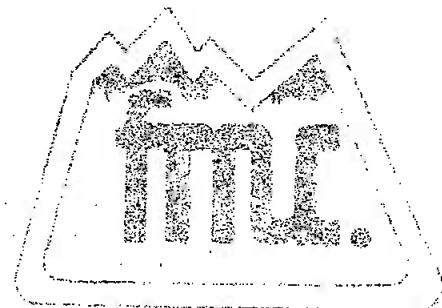


NEWSLETTER

FYLDE MOUNTAINEERING CLUB



March 1978

The General Scene

Rupert

Hello, after the last A.G.M. it was decided that a new 'heavy' would be appointed to deal with the general illiteracy which seems to abound within the Club. It was said that the successful applicant should have a way with words, be cunning to extract information and articles from certain members, but if all else failed, he should possess a certain gift called blarney to be able to write his own letter. I'm glad to say the newly bribed editor, compiler, or just general bully has all this and much more to offer. (Read on for more rubbish).

The new Committee have made it their prime aim to entice more support for the club, with more socials? (members slides and more members slides) But it would be nice to see a few long lost faces at the Rangers on a Wednesday night.

Activity on the hills and crags since new year has been quite high, starting in true style on New Year's Day with a hung over ascent of the Bludgeon XS by new member Miss Paul Clarke and Rupert, while Lord Archer was drinking his way up the Grandes Jorrasces, but weather was against him. John and Barbara Sealey were snowed in abroad while skiing as were some in Glencoe.

Half a week and a weekend's visit to Ben Nevis yielded Waterfall Gully IV (really V), Hadrians Wall V and Smith's route on Gardaloo Buttress V to Dave Archer and Rupert. The latter route ascended by myself with a half a crampon. Pauls Reid and Clark climbed Glovers Chimney IV and Tower Ridge II while Phil Caley and Robin Norris did the magnificent North East Buttress. Ex member Downhill and Andy Lewandowski climbed Point Five on the Ben at same time as Mick Tolley and myself were thrutching up Ravens Gully V on the Buchaille.

The same weekend George Parker and Co climbed several quite difficult gullies and the following day saw George, John and Barbara and Tony Farrel climb the Great Gully on the Buchaille, which contained a few steep ice pitches. (Competition ah)

MORE BEN NEVIS

N.E. BUTTRESS - Ben Nevis

Robin Norris & Phil Caley

It looks so impressive almost 2000' high, steep and direct to the summit and it certainly was a good route.

The main difficulties were low down with poor snow on the ramp up to the '1st step' and then a couple of superb pitches onto the ridge proper. The first of these included the hardest moves on the climb up a short corner, and the second was an 140' ice filled chimney.

The middle section was all the way interesting never a plod, with several short ice pitches, we passed the man trap on the right via a 140' ice wall and another short front pointing chimney led to the Summit, and what a sunset!

WHERE HAVE ALL THE MEMBERS GONE?

D Walton

February 22nd was the club's 29th A.G.M. I was disappointed at the turnout. Only 40 of over 150 members attended.

This is the club's one and only major decision making night. It must surely be the duty of every member to attend and express opinions on future club policy; the election of officers, the club's social commitments etc. after all it is your club.

It is beyond me why people join the club at all, if they are not going to give any commitment to the club. In the way of joining the committee, helping at socials and working weekends and what we are all interested in anyway - mountaineering. Surely it's not worth joining the club for the 5% discount which we can obtain from most climbing shops.

Please, please support your club and don't leave it to the few who are left to run everything time and time again.

Look for ways you can help, especially socials. This is where support is most needed, in attendance and in providing material, usually slides. Most members take colour slides. Some probably of areas not often visited by the club. If you could show a few slides that need only take up 15 minutes or so, it would be most welcome. Such activities on a Wednesday night at the Rangers would hopefully increase attendance and bring the club together more. Any members who can co-operate in this way, should contact the social secretary, Dave Sharples.

Our club has never been in a better position both financially and in a mountaineering sense. We have extreme climbers; marathon walkers and runners; orintees; potholers; skiers, all who enjoy the benefits of two excellent huts in the Lakes, and reciprocal rights with clubs in Wales. Representatives of the club, regularly attend B.M.C. meetings, putting forward your views. Meets are arranged in many areas of the country, with many members venturing out to the bigger ranges abroad.

I hope what I have said bites deep into the consciences of the many members, whom we never see at the club or on the hill.

Come on, show yourselves, join in the fun. This is a good club, lets make 1978 our most active year ever, with every member contributing in some way. In those often heard words: "This is your club, and its success depends on what you make of it".

WINTER, BLOODY WINTER!

By M. Tolley

My main object of the winter was Raven's Gully, a Grade 5 snow and ice climb. The first objective was to find someone to lead it, this was cracked with a choice of Dave Archer, Rupert and Rick Reeves. We set off one weekend for Glencoe in my V.W. Van. The weather wasn't very good, but still we set off to have a look, but, the snow was unconsolidated, very little ice and there was a stormy wind building up. Still, if we carried on up Great Gully, at least we would get to the top of the mountain and do a route, so

we continued soloing. By this time, the wind was really strong and we were literally blown out of the top of the gully. On the summit ridge now, but all thoughts of the top were ridiculous, it was just a matter of survival and descent out of the wind as quick as possible. Visability was nil as the snow and ice particles were being blown directly into our faces. No one had an M.L.C. who was to get us down!!! Back down the gully was suggested, but that would have been bad, so out with my compass, a scream (to make myself heard, not to give myself confidence) of follow me lads. I set off, at least I would lead the descent, even if I couldn't lead the ascent. About 20 minutes later we arrived at the head of the descent couloir, or at least what I thought was the couloir. I confidently told the lads this was it and stepped to one side and let them descent first. For about 1,000 feet, we went downface in with our eyes shut and not knowing if there was going to be a steep step or not, until finally we arrived in the sheltered part of the couloir and were able to descend in a more elderly and professional manner. We had a meal in the van, with the snow starting to drift on the road. Off to the pub we agreed, but, unfortunately, the van stopped, the blizzard blew and we became stuck from the Saturday night until Monday night!! Can you imagine being stuck in a van for all that time with Rupert!! Eventually the storm eased and we were brought home by the A.A.

Like the title, Winter, Bloody Winter.

WINTER, FABULOUS WINTER.

M. Tolley

Off to Glen Coe again, this time on the Annual Meet. Still got Rupert as my partner and still want to do Ravens. This time the weather is clear and cold with not much wind. Up Great Gully again to the foot of the route. The route description is typically Scottish i.e. 600 ft. approx. 12 pitches, all hard and most requiring odd rope movements. The first pitch was banked up so I soloed up that and prepared a belay about 50 ft below the first pitch. This is turned on the left, with a ring peg for air high round the edge. Rupert pulled up, with crampons scratching and taking on a thin veneer of ice, and slipped into the peg, at which point a small spindrift avalanch came slushing down over the edge of the chockstone, the updrought in the gully then took a good proportion back up over the chockstone and thus back down again, and then back up and so on. All this with Rupert in the middle of it, gasping for breath and furiously trying to get back down again, which he eventually did by unclipping and dropping back down. Not a very good opening I thought. After a rest and a fag, Rupert tried again, and this time, minus spindrift, he made it and disappeared upwards. My turn to follow, the chockstone move was strenuous, but with no spindrift, not bad. Above, the rope disappeared up vertical powder snow!! I climbed, trying not to stand on my feet or pull on my arms, and eventually fell into a cave where Rupert was belayed. I looked at the next bit, a tight chimney, a small chockstone, minimal ice, both walls badly scratched by crampons, and after than a thinly iced vertical groove. Obviously another good pitch for Rupert to gain experience on! so I let him lead it. This was a hard pitch and took about 1½ hours. At the end, another cave belay. The gully was opening out a little so it was about time I had a go up front. A traverse left into a groove, up the groove, not very good snow, out left, swinging on yet another chock and a nasty lurch into a layback position? At this point, I thought this is stupid and promptly started bridging! A long snow slope now led off, up to the right, but, when I got near the top I saw it was the direct finish, a 150' vertical chimney with no ice and a large chockstone at the top. Not a goer in these

conditions, so back down to the groove and a tottery move out left to reach a series of grooves and corners on the left wall. The next pitch went up grooves directly above me, so the snow that Rupert dislodged, landed on my head. Rupert was starting to swear inbetween grunts, so I spent my time looking at the fragile belay and the space below. Rupert got up the pitch, and found a good belay, my prayers have been answered, and I climbed up. A really awkward and nasty pitch and a good lead by Rupert. I carried on leading, trying to climb safely and fast, as we only had about 1 hour of daylight left. After about 100' of steep mixed ground, with more placements in frozen grass than ice and no protection, I arrived above the chockstone of the direct. Just one pitch to go and another good belay - guess what - a threadedchock. Up comes Rupert and found the off width overhanging 5-17 crack which is only about 15' high. Off came Rupert's sac, still no go. Combined tactics I think I said and gave Rupert a hump up by his ankle, still not high enough and spindrift coming down called for more effort, so I finished up with Rupert swearing at the top of his voice and standing on my hands (with crampons on!!) but, he was up. My turn with two sacs, simple, I pulled up on the rope and nearly burst a gut, but we're up and it was dark. Onwards to the top, to a beautiful moonlit night, absolutely fantastic, and back to the hut still with crampons on.

A really memorable and enjoyable climb which was worth all the problems. Right, what's next? (Skin grafts on hands and back ED.)

Coffin' Climbing

By Dave Archer

Turning a suffered purple, body bent double with repeated spasms, I coughed and coughed and coughed: great gobs of flem, lung lining, bits of breakfast and old teeth were spattered over the snow. I looked towards the summit of Ben Nevis despairingly and a deep hatred of all smokers flooded through me. I had smoker's cough and I DON'T EVEN BLOODY WELL SMOKE!

I made myself very ill at a tender age by smoking grain filled straw and ever since have considered smoking to be a vile, anti-social and barbarous habit and yet I always seem to be saddled with nicotine addicted climbing partners.

My first companion on rock was Steve who was a committed 60 a day man. Not unusual in the glorious polluted sixties, when smoking was a man's game and didn't harm your health. The harder the route, the more Steve smoked. A very hard route was never finished because invariably night fell before he could wheeze through the required number of fags. I graded routes in those days as 5, 10, 15 fags or unsmokable. Steve also spat repeatedly when gripped and my helmet still bears the tobacco stains. I didn't climb with Steve for very long.

Graham was more refined and liked to perform on rock with a certain style and clan. One day at Tremadoc whilst indulging in a rather too demonstrative exhibition of rock ballet he fell off and much to the admiring audience's delight, was engulfed in a plume of blue sulphurous smoke. Moral: falling climber should not carry box of matches in pocket.

Over the years I have spent many a long evening, not in the pub where I should be, but groping down some appalling walk-off in the dark - inevitably torchless. Without exception this is the result of climbing with a nicotine addict. Contrary to expectations, smokers can walk as fast as normal people but when they get to the foot of the climb, looking grey and emitting a noise like shingle

drawn down the beach by a heavy sea, they slump down despairingly, fumble for the life-giving weed, light up and pass out for the next 30 minutes. Gradually consciousness is regained and the route is attempted but the performance is repeated at each stance: wild-eyed and drawn he collapses onto the stance, belays (those who don't inherit the immediate belay response, die at an early age), reaches for his fix with trembling hands and again goes into coma. This side-show can be pleasantly diverting, even amusing for the non-smoker, particularly on warm drowsy days when both climbers may gently slumber away the afternoon. But, when it's filthy wet and cold and your turn for the lead, fag-time at stances can be exasperating, if not infuriating. However, the temptation to throw the offending drug into the void is not advisable: your partner may quickly turn into a raving maniac intent on murderous revenge or, more likely, a weeping leave-me-here-I-can't-go-on wreck. Neither condition is likely to speed up your advance to the pub.

The inevitable accompaniment to Smoke-gets-in-my-eyes is the wracking cough. Strung out on a delicate move or hanging weakly from an insecure ice-hammer, it is not comforting to know that the desperate rasping coughs and death rattles projected from below are those of your trusty companion. Bent double as with terminal convulsions he repeatedly jerks the rope, completely insensitive to the jibbering jelly poised precariously above. (vice versa last time ED.)

Bob, a friend of many a smoke filled adventure, is fortunately not a cigarette smoker but he does have a weakness for pipes. Whilst not as offensive as cigarettes, pipe smoking is much more of a rigmarole involving lots of bits and pieces and a particular technical expertise incomprehensible to the layman. Now Bob is a great chap to be with in the hills but he is totally and completely disorganised: something is always left behind. It may be the bivi-bag, the stove, the food, but as long as the pipe smoking equipment is with us, we can manage. Forget the smoking gear and you might as well pack up and go home.

Typical of the trauma invariably associated with Bob is the following episode, played out on the 5 hours walk up to the Romantaire hut in the Dauphine Alps. Bob, starting yet another doomed 'I'm giving up smoking' campaign, has vowed to make it to the hut without a pipe stop. After 3½ hours, the withdrawal pains are too much and he collapses: "can't go on without a pipe". Rucsac is opened in smirking anticipation. Hand rummages around in sac "That's funny". Rucsacs pockets are investigated: Bob smiles as matches appear. Further rummaging with just a hint of desperation "I'm sure I put it in the sac". Numerous pockets in absurdly ill-fitting salopettes are patted and then opened. "My God, where is it?" Rucsac is again resorted to and the top items are flung out. Suddenly a great sigh of relief and the pipe, miraculously intact, is produced triumphantly.

Two of the three vital ingredients have been found and I leave myself for the final act of the off-repeated drama.

Once again the search is commenced. Rucsac rummage, no tobacco: rucsac pockets, no: pockets, hat, underpants, no. "Oh my God, Oh my God" is repeated over and over again like some primitive dirge. All personal pockets are feverently emptied and finally the entire contents of the carefully packed rucsac are dragged out and hurled to the ground in a last despairing panic. I start to cry quietly, resigned to walking back down all those thousands of feet.

Suddenly, a great roar of delight and the tin of tobacco is produced from a Dachstein mitt. "Funny, don't remember putting it there" he says as his eyes close onto a nicotine heaven. I quietly sob into the snow.

The nervous strain, not to mention the clouds of second hand tar-laden smoke inhaled, of years of climbing with nicotine addicts was finally brought to a choking head, by four days enforced encampment in a snow-bound, smoke-filled V.W. Dormobile on Rannock Moor. Mick and Rick survived and may, when time has healed the wounds, feel up to recounting the sordid saga. I was permanently disabled with a permanent smokers cough and, to help me, I'll throttle the next person who patronisingly says "You know, if you only smoked a little less" (comment the doctor told him it was a virus, nothing to do with smoke) Yours truly.

18th/19th February

Below freezing temperatures greeted the ten members who made the journey north on day clear roads. Saturday dawned fine and clear and most people headed for Corrie Nam Beith. John and Barbara climbed Arch Gully and found it harder in parts than anticipated, but, very enjoyable nevertheless. In an attempt to avoid the derisive comments which attended his efforts last year, the Treasurer surrounded himself with four other stalwarts and a great amount of equipment for a mass assault on North West Gully. The route, which passes through very impressive rock scenery was enjoyed by all. Tony making a fine lead on an awkward bit near the top. After meeting up with John and Barbara on the summit, the party traversed the ridge in brilliant sunshine. Meanwhile, back on the Buachaille, Rupert and Mick spent all day hiding from the sun in Raven's Gully, only emerging at sundown for a moonlight descent back to the hut. Lack of sufficient snow and ice cover added to the difficulties of this already fierce Grade V.

Dinner was accompanied by a 1978 Chateau neuf du Bodkan, served chilled.

On Sunday, having already attracted considerable attention as probably the only climber in the glen wearing "nails", Dave decided to share the Beinn a Bheithir ridge with Cherry and Barry and the hard climbing duo accompanied them down the glen for No. 6 gully in Corrie Nam Beith. John, Barbara, Tony, Pete and George deciding that Sunday was a Buachaille day made for Great Gully. Although the soft snow at the top became very tedious, this is a splendid route which belies its modest I grading; as gathering clouds greeted their arrival on the summit ridge, a rapid descent was made back to the cottage. The next hour was spent hunting for the key - this finally being tracked down in Ballachulish. It was here also that the party met Mick and Rupert who pronounced their climb "a piece of duff". But extremely good.

An enjoyable weekend altogether, remembered for the superb weather and well informed chat with thanks to our hosts S.M.C.

Ladies Weekend March 11th/12th Stair

The party of 6 met as arranged at Ravenstone and Skiddaw was ascended via Ullock Pike and Long Side. Cockup was avoided on the descent, Whitewater Dash Waterfall being visited instead.

Sunday, joined by Chris, Causey Pike was climbed, blizzard conditions being experienced on Eel Crag; the Yorkshire section having done this in better weather on the Saturday. By the way, what did the climbers do that weekend?