to give up may have been stronger. Bart and I walked up the road towards Ralph's Cross and waited there for John to catch up.

To cut out road walking, we then took a straight path from a small white cross known as Fat Betty and followed boundary stones, crossing the road

cross known as Fat Betty and followed boundary stones, crossing the road twice, cutting the wide, sweeping bends for two miles, until we could head up past Loose Howe (Howe meaning a burial mound), and over a fine stretch of moor for 3 miles to Shunner Howe with its circular mound and central cairn. Bart and I forged ahead. John sensibly adopted to walk at his own natural pace and not keep up with our slightly faster natural pace for this type of terrain. Down from Shunner Howe and over the moorland road just up from Hamer we stopped for a ½ hour lunch. Getting up and starting after only ½ hour was hard. Our legs had

stiffened up and the first few hundred yards onto Wheeldale Moor were a struggle. We had now done 23 miles and had 17 left to go. Unfortunately for Bart he was having trouble with his knees, and from here onwards it was a struggle to keep going, but he kept moving, fearing that if he did stop he would not be able to start again.

It was a long way over Wheeldale Moor and the only feature was a standing stone seemingly daubed with blue paint, and called Blue Man. Further on I found it a relief to run down the steep incline to Wheeldale Beck just

It was a long way over Wheeldale Moor and the only feature was a standing stone seemingly daubed with blue paint, and called Blue Man. Further on I found it a relief to run down the steep incline to Wheeldale Beck just to break the pace. I was thirsty, but the beck was wide and slow running, with fine stepping stones across it, rather like those in Dovedale.

There was a short steep ascent, then more moorland to a large cairn on top of Simon Howe. From here we had our first clear view of Flyingsdale with its enormous duckegg-blue domes. An impressive sight, although an amazing

monstrosity in an otherwise wilderness of purple heather. Another mile

saw us at the main road. There were a lot of people there and an ice-cream van which was a very welcome sight. A brief halt was called for while large soft ice cream cornets were devoured.

From Flyingsdale there remained only 8 or 9 miles left. It seemed, thinking about it, a trivial distance, merely one fifth of what we had already walked.

My right ankle suddenly started to swell, and the last 8 miles were limped.

but it didn't seem to matter. Bart had limped for over 10 miles already, and John wasn't in sight. He had elected to use the large Sponsored party as his pacers. I was lucky that it was only at this point I started to have trouble. The track continued to be good and we didn't stop going over Lilla Howe with its fine 7th century cross, then on and on to the Whitby .. Scarborough Road. Only Stony Mare Moor was left to be crossed and we headed straight for the beacon that overlooked the coast. We reached the trig point in just over 13 hours. A further 20 minutes and we were signing in the book kept especially for this purpose in the cafe in Ravenscar. Bart and I managed 13½ hours. John arrived an hour and numerous cups of tea later. In that hour our legs had locked up solid. But we weren't the only ones. Ravenscar seemed to be full of cripples. Most seemed happy however, having completed the course. I for one certainly was. Next morning back in camp in Potts Hill we collected our black-edged cards of condolence from chief dirger Bill Cowley.

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GHANA - P. Holden

I went out to Ghana in tropical West Africa with no expectation of climbing there at all, never dreaming that the opportunity would arise and further, I think that I had even hoped for a break from the routine of the crags.

My first surprise was to find, whilst driving across the Accra plains, a group of rather fine hills rising to about 700ft. above the absolutely flat grasslands. Protruding from these hills were granite outcrops up to 200ft. high. Interesting I thought, but reminded myself that this was tropical Africa and not England, and we drove on by.

Sometime later in Accra we met Steph Swain who taught at the same school as Angela and it transpired that her husband was a climber and had equipment with him and knew of many crags. Mike and Steph came round to dinner and entertained us with accounts of visits to crags in the forests and natives pouring libations for the appeasement of spirits. My tropical lethargy began to give way to a desire to explore some of these places. Mike had photographs of a veritable giant Tremadoc, rearing for 600ft. above the trees and boasting absolute verticality, enormous roofs, and compact granite all the way.

The following Sunday found us off to the nearest crag, less than one hour's drive away, with a mile of walking through the forest, accompanied by an inquisitive group of friendly natives who insisted on carrying all the gear. This crag was a huge sheet of granite high at about the angle of the Idwal Slabs or less. The natives cut a

path through to the foot of the crag for us, and constantly enquired as to what we were looking for .. impossible for me to answer. The climbing was generally rather easy if the angle allowed, but as soon as the rock steepened, great difficulty was encountered. We enjoyed a general roam around, but the highlight of the afternoon was when a Ghanaian wandered casually up the smooth slabs barefoot to look see and then from about 40ft. up slipped, turned and ran and somersaulted with a great cry into the bush beneath. Horrified I went to look for him, but discovered him happily slashing his way out with his cutlass, grinning from ear to ear.

For our next foray we decided to explore a crag on the Shai Hills on the Accra plains, choosing one at random from the many. The one we visited turned out to be about 200ft. high and very steep, but it had been quarried in part and most of the bottom was undercut for the first 20ft. which prevented us starting with our limited equipment. Eventually we chose a line at the left hand end and I climbed an excellent 100ft. pitch of V.S., with three points of aid. This sort of steep strenuous climbing in the tropics is really hard work as one is instantly dehydrated and rather like a car must feel when it is about to boil over. Mike found this all rather too demanding and had to leave the gear in place, and I was glad to retreat from my ledge as the sun was baking me alive and I needed water. The day was finished by an epic retrieval of gear thrown into a tree which was encrusted with barbs and I was temporarily blinded, whilst climbing the tree, from an insect dropping into my eye. Then a storm broke and we retreated in a sorry state to the comfort of home.

My next visit to the Shai Hills was on my own when I went with the intention of finding a more reasonable crag for us to develop. decided to view the quarry from where they had gained the stone for the construction of the new Tena harbour. Most of this quarry was very broken and shattered, but there was one wall 300ft. sheer and gently overhanging with a tremendous line for pegging up a thin crack and another line on the right hand side with a number of roofs --- all too much for our meagre resources. Behind the quarry on top of the hill I discovered an excellent crag up to 200ft. high, with many natural lines, mostly steep bold cracks. I wandered along the bottom and espied a particularly fine line up a groove at the highest point. The line finished under a huge capstone which looked as if it could be easily rounded on the right hand side. My only equipment was an oversize pair of rubber boots, but I decided to try the line. Inevitably, once tackled, the dreaded angle adjuster came into play, and I found myself jamming over an overhang into a thin groove at about 90ft. and the adrenalin began to flow. Having overcome this difficulty, I discovered myself under a roof and the slab had become a vertical wall with no possibility of free climbing

out. To reverse was unthinkable and I began to contemplate the situation. The right wall was hopeless - the left wall, all knobbly, offered hope and I balanced across to an arete and thankfully saw a tree and an easy groove 20ft. away. This 20ft. was very thin and took a number of attempts before I was able to reach the tree and swing into the groove and follow this to a huge cave under the capstone. Here I found myself at the site of a fortified lookout which had been used by native raiders who used to swoop down onto the traders moving over the plains.

I returned with Mike at a later date and completed the climb, solving the roof with three wooden wedges -- a fine varied climb. The next challenge was an 120ft. overhanging corner, with a large ledge at 20ft. which was gained with two pegs for aid. From the ledge, the corner went free with one aid move until I found myself handjamming under a roof at the top, fully committed and saved by my single remaining wedge which I was able to smash in next to my hand and then quickly sit in a sling from it, praying it would hold. One more aid move on a jammed nut solved the corner. Mike decided to follow and I had to prussik to take the gear out.

These sort of antics may sound very normal to an English cragsman, but the execution of them was rather demanding because of the temperature (say 85 degrees F) but more particularly the high relative humidity.

Not only did we go rock-climbing, but I often used to go walking over these Shai Hills which were, in fact, a game reserve. My first problem with the walking was to overcome the few snakes which everyone assured me abounded, but in all my visits I never actually saw even a small snake, though the game warden was able to confirm the existence of brutes 15-20ft. long, with bodies as thick as your thigh. The most unnerving animal for the lone walker is the baboon, the males standing 3-4ft high and looking quite ferocious, with two large fangs protruding from the mouth. Even worse than their looks was their deep throated growl and dog like bark with which they used to call one another. My first encounter with them was when I heard them dropping out of trees 50 yards from me .. then they were hidden in the grass and undergrowth and my imagination ran riot and my blood curdled as they warned others of my presence with their growl and bark.

They seem to live in family groups and that day I saw 50 - 100 baboons which I was never lucky enough to see in so many numbers again. The only other animals which I saw during my visits were the antelope, Lihe kob (?), the smaller aviker and a few monkeys.

Another climbing escapade was when we travelled north from Accra for

the weekend and stayed at a simple government rest-house 1500ft. up in the hills and here we enjoyed the drop in relative humidity and the temperature drop at night (down to 75 degrees F.) The objective was a rather unique tower of rock atop one of the hills which, when we viewed it end-on from the road five miles away, looked rather like a mushroom, being wider at the top than the bottom. Not knowing how to reach it, we parked the car in the forest three or four miles away, and then we set off with our native cutlasses and began to enact the roles of the infamous "mad dogs and Englishmen" as we stumbled through the forest. After half an hour we surprised a native Ghanaian woman tending her farm in the forest. We attempted to explain that we wished to reach a village called Boruku, but she spoke no English. Nevertheless, she understood the obvious fact that we were lost and with endearing unselfishness she left her work and guided us to the nearest village where we again gesticulated to another gnarled old lady. This native woman was wearing the latest government directive in the form of a 'T' shirt emblazened with the words "FEED THYSELF" right across the breasts .. two large leathery droops hanging empty on her bony chest .. suckled

break off up the hillside, staggering under our loads and sweating profusely. In the forest we met a native 'hunter' preparing his meal of roast 'grasscutter' a local variety of large rabbit. Exhausted, we gained the ridge 500ft. above and contemplated our objective ..a 200ft. isolated tower of hard sandstone, 800ft. in girth, complete with encircling bands of overhangs. The nearside end was split by a chimney/ crack which cleft the roofs 150ft. up. We were unable to assess the difficulty by observation, so we embarked upon the challenge and were amazed to discover difficulties of only v.diff. but with A2 situations.. the exposure through the roof being tremendous.

Again she was good enough to show us the right path to our village and soon we glimpsed the rock tower through the trees and we were able to

dry by another generation.

The summit showed no signs of earlier ascents, and from this vantage point we contemplated the superb panoramic views over forested hills with villages in the clearings. Close by, to the North lay the Afram arm of the Volta lake .. perhaps the largest man made lake in the world-a silver sheen on the land - dotted with thousands of trees up to their knees in water - ahead the northern shore defined the southern limit of the 'Guinea Savenna bush' - stunted trees and bushes diminishing to the North until the grasslands predominate.

As we sat and contemplated the view and gazed into the northern haze, Mike told me about those plains virtually uninhabited by man - dry and unproductive for hundreds of square miles, and in there somewhere, "a recent aerial survey had shown hills standing 1500ft. up from the plain" - we planned to make a trip there if I returned for further tours -

but that was not to be so.

We had to descend by reversing airily through the overhangs and then with a one hundred foot plus abseil to the ground; a successful venture and we gulped our way through a gallon of water and staggered back to the car, Mike clutching his plant case containing a specimen of a plant which quite possibly had not yet been recorded. A day of firsts and thirsts and yet more undergrowth bashing before we finally reached the car.

The Ghana Tremadoc as yet remains unvisited by human hands, perhaps it will be so for ever more - the baboons play the game rather better anyhow.

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MALAM IS A SWINGING PLACE

by Garth Fenton

The outdoor meets seem to be getting like ten little niggerboys; now there were six; but then Malam is not the place for the true mountaineer. No lofty peaks to gaze upon, no real spirit of the hills, but in the true club outdoor meet spirit, Dave, Jon, Elaine, Lew, Roz and I set forth to do battle with Malam Cove.

After a number of wrong turnings, we arrived to find Jon and Dave established on Centre Direct. We sat at the foot of Central Wall, having carefully noted a large tree way up at the top of the first pitch.

Now to the first problem ... the initial bolts were missing, and we (being purists) didn't have any. It was decided that if Lew stood on me, he could place a peg under a flake, but on the third blow the now detached flake crashed to the ground narrowly missing my head. However, with due dilligence, cunning, superb technical innovation, and a great deal of luck, Lew hammered small pegs into even smaller bolt holes, tied them off, and at last reached the first bolt. We were now on the route.

Lew moved in the direction of up, to the start of the roof. More crabs and a sweetie were passed up to him, whereupon he moved out under the roof without further excuses. More crabs, another sweetie and more upward motion followed until he announced that he was up.

So now it was my turn. After dropping the first peg and watching the next bend under my weight, the first real point of aid was reached, but now I came to the disturbing state of bolts and hangers. Time passed and I reached the start of the roof. The first bolt was missing and the next was a long way away. It looked awkward, I wished I hadn't

come, the space below my dangling feet was becoming noticeable, and I was launched onto the "swinging free" bit. Sitting in the bottom rungs, slowly spinning round, hysteria was not far away. The "helpful" advice from the nice solid ground did not help, but something must have happened because I had moved up to the next bolt, and the next. However, twilight was upon us, and harking back to my previous artificial experience in the Dolomites which ended in benightment, a little haste was called for.

With much cursing, swearing, and coloured advice to the inventor of tape etriers, I at last reached Lew. It was now almost dark.

The next pitch was decided for us. It was a long traverse to the left on a path onto easy ground. Sounding like two Swiss cows, we jangled and tumbled our way down to the others, and hence to the pub, to sit down on a seat that doesn't move about, until perhaps the next time, when we might climb two pitches, and finish in the dark.

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A NIGHT ON THE BARE MOUNTAIN

Perhaps I had been out here too long, concentrating on climbing too much. Certainly on the path up to the hut I seemed to be developing strange obsessions.

As was usual for hut walks, the afternoon sun was very strong, its searing rays blasting out of a clear sky like laser beams. Our sacks were heavy with a lot of hardware. Ice seems to require such a lot of steel these days. The flowers were in full bloom, their scent being drawn out by the heat of the day.

Being such a sunny afternoon, lots of people were out walking through the upper pastures; family groups, incredibly wizened old folks, and girls of all nationalities ... French, Swiss, American, German, even some Nigerians.

The first disturbing signs were soon to appear. Women's Lib seems strong in Switzerland this year, with an accompanying tonnage of unleashed mammery. All hell bent for the Dix hut it seems. In shorts, Thighs quivering from the uphill effort.

As you know, walking uphill is a strenuous activity. Large intakes of oxygen are required, so that the new found freedom was shown to greatest effect, prescribing slow, lazy undulations beneath flimsy diaphanous material. Bloodstream taken over by hormones.

What a peculiar game this is. Here we rush to the hut to get to bed by 8.00p.m. to be up for 12.30a.m. and out into sub-zero temperatures with the ice cracking underfoot and the mountains a black emptiness against

the sky, brooding and unknown.
Forget it all. Languish here in the scented air in the voluptuous curve of the Pas de Chevres. Dream through the long afternoon. Wait for them to catch up. Shy smiles. They must find it very different from Nigeria. Wander into the metaphysical deeps of such questions as

the tentage situation.

Peality intrudes. Press on. Down the iron ladders, across the moraine and onto the ice. It is cooler out here, it gives the mind a chance to cool down and think of other things. Change the subject, take a little healthy interest in the surrounding scenery.

Cross the happy valley between the great mounds of Cheilon and Pleureur, whose long limbs lead sinuously down on either side to the just discernable barrage of the Grand Diz Dam, resting there like some huge chastity belt barring progress to the gentle pastures beyond.

Must think of something else. One final rise to the Dix hut which appeared to be resting on one enormous bed of red and yellow flowers, like some big, gay, springy mattress. Dominating the scene was Mont Blanc de Cheilon, whose easy angled retaining arms seemed to invite, diverting attention away from the sterner stuff up the middle.

The hut was overcrowded, with a motley collection of scouts, school-children, and dozens of stocky hairy legged Dutchmen, going as high as they would go. The odd daughter here and there, built in the same mould, for comfort rather than speed. And finally the shy Nigerians. Wonder if they suffer from altitude. Doubt it, they seem to have plenty of lung capacity.

The warden gives us special treatment; a room sparsely populated, with two spaces each. Luxury indeed. Sleep is impossible however, with howls, shrieks, and squeals from next door. None of them were due up before 7.00a.m. Visions of lowlanders orgies. Jealousy rather than inconvenience seemed to be the most disturbing emotion. This is no way to prepare for a big day. Try hammering on the wall. No good, the noise continues unabated. Something a little more drastic is required. Consider what to do.

Pad downstairs and grab an axe. Upstairs again kick the door in with violence. Leap into the room. "If you load of noisy bastards don't shut your faces, I'll wrap this ice axe round your tits". Wave the axe. Utter silence. Amazing. They probably do not even understand a single word of the Queen's English.

Back to bed and quiet. Still cannot sleep. Restless, but utterly exhausted at the same time. Lie staring at the blackness for a while. What's that noise? It is in our room this time. It is certainly not

snoring. Breathing. Furtive rustlings. Low moans and whisperings. Jesus, how did they get in here? Why do they have to be so noisy? This is the last straw. It is as bad as Tyn Lon. It is too much. The pressures of the day have been too much. Am I cracking up? My mind is reeling through a red and purple fog. Do I sleep at all? I no longer know, I seem to have a fever. But wait. ... What is this movement through the shadows? In shadowy outline at first figures gradually resolve from out of the darkness. Slowly coming nearer, into the moonlight coming through the window. Pale light reflecting off dark shining skin. Gentle smiles. Why do you not speak girls? Why do you not wear clothes? Gathering around. Coming closer, the weight of all of them pressing on me at once. But something is wrong. It starts as a dull ache, but builds into a searing pain. I have this terrible pressure between my legs. I try pushing them off me but to no avail. Nothing will stop the pain.

I awake with a jolt to find myself dangling in my Willans harness, having rolled off the bivouac ledge. The second day begins.

I look upwards to catch the glint of ice in the sun, and above that, granite spires scaring into the heights, burning in the first light of dawn.

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NEW ROUTES

Castlemartin, Pembrokeshire

The coastline here is fantastic. There is enormous scope for development. Don't believe the put offs about this place. It is big, remote and wild. It makes the Gower Coast look what it is; a bouldering area.

The following routes are on the seaward face of the obvious large ramp to the east of the cauldron.

Ring of Bright Water 250ft. Severe.

An interesting girdle with no easy escape after the first few feet. It girdles the cliff from W to E. at just above high water mark. The rock is excellent.

Start Descend the obvious groove just before the end of the ramp. The route starts from a pedestal to the left (in descent) near the bottom of the groove.

- 1) 60ft. Take a slightly rising line of holds and cross a wide groove. Continue round a smooth nose down to a good belay pillar and stance at the bottom of a groove.
- 2) 70ft. Climb the groove for 10ft. Traverse right onto the arete and continue right and downwards to a deep groove. Cross this at low level (if you can). Climb the wall opposite to a good stance.
- 3) 80ft. Continue right under the enormous overhangs to belay on a large ledge.
- 4) 40ft. Climb round the nose on the right and up an easy groove to the top.

Fach 70ft Severe

Start The double grooves about 20ft. past the start of the traverse.

The climb takes the RH of these grooves. An interesting pitch on perfect rock, sustained at a pleasant level.

First Ascents: A. Dowell, Julien?, J. Brennan (climbing haphazardly)

Yellow Brick Road 110ft. V.S.

This climb starts from halfway along Ring of Bright Water, (girdle traverse). It takes the last obvious groove before the enormous overhangs on the right hand end of the cliff.

Start some 30ft. left of the groove which gives the route, below another large groove, containing some rotten yellow rock.

lloft. Climb a short crack then traverse left to the foot of a corner crack. Climb this to the overhang then make an awkward move right to the foot of the main groove. Climb this almost to the next overhang then place a peg in the groove and use this, and another in the right wall to gain the arete. Easier climbing up the yellow wall leads to the top.

First Ascent: Jon de Montjoye and Dave Irons. 21 October 1973

59th Street 210ft. H.V.S.

About 300 yards South West of the headland giving the other climbs, is a large area of slabs with a rounded bulge at about half height. At the right hand end is a narrow recessed slab forming a prominent slabby groove with two square overhangs towards the top. Serious due to the nature of the rock.

- 1) 40ft. Climb easily to where the groove steepens.
- 2) 130ft. Climb the groove to the first overhang and move rightwards with difficulty across the slab to below the next groove.

 Climb this to the overhang and pull over on the left, move back right to where the angle eases and continue straight up to below some large crumbling overhangs.

 Peg belay.
- 3) 40ft. Traverse easily to the left edge and up to a belay. First Ascent: Jon de Montjoye and Dave Irons 21 October 1973.
- Craig Dulyn Main Cliff (approached from the RH side of the lake)

 (For the information of those who know only Bwlch y Moch, Craig
 Dulyn is in the Carnedds)
- 570ft. VS A climb which should please those given to desperate vegetable wanderings at angles beyond the normal.

It starts at the lowest point of the main buttress. It takes the indeterminate rib on the left and the obvious clean-cut groove between the rib and the steep wall at two-thirds height. At the top of the

groove it regains what remains of the rib on the left, and continues somehow to the top.

- 170ft. HS This climbs the second of the small buttresses on Rof the main crag. Excitingly loose.
- 1) 40ft. Climb the steep broken wall to a pinnacle. Belay. The pinnacle is quite well balanced.
- 2) 130ft. Step onto the top of the pinnacle, climb the groove above, and round the overhang on R. (loose block!). Continue upwards to the top.

First Ascents : Jon de Montjoye, J. Brennan.

These two routes were exploratory wanderings up the huge neglected main crag at the back of Cwm Dulyn. Although unsatisfactory from the conventional point of view, there may be scope for something better.

There are some big overhangs and steep overhanging walls in the centre of the crag. These may yield short (150ft.) viscious routes. They can be approached easily from a terrace running in from the right.

To the extreme left of the crag there is a very steep wall about 200ft. high, absolutely bristling with overhangs. It is THE place for a short but brilliant career.

The main crag is magnificent . . . very big, steep, wet, and vegetated. Just the place to wander to your hearts content.