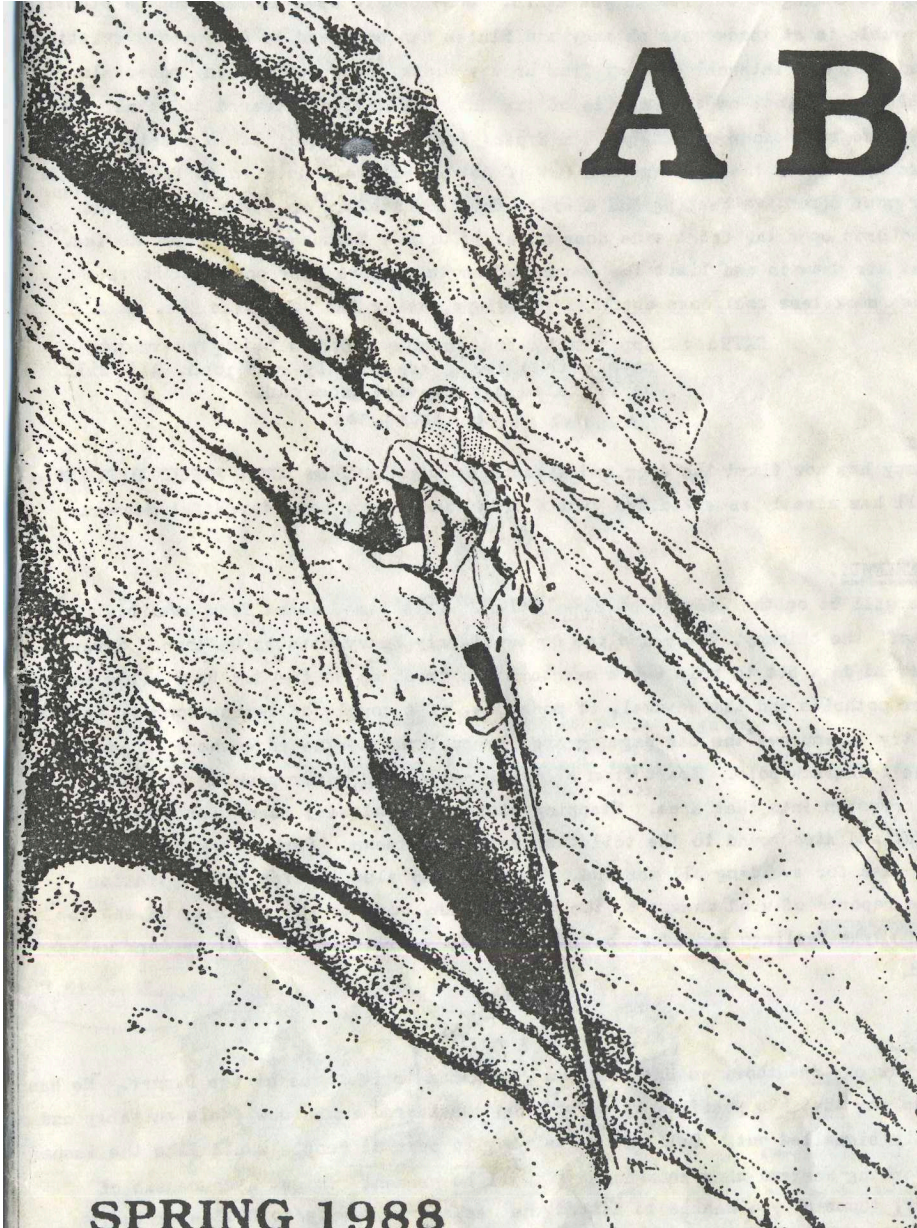


A B



SPRING 1988

Club News



THE STOVE..

Since its instalation the new stove has caused a few problems with smoke and poor heat output. Despite this we are all grateful to Blutes for his efforts on our behalf, and that same man is coming to our rescue yet again. Some people have decided that a significant factor in the trouble is an inadequate chimney and Blutes has proposed to remove the existing flue and build a brand new internal chimney from breeze block and proper lining materials. He will also replace the spout on the outside of the Hut. He has volunteered to do all this off his own bat so maybe someone should buy him a pint for his efforts. It is possible that the job will be completed by the Work Weekend but if not we will all join in to finish it off.

For most effective heating and a smoke free atmosphere open the bottom vent door about 2" and prop open the front side door about $\frac{1}{4}$ " with a teaspoon or similar device. This seems to let air draw in and limit the escape of smoke. Where ever possible it is preferable to use smokeless coal/coke obtained in Betwys, using the wood pile just as a topping off.

EXTRA : Apparently the chimney is now being re-vamped rather than being completely replaced. All will be reveiled at the work weekend.

THE DOOR..

Stumpy has now fixed the door and attached a padlock, so DON'T FORGET YOUR KEY from now on. Bill has already received two visits from some of our more forgetful members.

WORKING WEEKEND..

This will be on the weekend of 28 - 31 May. This time, apart from possibly having to finish off the chimney, there are one or two fairly heavy jobs to be done. Several people think we could do a bit to help Gwylm maintain the track up to the Hut by filling in some of the deeper potholes and the removal, if possible, of a couple of large stones. As well as this we could try to improve the car parking area by building up the edge where it has fallen away by the telegraph pole. Apart from allowing easier and safer parking it will slow down the rate of erosion into that area. Stepping stones have already been laid from the car park to the Hut and also round to the toilet by persons unknown. Perhaps we could improve on this excellent idea for avoiding all the mud. The roof may also require some attention as there have been reports of wind damage to the slates. Any work to the interior of the roof is a major job and maybe feelings and ideas on its possibly renovation at a future work weekend could be discussed.

PAUL METCALF..

This was our unauthorised Hut user who was asked to leave us at the Dinner. He has written to Bill asking that his possible membership be considered as he now feels suitably and has his view unjustly signalled out. Bill, after talking to several people would like the issue resolved at the Working Weekend when enough people will be present to get a consensus of opinion. As ever, those of you unable to attend the weekend may write to Bill with their views. Paul has been invited to the weekend so if you see him at the Hut don't be unassociable as he is an official guest.

VOUCHERS..

These are handed out to those attending the Work Weekend giving £5 discount on Club membership. Many thanks to those who received vouchers but felt they would still like to pay their full membership.

FAMILY WEEKEND..

It has been proposed that this be on the weekend of 25 June so bring all your families along and have some fun. People who do not like children are warned to stay away as complaints about noise, early nights and general chaos will not be tolerated. As usual I take this opportunity to remind owners of children to be equally considerate at other times during the year. Maybe an extra family occasion could be arranged if there is a demand for it.

We often cheat reality,
Weighed down with climbing gear,
Danger has been thrown away
Adrenaline feeds false fear.

Gravity grabs like a greedy child
Reaching for a cream cake,
We fall, but nylon rope snaps taut,
Our death was just a fake.

Who knows how many breaths were held,
Or hearts have missed their beat,
We only see the twisted wrecks
Of those who did not cheat.

The same old game is played again,
Mountains make the rules,
Those with no respect for them
Cheat themselves like fools.

STONKING.





BRIAN : " And then you sniff it up your nose, but take care to hold on to the ring-and".

JOHN : " Look Brian, I just can not condone that sort of behaviour".

Steve Duley attempting to lead the
choire with his rugby club book of
after dinner ditties.



The Dinner

As usual , whilst the sensible people took shelter in their favourite Hotels , the fun and games of Dinner Meet began in earnest on the Friday night. On returning from the Tyn y and from Cobbies the Hut was kindly warmed up for us by Mr. Owens' impersonation of Stanlow Oil Refinery , followed by the extermination of a phantom wasps nest in the stove by the addition of a can of "Killer" to its glowing embers. A short interval followed whilst homebrew and fruit cake sliced with a chain saw was handed round, and then the floor show continued with a display of flame throwing by the Welsh Dragon, assisted by several mouthfuls of 2 star ! Finally, the evenings events were rounded off with some violent skirmishes over the remains of a bottle of whiskey - perhaps in training for the real fight to come over who should have the sprout at the Dinner.

Saturday dawned slowly on alcohol tortured minds, but eventually everyone was out of the Hut, hot on the footsteps of Nigel who had made a dawn start on the Hills. Tryfan, the Carneddau, Snowdon and Bangor were all visited, and Sparrow and party went to Idwal to do the Ordinary route on the slabs. Back at the Hut that evening it was Party Time oncemore with balloons full of Propane, petrol and matches featuring in the spectacular entertainment.

Of the Dinner itself a majority of people were unimpressed with the portions, but eventually the vegetable was sliced into 41 and we all had a piece. To quote Geoff, " I only said I was going for a leak and I got mugged." The speeches were slightly held up by Stumpy's (yes, him again), demonstration of safe sex, but eventually Bill managed his annual address at the same time as being asked to go on a call out. Next onto the platform was Owen who, after thanking Cobbens for his calorie controlled diet, went on to explain about the issue of Hut keys and about recent attempts to re-establish links with Aber Mounts. Any fears of this man becoming serious were thankfully proved false later that evening. Steve Duley, a very welcome face back in our midst, read out a poem in a rather strange accent about mountain rescue for Bill followed by a description of the Aba Oldies reunion visit to Aber by John Kerridge. The next speaker was heavily disguised under his very ostentatious hat, cunningly designed to distinguish X—Aba members from the rifraf. Fears that the Hut abuse problem is to be solved by 'non-admission without X—Aba Hat' rules rather than a key were denied. And then to finish off Al and Rich mounted a revenge attack on the Newsletter editor with a presentation of Auntie Neil's Prablem Page and the donation of a toy bear to a worthy cause. (All poison for my pen will be gratefully received - just you wait Alistair).

After all this the serious drinking began but there was little singing or frolicing, though one drinking game was initiated by some of our welcome new members, Chris, Ian and Suzy. One minor incident occurred when an unwelcome gatecrasher was spotted but he eventually left on request and things returned to normal. Back at the Hut the action was fairly low key with some people going to bed (!) some playing Scrabble and Ding and Al went for a walk up Snowdon, arriving at the summit at 5.10 am and back to the Hut by 7 o'clock.

Addresses

Bill has supplied an extra sheet of members addresses in a new format. Please check yours is correct and tell Bill if it is not. Phone numbers are useful too.

People

First of all we are able to welcome two new members to the Club this year, so to D.J. Norris (first name not known) and to Owen Burt.

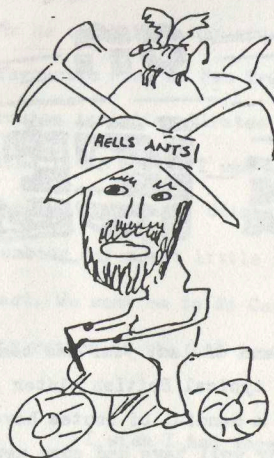
The shock announcement this time is the marriage of Colin Miller to Elizabeth. Randy buggers been quiet about this hasn't he? He has also been working out in Bombay and according to his letter, been at it on the Sofia as well. Paul Hildreth also got himself married last year to a young lady called Vicky. Apparently she is not much of a climber so we'll not be seeing so much of Paul from now on.

Moving on from one sort of disaster to another, there has been a trend amongst club members to break their bones in recent months. Starting the ball rolling is Steve Duley. In fact it wasn't so much a ball rolling as Duley himself when a gust of wind picked up his light frame and blew him away. As a result he suffered a broken wrist, a dislocated finger and a gash to his head. Fortunately for him Linda was at hand to carry him down the mountain. As if this wasn't enough, a short while later he was rushed off to hospital with kidney stones. Leaving behind Duleys' wind problems we come to the road accident section. First off, quite literally, was Ant Jones whose motorbike disagreed with a car and came off worst. It was not his fault but that did not help his broken leg feel any better. Next comes Mr. Lewis (and it was his fault) who sustained a broken nose when he collided with a fast moving fist belonging to the other driver. Poor Rich found himself in a tangle with a bunch of Sheffield criminals well known by the fuzz who came and rescued him.

The next time it was my own turn whilst up in Snowdonia at Christmas. My little fault 5 summersaulted off the road near to Capel Curig when I hit some flood water at 65 mph.... the flying was fine but the landing on its roof was not and left me without a car with some minor fractures to my vertebrae and ribs. Many thanks to Phil, Geoff and Helen who gave me a great deal of help. Incidentally, a former X-ABA member Jerry Waters whom I'm sure many of us know also smashed his car up, putting it through a fence up in the Lakes. You may know he is a driving instructor and was rather embarrassed about the huge sign on his roof. Finally, I hope, Paul Revell has also injured himself lifting heavy weights. He received cartilage injuries to his chest - I always said training never does you any good.

Not all the news is such doom and gloom. For example Phil England is offering accommodation at his Outdoor Pursuits Centre in Llangadog, (Brecon Beacons). Jon and Helen announce their intention to "hit the Hut with full force" this year so if you happen to see the odd half dozen kids then you'll know they are not far away. Rod and Hilary were at the Hut a while back with their brood of two - Jenny aged 3 and Andrew aged 1. The Waters are planning on moving from their present flat in Peak Dale due to prospective employment in Sheffield. Nigel now works at a YTS training centre in Castleton.

Bill has asked me to make mention of Bettimus who has now paid his membership in advance that it's not due again till 1995. Bill himself has been away skiing with Tarpley in March so I'm sure they will have tales to tell by the work weekend. He does, usual, still carry out his much appreciated and often gruesome duties with the Ogwen Rescue. Moving on from a seasoned Desert man to budding explorers, Howard and Denise are currently 'doing Africa'. They are reported to have crossed the Jabul Mountains in Morocco, crossed the Sahara to the Tamanrasset and Hoggar Mountains, into Nigeria, Cameroon, Zaire and so to Kenya. Expedition still in progress.... watch this space.



Still in foreign parts Charlie is now Head of an Outward Bound Centre in Kenya as previously reported and will hopefully soon be sending back outrageously funny stories of his escapades (wont you Charlie?). Ned is still awaiting World War Three to start in W. Germany.

Back home Geoff Thomas is going self employed as an outdoor pursuits instructor and has been gaining experience by working on a personal development course up in Scotland and also on one in Northumberland. Helen is currently trying to get into the swing of house hunting but it's early days yet and an uphill struggle. Rich Lewis is still hard at work on his recreational management MSc and due to heavy demand on his extracurricular abilities by a young lady assistant at Castleton YHA he has had to install an answer phone at his house because he is so seldom there. This is really useful when you want to be abusive to him on the phone as he can't answer you back. Phil Tarplee is still looking for work and may even be successful by now since he's been getting interviews at last with some of the major Banks. John Bibby started a new teaching job last September in Oldham and has now bought a house in Rochdale.

Mark Thorley has left York and gone to live in Ware where he now works for Glaxo. He's off to the Pyrenees in June and he should be really fit by then as he's doing the Welsh 2000' peaks with Helen ... there are about 175 of them I think. Janet McKelvey now works for the Telford branch of the Shropshire Trust for Nature Conservation. She spent last November in India visiting Calcutta for a cricket match (I didn't know she played) and also Darjeeling about which she has written a short piece for us.... see later. Judy Edgar is cheesed off with being continually burgled and is planning to move to Beeston as soon as possible. (That is Beeston in Nottingham and not Beeston in the Manifold Valley. She's not that struck on climbing. Mick Green has been working in Dubai and also in the West of Eire. Globe Trotter Green has also been on holiday to the United States where he visited the Rocky Mountains and the Grand Canyon.

Front Cover Drawing by Janet McKelvey.

Thank you to all contributors of information or articles. Please send anything you like to me for inclusion in the next letter.

First of all we are able to welcome two new members to the Club this year, so to D.J. Norris (first name not known) and to Owen Burt.

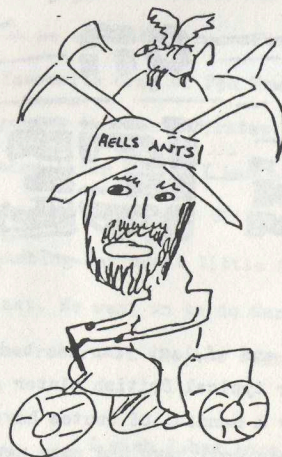
The shock announcement this time is the marriage of Colin Miller to Elizabeth. The randy buggers been quiet about this hasn't he? He has also been working out in Bombay and according to his letter, been at it on the Sofia as well. Paul Hildreth also got himself married last year to a young lady called Vicky. Apparently she is not much of a climber so we'll not be seeing so much of Paul from now on.

Moving on from one sort of disaster to another, there has been a trend amongst Club members to break their bones in recent months. Starting the ball rolling is Steve Duley. In fact it wasn't so much a ball rolling as Duley himself when a gust of wind picked up his light frame and blew him away. As a result he suffered a broken wrist, a dislocated finger and a gash to his head. Fortunately for him Linda was at hand to carry him down the mountain. As if this wasn't enough, a short while later he was rushed off to hospital with kidney stones. Leaving behind Duleys' wind problems we come to the road accident section. First off, quite literally, was Ant Jones whose motorbike disagreed with a car and came off worst. It was not his fault but that did not help his broken leg feel any better. Next comes Mr. Lewis (and it was his fault) who sustained a broken nose when he collided with a fast moving fist belonging to the other driver. Poor Rich found himself in a tangle with a bunch of Sheffield criminals well known by the fuzz who came and rescued him.

The next time it was my own turn whilst up in Snowdonia at Christmas. My little Renault 5 summersaulted off the road near to Capel Curig when I hit some flood water at 65 mph.... the flying was fine but the landing on its roof was not and left me without a car and with some minor fractures to my vertebrae and ribs. Many thanks to Phil, Geoff and Helen who gave me a great deal of help. Incidentally, a former X-ABA member Jerry Waters whom I'm sure many of us know also smashed his car up, putting it through a fence up in the Lakes. As you may know he is a driving instructor and was rather embarrassed about the huge sign on his roof. Finally, I hope, Paul Revell has also injured himself lifting heavy weights. He received cartilage injuries to his chest - I always said training never does you any good.

Not all the news is such doom and gloom. For example Phil England is offering cheap accommodation at his Outdoor Pursuits Centre in Llangadog, (Brecon Beacons). Jon and Lesley announce their intention to "hit the Hut with full force" this year so if you happen across the odd half dozen kids then you'll know they are not far away. Rod and Hilary were up at the Hut a while back with their brood of two - Jenny aged 3 and Andrew aged 1. The lookers are planning on moving from their present flat in Peak Dale due to prospective employment in Sheffield. Nigel now works at a YTS training centre in Castleton.

Bill has asked me to make mention of Beattimus who has now paid his membership so far in advance that it's not due again till 1995. Bill himself has been away skiing with Phil Tarpley in March so I'm sure they will have tales to tell by the work weekend. He does, as usual, still carry out his much appreciated and often gruesome duties with the Ogwen Rescue group. Moving on from a seasoned Dessert man to budding explorers, Howard and Denise are currently 'doing Africa'. They are reported to have crossed the Jabul Mountains in Morocco then crossed the Sahara to the Tamanrasset and Hoggar Mountains, into Nigeria, Cameroon, Zaire and so to Kenya. Expedition still in progress.... watch this space.



Still in foreign parts Charlie is now Head of an Outward Bound Centre in Kenya as previously reported and will hopefully soon be sending back outrageously funny stories of his escapades (wont you Charlie?). Ned is still awaiting World War Three to start in W. Germany.

Back home Geoff Thomas is going self employed as an outdoor pursuits instructor and has been gaining experience by working on a personal development course up in Scotland and also on one in Northumberland. Helen is currently trying to get into the swing of house hunting but it's early days yet and an uphill struggle. Rich Lewis is still hard at work on his recreational management MSc and due to heavy demand on his extracurricular abilities by a young lady assistant at Castleton YHA he has had to install an answer phone at his house because he is so seldom there. This is really useful when you want to be abusive to him on the phone as he cant answer you back. Phil Tarpley is still looking for work and may even be succesful by now since he's been getting interviews at last with some of the major Banks. John Bibby started a new teaching job last September in Oldham and has now bought a house in Rochdale.

Mark Thorley has left York and gone to live in Ware where he now works for Glaxo. He's off to the Pyrenees in June and he should be really fit by then as he's doing the Welsh 2000' peaks with Helen ... there are about 175 of them I think. Janet McKelvey now works for the Telford branch of the Shropshire Trust for Nature Conservation. She spent last November in India visiting Calcutta for a cricket match (I didn't know she played) and also Darjeeling about which she has written a short piece for us.... see later. Judy Edgar is cheesed off with being continually burgled and is planning to move to Beeston as soon as possible. (That is Beeston in Nottingham and not beeston in the Manifold Valley. She's not that struck on climbing. Mick Green has been working in Dubai and also in the West of Ireland. Globe Trotter Green has also been on holiday to the United States where he visited the Rocky Mountains and the Grand Canyon.

Front Cover Drawing by Janet McKelvey.

Thank you to all contributors of information or articles. Please send anything you like to me for inclusion in the next letter.

SPOTLIGHT on ROCK and ICE

From what I can gather this winter along with the end of last year has been a very lean time for most of the Clubs' climbers. Yet another typical British winter gave poor snow in the gullies of both Wales and Scotland and only a handful of routes have been climbed. I have not managed to contact Ian Jones who may well have had some news as he is a keen winter mountaineer, but Nigel Hooker for one has been out making ascents of several Welsh gullies including Cave Gully (III) on Yr Wydffa. He did this when all but a hard streak of snow down the gully line had melted away and he said it gave a very enjoyable climb. He even found success in the Peak District with a winter ascent of the Brain (VS) under ice and snow.

Ian Owen went up to Scotland for a few days in February but after a couple of walks on bad snow he gave up hope of doing any decent climbing and came back down to the X-ABA. Whilst in Wales he did Central and Western gullies on the Black Ladders with Blutes, finding them most exciting since they kept on being forced out of the gully bed and onto the buttresses to climb on frozen turf.....great fun by all accounts.

On rock some late news from last year is that Janet McKelvey thinks she went to Burbage and did some climbs whose names she does not know or who she did them with or what time of year it was, but they were obviously memorable or she would have forgotten them, wouldn't she? Rod Lees also climbed last year on one of his infrequent visits to North Wales, doing a few routes on the Milestone Buttress and then Direct Route (HS) on Glyder Fach which he says he thoroughly enjoyed. Nigel was also in action in Pembroke but I have no information on route names as yet. He also did either Kayak or Canoe (E1) at Curbar a few months ago. Phil has been climbing on his new local crag of Avon Gorge doing about a dozen routes so far. It seems that the place to go these days if you live in Bristol is Goblins Coombe. I must say that I visited this crag some 9 years ago with Mark and Alistair and none of us has ever felt any desire to return there but, well I suppose the sport is changing fast.

Alistair is settling in to his usual pattern of one route forays from the Hostel at Eastleton and has already bagged Pool Wall (E3, 6b) at Lawrencefield and on separate occasions, Great Harry (E1) and Scoop Connection (E2, 5b). Al insists that Pool Wall is

not at all strenuous and that is probably the case when you can do as many one arm pull-ups as he can. Mark has made a flying start to the year, (figuratively speaking), on his favourite crag of Pen Trwyn. On one visit at the end of Feb he knocked off seven hard routes including Pirates of Pen Trwyn (E4, 6a) and Pocket City (E4, 6a). On these and some later routes I was able to hold the ropes and follow after a fashion whilst recuperating from my injuries. Climbing with a tight rope and dosed up with pain killers on a finger numbing day meant little feeling of any kind. Climbing was beginning to get pleasant at last. We went on to do Cardiac Arete (E4, 6b) and Plastic Nerve (E3) at Tremadoc before the return of the bad weather. Mark is off down in Pembroke as this letter is in preparation.

I wish I had more news to pass on but I'm afraid that's about it. Perhaps there will be an excess in the next issue.....get to it.

Nail

STOP PRESS PEOPLE NEWS.....

Paul Revell has bought a house; in Glossop ??

Tim Sparrow has bought a house in Bridgend just up the road from Ian.

Owen Burt, Blutes and Stumpy are organising a drinking trip to the Coulin of Skye.

Phil England has been involved in some tricky cave rescue operations down in South Wales. Apparently the people were got out alive. More details next time.

PHOTO CREDITS :

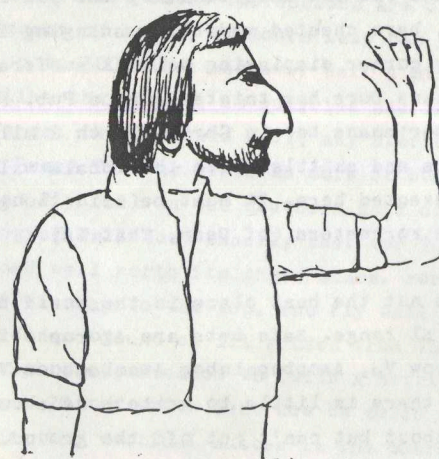
All pictures of the dinner
by Mark Harding.

Litany Against Fear by
Neil Plant.

The Sentinel by T. Valentine.

TITLE LETTERING by Jan McKelvey

CONTRIBUTORS : Phil Tarplee.
Janet McKelvey.
Helen Osborn.
Paul Revell.



RDL

Articles From Contributors

A TOURING GUIDE TO THE WYE VALLEY.

From the previous output of this rag it would appear that the membership of X-ABA almost exclusively climbs in the Peak District and in North Wales. It could be the case that only those climbing in these areas are prepared to report their activities. Anyway, in an effort to redress this clear Northern bias one young yokel aims to shed light on a much neglected area of the South West. Now a list of repetitive route descriptions is not my aim. We all climb at different grade and other peoples routes are, lets face it, boring. So far better is to give a general report on those aspects of outdoor activity that appeal to us all. Some mention will be made of good routes I know and generally at what grade each crag is best represented, but hopefully I can keep this to a minimum.

For those of us bound between the Midlands and the S.W. rough ground is something sorely lacking. About the roughest thing hereabouts is the cider, 'though very good at £4 per gallon. The Wye Valley, though 50 miles from home, has become for my friends and myself the local climbing centre. Running North to South there are four main crags; Symonds Yat, Shorncliffe, Wyndcliffe and Wintours Leap. If your mind is already prejudiced by horror stories of Avon then hold on. Polished rock is rare 'though looseness can be found if you look.

Our first port of call must be the tourist trap of Symonds Yat. The quality of climbing may at times not be up to scratch but the opportunities for drinking and oggling the rubbernecks are absolutely unlimited. Camping is best done at the Saracen Head site for obvious reasons. If you don't mind a drunken uphill struggle (remember Penglais) far cheaper is to doss in the many accomodating cave entrances as the base of the crags. The Saracens Head was a grand Pub but unfortunately the previous Landlord was bought out by a Porsche driving, bare chested medallion swinging Eastender. The instalation of video screens in every corner displaying Walkiki surfers and the walls adorned with photos of "me" with Diana Dors has tainted a good Pub. Far better evenings entertainment is found at the Sportsmans bar in Christchurch 2 miles south. Half an hour in the back bar playing darts and skittles with the locals will soon make you realise that the wheel wasn't invented here. It must be said though that you couldn't find a friendlier bunch than the Forresters (of Dean, that is).

As for the climbing well it's not the best place in the world but there are some excellent routes in the V.S. to E1 range. Safe bets are Agorophobia HVS, Red Rose Speedway HVS, The Russian VS, The Prow VS, Awopbopalubop Awambamboom VS and Yellow Grip Road E1. Bellow these grades there is little to write home about and above that grade I'd like to write home about but can't get off the ground.

Moving south a few miles to Wintern you will find the best crag in the valley... Shorncliffe. Forget about polish. no-one really used the place before 1984. In fact my first visit was a fortnight after the 1987 guide book had been published. Up untill then there was no guide at all. The place was crowded but nobody had a clue where to go. The crag, 'though clearly visible from the main road lies across the river and is a good half hours walk from Wintern. Starred routes abound from HVS to E5. Particularly good are the HVS's, all 37 of them. Try Tigers Don't Cry *** HVS. Unlike Avon the problems here are not on the crag but above and below it. There are no ways down other than by abseil from the ample vegetation above. Below the track is becoming clearly defined although one or two plants have yet to get the message.

Just north of Chepstow race course is Wyndcliffe. As the viewpoints from above here have become a tourist trap access from both above and below is easy. The climbing is suprisingly good as well. Again the VS to E1 range is well represented and sure choices are Questor VS, Sinew VS, Trial HVS and Firebird HVS. Accomodation for Shorncliffe and Wyndcliffe is perfectly supplied by the race course campsite. The site is fine but the night life limited. Far better is to doss down in Chepstow, a wonderful little town. From experience the railway station bridge has proved most comfortable. The station is unmanned and has one of those cute old bridges with a soft wooden floor, decorative roof and wind proof walls. The only problem comes from the occasional train thundering by below (you can hear the rails whine for ages). Adequate patronage of the local hosteleries will reduce the noise levels. Saturday nights and Sunday mornings are peacefully undisturbed. Saturday mornings are a different matter... waking up to find a family of day trippers off to Barry Island clambering over your dehydrated body at 7am can only improve with practice. For those climbing at the largest crag, Wintours Leap, Chepstow can also be used as a base. However, the dosing at Wintours Leap has its own charms and benefits.

From the top of Wyndcliffe there appears to be a rather extensive slag heap across the river. First impressions are often wrong but in this case there is a certain element of truth. Wintours Leap has to be one of the largest crags in the south west. Up to 300' high and over half a mile long it can not be overlooked. The crag, unlike the others, is quarried and in some ways resembles Avon Gorge. Basically, forget the northern half; any starred routes are just liars. Clinging on to something Percy Thrower would be more at home with is not my idea of fun. However, G.O. Wall and Fly Wall on the southern half of the crag are well worth while. The Great Overhanging Wall does exactly that for 300 feet. The only route below extreme is Kingkong and well worth its three stars. For all those apes of you around, the grades go all the way to the top. The Fly Wall is much more freindly. Here the stars can be believed and found at all grades from VS up. Routes that I can report are good are The Split VS, Freedom VS (with a horrible 5b direct finish) and Dragonfly HVS - the first 20' of which must now be solid as I pulled off tons. Of greater importance than the vertical matter is the board and accomodation.

All in the space of 100 yards there is a crag, campsite, post office, grocers and hostelry. An evening in the Rising Sun will confirm the friendliness of the Forresters. Unofficial camping sites may be found along the Woodcroft Quarry track leading off the main road just opposite the Rising Sun down to the crag base. If the local camping does not meet your requirements then the local Cider at 72p/pint cannot disappoint. Dominoes with the old fella's or reading the supply of woman's Realm adds to the atmosphere. If the creature comforts are vital for camping then the Landlord supplies free gallon water containers and the old quarry dynamite sheds act as ideal windproof W.C.'s.

So, if climbing to you is a handy occupation between the evenings and you want to discover somewhere a little different then come down to the Wye Valley. Don't forget, it hardly ever rains down here!

PHIL TARPLEE.

A PASSAGE FROM INDIA.

On my recent trip to India I spent nearly a week in Darjeeling, enjoying a fabulous view of Kanchenjunga whilst recuperating from the filth and heat of Calcutta. From here we made a short trip to Tiger Hill, a vantage point some 6 miles from Darjeeling and a little higher at 9000'. It was 4 a.m. one morning and we watched the sun rise over the Ganga Plain and light up the whole Kanchenjunga range in pinks and oranges. From this same point along with several hundred other tourists we got one of the few views of the top of Everest some 180 miles away. It is lit up by the sun's rays for a short time and appears rather average looking though familiar lump amongst all the other lumps on the horizon. Peering through binoculars and with the eye of faith you can make out the Hillary Step and the South Col. Eventually, as the sun climbs higher the peak merges into the haze and you begin to wonder if perhaps it was just the product of an over active imagination or the resulting hallucination from getting up so early. Whilst in Darjeeling we also visited the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute which is well worth a trip to look through 'Hitler's Telescope' (focused on the summit of Kanchenjunga) and a look around the museum full of curios from various Everest expeditions, such as Sherpa Tenzing's socks!

JANET MCKELVEY.

WILD WALKS IN THE SOUTH WALES MOUNTAINS.

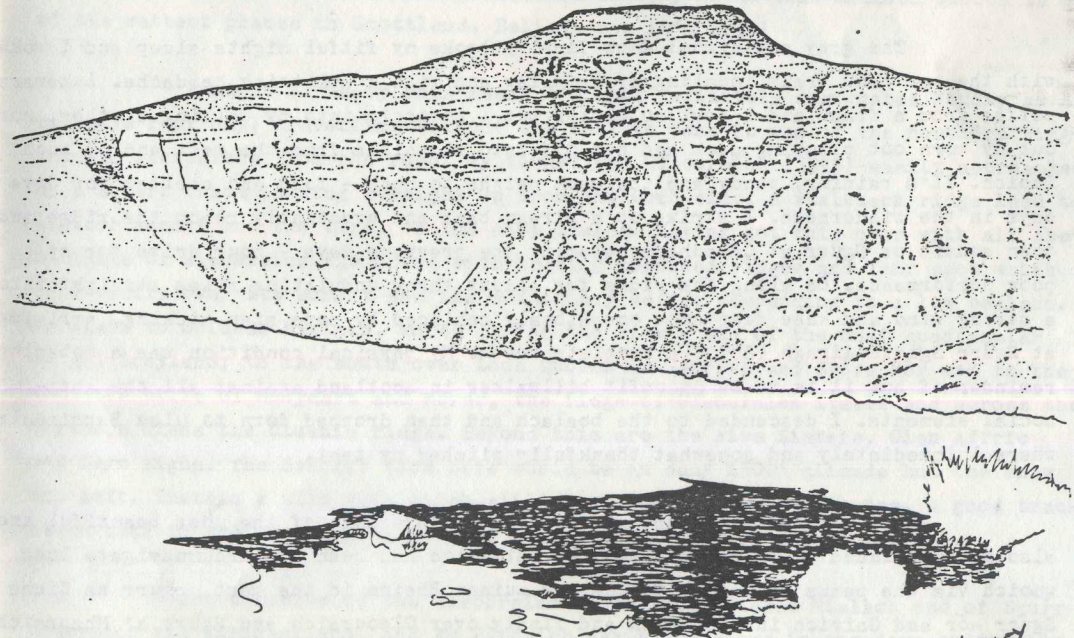
By Helen Osborn.

Contrary to popular belief Snowdonia does not have a monopoly of the best walking country in Wales. During the 18 months that I've lived in Aberdare I've had chance to explore many of the hills south of Plynlimon so when Neil asked me to write about walking I decided to describe some of my favourite walks in South Wales. I'm sure that Brian, Stumpy and maybe Steve Axe could suggest many others.

THE BLACK MOUNTAINS.

From Llanbedr (N.W. or Crickhowel) climb Crug Hywel, an Iron age hill-fort, and follow a clockwise circuit over Pen Cerrig-calch, Pen Allt-mawr, Pentwyn-glas Mynydd Llysiau, Pen Trumau, Waun Fach, Pen y gadair rawr and Crug Mawr from which it is a short descent to Llanbedr. A pint (or several) in the Red Lion there is highly recommended.

For most of this 17 mile route a path accompanies you along broad grass ridges. The going is easy apart from a boggy section between Waun Fach and Pen y gadair Fawr and you would be unlucky to meet many people on these hills except in the height of summer.



Pen y Fan from
Bryn Teg

JANET MCKELVEY

The breacons with their distinctive flat tops and steep northern faces interspersed with long ridges are more impressive looking and much more crowded than the Black Mountains. Only on summer evenings midweek have I had the summit of Pen y Fan to myself. For a short simple ascent of Pen y Fan the path through Cwm Llŵch is to be recommended... the trench from the Stoney Arms is not !!! Also recommended is a circular walk from the Neuadd Reservoir taking in Cribyn, Pen y Fan and Corn Du. If done in reverse this circuit can be extended beyond Cribyn to take in a number of other summits.

MYNYDD DU.

This massif resembles the northern Carne-ddau in the feeling of remoteness and emptiness which it creates, I would recommend a linear walk from Garreg Lwyd over Coel Fraith, Plaus Du and Ban Brycheiniog down to Llyn y Fan Fawr- the subject of several local legends- and the road beyond.

Editors note ; many thanks to Helen for starting the walkers balls rolling. So, come on all you 'non-climbers', get out your pencils and start writing ! Thank You.

THE RIDGES AND GLENS OF KNOYDART.

The grey and dismal dawn finally broke my fitful nights sleep and I woke with the car hand brake impaling my left leg and with a splitting headache. Lukewarm coffee from a flask and I feel no better but I struggle into my walking clothes, sort out my worn out climbing sack and set off into the hills from the west end of Loch Quoich. It's raining, windy and the sack weighs too much - food and shelter for five days in the wilderness. I strike up a stream bank and eventually reach the ridge and then summit of Sgùrr a' Chladheim, blaming the previous days 9 hour drive for my poor performance. On along the ridge for almost three undulating miles straight into a strong wind and knee deep snow occasionally replaced by some step kicking, arriving at Sgùrr Sgiath Airagh (2890) a complete wreck. My physical condition was a sobering reminder of how it is to be an unfit hillwalker in Scotland against all the anti-social elements. I descended to the bealach and then dropped down to Glen Barrisdale where I immediately and somewhat thankfully pitched my tent.

The hills of Knoydart and Loch Quoich are some of the most beautiful and also most secluded peaks in Scotland. My intention had been to circumnavigate Loch Quoich via the peaks of Ladhar Bheinn and Luinne Bheinn in the west, Sgùrr na Ciche Sgùrr Mòr and Gairich in the south and finally over Gleouraich and Sgùrr a' Mhaoraich on the north side, taking about five winter days in the process. My body and the weather had other ideas.

I awoke from a deep sleep feeling relatively refreshed. All plans had changed and I'd decided to head back to the car as a 9 mile "training" walk and save Ladhar Bheinn for a day when it wasn't lost in the clouds. Glen Barrisdale is wildly beautiful and the walk from the bay to the bealach is pure delight. Scots Pines and waterfalls add to its flavour. The descent from the bealach with its dark Lochan down the Gleann Cosaidh is another matter - the drove road becomes more like a river and indeed it eventually disappears into the Amhainn Chòsaidh about a mile from Loch Quoich never to be seen again. From here on it is up to you with no lesser of two evils to choose from. Tussocky, boggy and more boot sucking squelch lead to the Loch shore but no reprieve. Three more miles of a poor path even by Scottish standards have to be overcome before the road is reached via a richety old foot bridge. No place for a Sunday stroll. Back at the car I pitched the tent and left all but the essentials and made an end of day dash up to Sgùrr Coire nan Eiricheallach (2916) from which a snowy ridge leads to Sgùrr a' Mhaoraich. The path up from the road is very good and of the mindless zigzag sort, which was just what I needed, but having got up it to the top it was too late to risk the ridge traverse. I opted for the laborious slog in reverse.

As a low level walk starting from Kinloch Hourn and following the coast path to Barrisdale Bay and then up the Glen and down to Loch Quoich finishing with a five mile downhill road walk this route would be most rewarding, taking in as it does all aspects of Scottish scenery. The section from the Amhainn Chòsaidh along Loch Quoich side, (mentioned in a chapter of Ken Wilsons "Big Walks") should not however be underestimated. Also it is said in many books that Kinloch Quoich is one of the wettest places in Scotland. Believe me, it's true!

A night of heavy rain meant I'd most definitely designated Monday as a relative rest day, travelling without the tent to take in one of the northern ridges readily accessible from the road. My target was Gleouraich (3395) easily approached by a superb track leading straight up from the Loch side. A whaleback ridge lead to a minor summit and the first of the snow fields. Having got this over with all the delights of Gleouraich lie ahead with heavily corniced ridges and fair snow which lead easily over its summit and its subsidiary before descending to a low bealach. Up again to Spidean Mialach, worth it for the view - one of the most spectacular in all Scotland; to the south over Loch Quoich is Gairich and Sgùrr Mòr and to the west the hills of Knoydart and Morar, the ridge of Gleouraich itself and across the northern Glens the Cluanie ridge. Beyond this are the Five Sisters, Glen Affric and Carn Eighe. The descent from here would be an easy 1500' glisade but the snow was soft. Instead a wild romp which still took less than five minutes. A good track leads back to the road making an easy five hour circuit of the ridge.

The traverse of the Gleouraich ridge from Spidean Mialach and or Sgùrr a' Mhaoraich via Eiricheallach and Am Bàthaich can be combined in one days outing (in summer at any rate) which traverses most of the north shore of the Loch. The only disadvantage is the 2500' descent between the two ridges but on a fine day the reward of the views would be enough compensation.

The following day I set off once more with the intention of spending several days in the hills in order to reach the peaks on the south side of the Loch. First on the list was the star attraction of the region, Ladhar Bheinn. I walked in the six miles to Barrisdale the slogged up for 1000' into Coire Dhorreall where I pitched my tent before continuing up to the Druim a' Choire Odhair. Once you leave the Coire floor the path only exists in the imagination and the going is hard work. However the ridge soon sharpens up to give a Crib Goch feel for a while as it nears Stob a' Choire Odhair. The knife edge snow arete was heavy with cornices and the snow was sugary and very worrying. At first kicking steps was fine but half way along the ridge I found hard snow beneath. I'd gone just a little too far and felt very insecure but I kicked and cut a small ledge big enough to squat on and put on my crampons. At least now only the snow was in doubt and with extra confidence I continued on to Ladhar Bheinn. In places large cracks had opened up in the snow and in others the cornices had already dropped the 1000' to the Coire floor. However my crampons and axe were finding something under it all, and at the same time as all the doubts and apprehensions grew so did a feeling of 'being there'; out on a limb, out on my own and in a wild and beautiful place. This is what it is all about. I lingered only a moment on the summit before heading off down over iced rocks to the bealach and the descent to the Coire floor.

For a mountain only 3343' high Ladhar Bheinn has a big feel about it. The view of it from Loch Hourn as you reach the headland about a mile from Barrisdale is spectacular. 1500' gullies sheer down its headwall interspersed with broken buttresses give it a fortress-like look to it. The views from its summit, (if you are lucky enough) are of a wilderness hardly touched by man, (or seemingly so) to the south and west, whilst to the east are the Loch Quoich peaks. The other "jewel" of the region is Sgùrr na Ciche which, although difficult in its own way, does not have the same impact as Ladhar Bheinn. I climbed it on a previous visit and it felt like just another peak on a ridge. The Sgùrr na Ciche group marking the south shore of the Loch are usually approached from the south via Glen Dessary as the access is a lot easier. Unless you were very fit the ridge traverse from Sgùrr an Rhuairin to Ben Aden would almost certainly require a bivvy as the return via the lochside to the Killoch Hourn road, or via Loch Nevis and Glen Dessary are arduous walks in themselves. This time at any rate I would have to give them a miss.

Back at the tent my feet were agony and the weather had finally turned from moderately wet to incredibly wet. Not wanting to give up too easily I moved the tent yet again and then made a half hearted attempt on Luinne Bheinn, a sister peak to the Ladhar but really only a rounded hummock by comparison. My epic hill walking trip had turned into a fiasco and as the rain beat down the wind tried to pluck me and my tent from the soaking bog I'd pitched on. After a wild night, (unfortunately only of the elemental sort), I abandoned hope and squelched off back to the road, my car and a long drive home. Scottish weather won but well, I think it was just about worth it all.

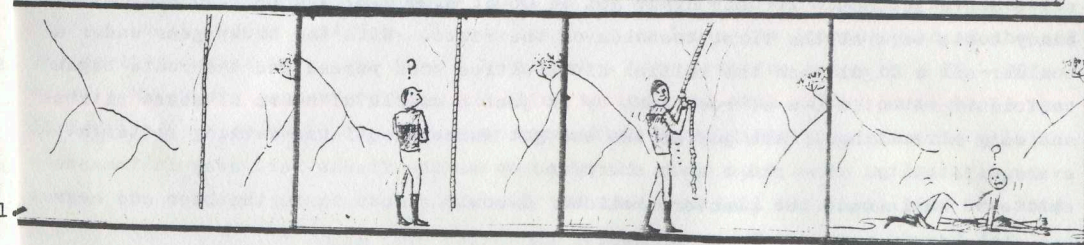
NEIL PLANT.

STUMPY OWEN'S party piece brings reactions of horror, bemusement and hysteria. It can not be shown without contravention of the obscene publications act.

BELOW : Neil on SENTINEL (E.2.) at Burbage South.



Mark Harding on LITANY AGAINST FEAR (E.3)



Reproduced without any permission whatsoever from DRINGO 1980.

Drawings by Jan ??

I should imagine that as this Newsletter goes to press many of us will be musing on possible trips to the Alps and other places to the South of Buxton. If so we should heed the words of Whympers - "Climb if you will, but...". Sat in my living room listening to Van Morrison telling me all I need to know it's hard to visualise that day last Summer when I failed to "...look well to each step".

The episode started, I suppose, on the last day of term, (and of that job), in a school in Scotland. Almost as soon as the bell had rung for the last time, Marc Morris was round in his Renault loaded with the kit for our first visit to the Alps. Twenty four hours later we had driven up the Val d'Herens and were lounging around the peaceful Swiss village of Arolla. Arolla is a world away from many of the climbing bases that are shared with the pastel coloured hordes of skiers. No frills here, just a rocky campsite with an ancient horse trough for a bath - fresh from the glacier! - and reasonably cheap beer in the adjoining bar. The place is very much a mountaineers paradise, rather than a rock climbers, although good rock routes do exist.

Anyway, for our first alpine route we chose the easy and short Petit Dent de Velsivi, a 3,000 m peak just down the valley. Done in a day it is a long slog followed by a ridge which is easy to climb but hard to follow, and then a steep return to really kill the knees. I went quite well but Marc really struggled and the reason became apparent next day as he lay crashed out with flu. Being keen on this, my first experience of the Alps, I wasn't going to let this minor slip-up hold me back. No - the climbing's easy says I, so I'll solo something. Well, as you look across the valley from the tent the skyline is dominated by the impressive aiguille de la Tsa, a magnificent pinnacle rising splendidly above the other lesser peaks of the Grandes Dents massif. From Arolla it is 700 m of grade IV and approached by a tedious ridge. Not for me thought I, but how nice it would be to stand on top of it. A little research soon showed the way - a clean grade III on the neighbouring Dent du Tsaliou, a short traverse, then up the back of the Tsa via a 50 m grade III to the summit.

After the usual cheese meal I packed the bivvy gear, (but no climbing gear), and set off to sleep beneath my chosen route surrounded by the silhouettes of dark peaks lit by a good moon and by stars which just don't seem to exist in the skies above England. Frosty night got me up at 6.00 a.m. and by 7.30 a.m. my big bendy boots were at the first toeholds of the route. With the bivvy gear under a boulder and a light sack the initial difficulties soon passed and the route began to follow. About 600 m of rock went by in just a couple of hours of short pitches and easy scrambling. Pure joy as the sun got warmer and I was feeling better at every difficulty. The ridge soon sharpened up as the flanks fell away in immense shattered walls onto the glaciers below. I could almost taste the beer and hear the comments back in the bar. Wonderful!

Then it hit me. I'd tried about three different ways of turning the grade IV+ crux - the guide had promised an alternative. The bastard lied, I thought but no need to panic as I'm going well. A couple more efforts then I realised that the situation was serious. Those tricky rocksteps might have been exhilarating on the way up but to go down them! No way. Summoning up my courage I moved up past a trusty (or was it rusty) peg. Some bloody use that is, I thought. Above it got worse and after much soul searching I decided that I hadn't got the skill to overcome the problem and avoid the fall to the glacier 600m below. Oh my god... collect your thoughts boy it's not your time yet.

Many routes end near the top of the Dents de Tsaliou so someone will be bound to traverse the ridge. I was level with one section of it at 3500m so it is just a matter of waiting. Bollocks - the only thing to arrive was cloud. Now it really was serious. I was on a ledge about 6' wide and about 6 feet long, sloping but with a variety of good handholds. Good enough for a few hours, but for a night as well? I just had to get off before nightfall. I had my whistle with me and began to use it - six short blasts at minute intervals for over three hours. Why did no one respond? I could hear the traffic far below in Arolla, and over there the Tsa hut a 1000m down. Surely someone was there? Apparently not - there was no response of any kind.

I'd been searching and signaling for nearly 5 hours and more clouds were arriving to mock me. Never again you bloody fool, or would I not even get the chance. Only dates to eat now, and the last cigarette is nearly finished. Why do we do this? Why, why, why? Pure misery was setting in as more clouds blew in below, around and above me. Another hour, I reckoned, and then that's it. Bollocks

Thut-ak, thut-ak, thut-ak. Bloody hell, a helicopter! What a chance - I bet he's supplying the Tsa hut - I've got to signal him! Duvet off. Show red, show cream; show red, show cream; wait a minute! Come back you Bastard! He does. Has he seen me? He must have.

A doubt soon disappears and I'm face to face with the biggest machine I've ever seen. Incredible noise and rotors only a few feet above me and a gesticulating Swiss in the cockpit. Yes, it is me that is in trouble! Off they go leaving me to wonder what for. I soon find out as I see the 'copter land at the hut and on its return in a huge circle I can see a body trailing below on a 15 - 20 m rope. I hurriedly pack everything and cling to the rock with all my strength as the rotors try to blow me off my temporary home. With incredible precision the pilot adjusts his position until the guy on the rope is stood next to me on the cramped ledge. In a flash the chopper peels away and seems to fall backwards into the void below. Now the Swiss takes over completely - am I injured? No. Am I stuck? Yes, I apologise but shift around to show I'm O.K.



"Ne bouge pas" he screams. Needless to say, French is not a chemistry teachers strong point, but the upshot was that he took off his harness, gave it to me and told me to clip into the 'copter rope and be flown away. No way, I tell him. Send me a rope and I'll climb out blindfold. (I realised after I got down that shock had set in). He doesn't buy it. Next thing the noise and blast of the machine are back, the rope arrives and before I can protest anymore I'm clipped in and very slowly lifted up. All of a sudden he slips it into top gear and we peel away in an unbelievable arc 1000m above the ice. I didn't know whether to be sick or lose control of my bowels - it was terrifying! I was spinning wildly, the various ranges coming into view successively. My knuckles were white and the harness was taking very little of my weight. The journey must have lasted no more than a minute but it felt like an age. I actually started to enjoy it when I'd discovered how to use my legs as brakes to stop the spinning.

As we approached the Hut it became apparent that hordes of aged tourists had been watching the episode and the cameras were clicking like mad, though I was to overcome with relief to take it all in. The hut warden's wife came offering brandy but I said no and smoked half a packet of fags instead. Then it was into the Hut and a million questions from all and sundry - had I really got up there on my own? - and of course the insurance details and finally an offer of a lift to the tent....
No Thanks !!

I felt that in some perverse way my walk down would heal me somehow, so after picking up the bivvy gear I virtually ran the descent to the tents, down past all the grockles who seemed to expect this sort of thing from the English, and arrived back at the tent at the end of a very weird day. Marc was slowly recovering from his flu outside the tent in the warm valley evening. I didn't know where to start but it was enough to tell him that the body hauled off earlier wasn't a dead one. After the initial shock he seemed to know the treatment and soon Percy Sledge was booming in my ears with the promise of beers in vast quantities to come.

Well, what's the moral or the end result of all this? I'm still not sure. I'm certain that writing it down wouldn't help anyone else understand their attitude to climbing. Perhaps it is enough to say that experiences like this widen your perspective of climbing in all its many forms. This has got to be good because in the end it widens your entire perspective. Well, time for a beer and to mull over next weeks climbing and ... what to do in the Alps this year! (Actually, it's Matterhorn mark II - but that's another story).

PAUL REVELL.

"Ne bouge pas" he screams. Needless to say, French is not a chemistry teachers strong point, but the upshot was that he took off his harness, gave it to me and told me to clip into the 'copter rope and be flown away. No way, I tell him. Send me a rope and I'll climb out blindfold. (I realised after I got down that shock had set in). He doesn't buy it. Next thing the noise and blast of the machine are back, the rope arrives and before I can protest anymore I'm clipped in and very slowly lifted up. All of a sudden he slips it into top gear and we peel away in an unbelievable arc 1000m above the ice. I didn't know whether to be sick or lose control of my bowels - it was terrifying! I was spinning wildly, the various ranges coming into view successively. My knuckles were white and the harness was taking very little of my weight. The journey must have lasted no more than a minute but it felt like an age. I actually started to enjoy it when I'd discovered how to use my legs as brakes to stop the spinning.

As we approached the Hut it became apparent that hordes of aged tourists had been watching the episode and the cameras were clicking like mad, though I was to overcome with relief to take it all in. The hut wardens wife came offering brandy but I said no and smoked half a packet of fags instead. Then it was into the Hut and a million questions from all and sundry - had I really got up there on my own? - and of course the insurance details and finally an offer of a lift to the tent....
No Thanks !!

I felt that in some perverse way my walk down would heal me somehow, so after picking up the bivvy gear I virtually ran the descent to the tents, down past all the grockles who seemed to expect this sort of thing from the English, and arrived back at the tent at the end of a very weird day. Marc was slowly recovering from his flu outside the tent in the warm valley evening. I didn't know where to start but it was enough to tell him that the body hauled off earlier wasn't a dead one. After the initial shock he seemed to know the treatment and soon Percy Sledge was booming in my ears with the promise of beers in vast quantities to come.

Well, what's the moral or the end result of all this? I'm still not sure. I'm certain that writing it down wouldn't help anyone else understand their attitude to climbing. Perhaps it is enough to say that experiences like this widen your perspective of climbing in all its many forms. This has got to be good because in the end it widens your entire perspective. Well, time for a beer and to mull over next weeks climbing and ... what to do in the Alps this year! (Actually, it's Matterhorn mark II - but that's another story).

PAUL REVELL.