

Fylde Mountaineering Club.



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THE YEAR WITH THE CLUB.

BY OUR CHAIRMAN. R.E. LEGGE.

The past year, the third since the inauguration of the club, has been one upon which we may all look back with considerable satisfaction. The inevitable "teething troubles" which all such organisations must face have been successfully overcome and the way is open for further progress and achievement.

The membership has increased beyond our expectations and though the problem of finding enough leaders is still apparent, the growing number of climbers with sufficient experience to fulfil these duties should very shortly ease the situation.

One of the most satisfying aspects of the club's progress has been the splendid way in which the meets have been attended. Not a single coach meet has been cancelled through lack of support, and though in the earlier part of the year this was partly due to the cooperation of our R.A.F. friends, more recent meets have revealed that ultimately we may find it necessary to seek additional transport.

Emphasis has been laid upon the fact that the club does not cater solely for rock climbers, in the past twelve months all the branches of mountaineering have been enjoyed. Fell walking, rock climbing, snow and ice climbing and skiing have each drawn their quota of enthusiasts, and although snow conditions have not been all that we hoped they would be, advantage has been taken of it whenever possible.

There have been a number of very satisfactory pot-holing meets. In the early days of the club when an occasional underground expedition was arranged, more or less experimentally, a mere half dozen or so members could be prevailed upon to attend, but at a recent meet at Lancaster Pot so many members attended that private cars were necessary in addition to normal coach transport.

Tribute must be paid to the work carried out by the Committee throughout the year. The success of the club must invariably depend to a great extent on the unstinting labours of the Committee whose chief endeavour

must always be to assess the requirements of the club members. The quest for new climbing venues and a variety of activities has been unceasing, and the popular acclaim which the coach meets to new areas in North Wales, Derbyshire and the Lake District received indicated that each was an unqualified success.

Activities at home have included a number of most enjoyable social evenings which provided an excellent opportunity to swap mountaineering yarns, compare photographs and meet new members.

The Annual Dinner Dance at the Park House Hotel was the highlight of the year's social activities and by its popular support has established itself as a keenly anticipated annual event.

The policy as regards lectures has been to confine these events to one or two of the very highest quality rather than to flood the syllabus with a number of lectures of less popular appeal. Both Mr. A. Robinson's beautifully illustrated lecture of the mountains of the Lake District and the Swiss Alps and Mr. A. Gregory's thrilling account and magnificent photographs of the British Himalayan Expedition, 1952 were an immense success and we look forward to a visit from both these lecturers again in 1953.

Recently an effort has been made to offer guidance to members of limited experience by organising evening meetings at which various aspects of mountaineering are dealt with. Although perhaps it is too soon to assess the value of the ventures, there is no doubt that the subjects of general mountaineering technique, mountain navigation, mountain rescue and first aid in the mountains can be of considerable value to all members.

Travel to mountaineering areas further afield to Skye, the Scottish Highlands and abroad to Switzerland and Austria has again attracted a considerable number of members and must certainly result in a general broadening of experience and mountaineering lore.



SUNSET OVER THE CULLINS.

G.B.



SKIING ON HIGH BAISE - LANGDALE.

W.C.

THE WEATHER.

Dirty days hath September, April, June and November,
All the rest have thirty one, without a blessed gleam
of sun,
And if one should have two and thirty,
They too would be as wet and dirty.

.S.D

Anon.

4.

A SERVICEMAN'S IMPRESSION OF THE F.M.C.

Had anyone told me two years ago that on one particular Sunday in December, 1952 I would have been groping about the bowels of the earth in the company of the F.M.C, and enjoying so weird a sport, I would probably not have been satisfied with calling him a liar but continued with other words that the censor prohibits. But I have, and regard it, and other parts of the F.M.C's activities in a favourable light.

It was this last summer when I first ventured aloft with the club on Great Gable. Then, a complete novice to the secret of rock climbing, I learnt from them how this delicate art is executed. Though my attempts may have been far from perfection, it was an enjoyable day and one to be remembered. From then on I attended every club meet that I possibly could through the aid of the Royal Air Force. This ranged from unorthodox burrowing of the earth's crust, to climbing on the dizzy heights of Wales.

Prior to my experiences with the F.M.C I had regarded such like organisations rather sceptically for like many amateur critics I was apt to criticize an organisation which I knew little about. Need I say that my views altered, for I realise that the F.M.C and others like it are typical of the social reforms of this century, and I personally am grateful for its presence, in which I have enjoyed many good outings.

S. NICOLL, F.Z.S.

5.

THE EAST FACE OF THE DENT DU REQUIN - 11,250 FT.

This mountain is one of the many aiguilles which lie on the Mont Blanc massif of France. It is best approached from Chamonix. It was from there that at 10-30 a.m. on a fine August morning last year that we took the mountain railway to Montenvers (6,200 ft) which is the starting point for many ascents, but is in addition, a mecca for the many thousands of tourists who come up from Chamonix to view the Mer-de-Glace.

Our route followed this glacier for five miles up to the Cabane Requin - a C.H.F. hut. On the way up we would see the peaks of the Dru, the Grand Jorasses and the Gröpon. Eventually a point was reached where the glacier splits into several tributary glaciers, the largest being the Glacier du Geant. We continued up this glacier, passing to the right of the ice fall until the Cabane was sighted; situated at the foot of the imposing east face of the Requin - our home for the morrow.

We were away at 4-30 a.m. next morning. The climbing starts immediately on the broken rocks behind the hut, then bearing right we put on our crampons prior to crossing the hard ice of the glacier in order to reach the foot of a large couloir flanked by a 3,000 ft rock wall. The ascent was speeded up as the day had dawned and when the sun's rays reach the frozen rock, stones would soon start cannoning down and this couloir would be a veritable death trap. The climbing was steep, and in addition to using crampons it was necessary to cut steps until a break in the right wall was reached, and an escape made on to the rock wall.

The route then followed a chimney which was ascended until an overhang necessitated a move to the left ridge. The crux of the climb then followed, this consisted of a series of thin cracks which were climbed relying mainly on the jamming of the hands and feet.

These cracks continued for about 500 ft and here we found the Rucksacks and ice axes to be constantly in the way and additional hazards. So far we had moved together in alpine style, and the absence of belays emphasised the need for extreme care in climbing rock which would be severe by Lakeland standards.

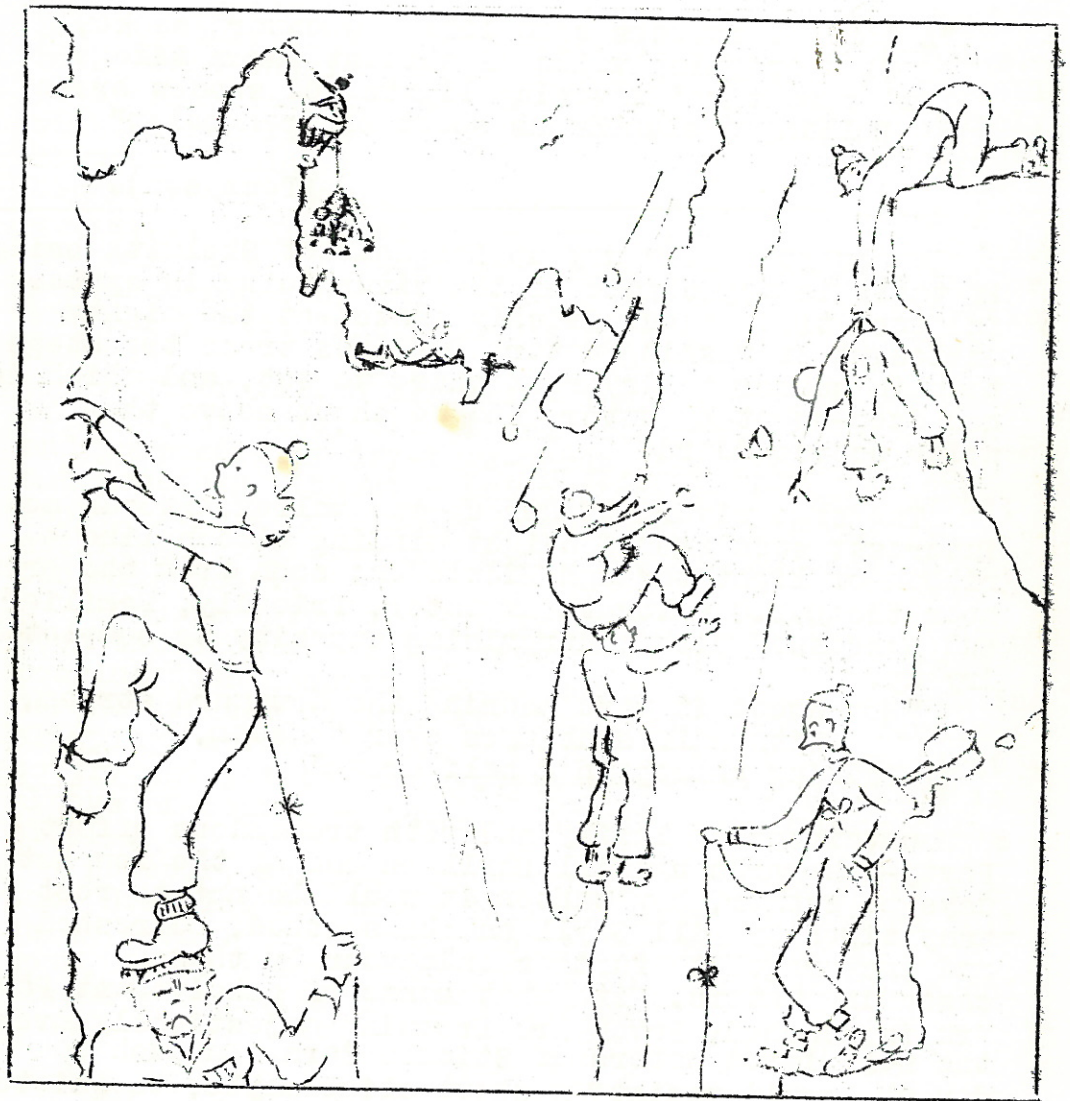
At 2-30 p.m. we reached a large ledge only 200 ft from the summit. This is called the Luncheon Ledge. Rucksacks and ice axes were left here for the return and the remainder of the climb was done in pitches using pitons for belays. The summit was reached at 3-0 p.m. when, after a brief survey of the great amphitheatre of surrounding peaks, we commenced the descent.

Two abseils were made down a chimney, first 50 ft then from a piton 60 ft to a small ledge, from here a semi hand traverse gave access to the ridge and the luncheon ledge where we collected our gear. The Ordinary Route was followed down to the glacier behind the peak. This glacier was descended first by glissading and then by jumping over crevasses until the ice fall appeared and once again crampons were needed to negotiate the steep ice. We threaded our way through the seracs which leaned and tottered above us as if they threatened to crush us at any moment. All that remained now was the descent of the broken rocks to the hut and so complete a memorable day in the French Alps.

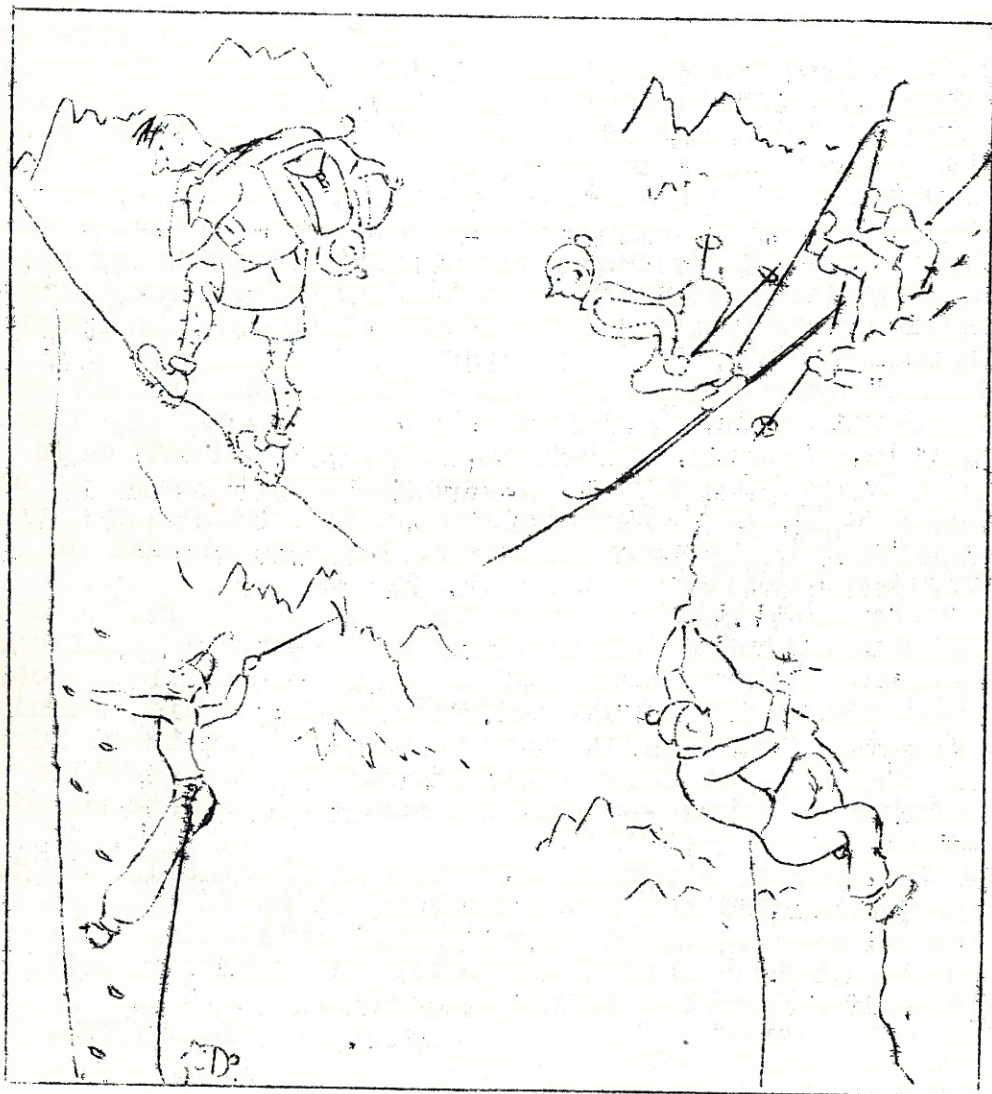
E. Lomas.

On Gimmer
Main Wall,
Roped on
Can't fall,
Half weight
Nylon line,
First pitch
Quite fine,
First stop
Bilberry ledge,
Quite keen
Sheer edge,
Traverse left
To stance,
Just clim
Don't dance,
Step right
Up again,
Darned main,
Belay again
Up rock
Passed large
Loose block,
Pouring down
What a lark,
Should have tried
Pavey Ark,
Right down
Steep hill,
Straight into
Dungeon Ghyll.

B.B.



A TYPICAL CLIMBING MEET



THE CLUB ENGAGES IN ALL THE
BRANCHES OF MOUNTAINEERING

AN UNDERGROUND ADVENTURE.

It was late 1952 when a pot-holing expedition was organised to the pot holes around Lancaster Pot on Casterton Fell. Several members had gone up to the caves on the Saturday to fix ladders for the descent of Lancaster Pot. There were two expeditions - one to the latter pot hole and the other to High Easgill Caverns. Both are recent discoveries in the caving world. Lancaster Pot has a drop of 120 ft to start with. This is negotiated by means of a rope ladder. High Easgill Cavern has its entrance at ground level. Four of us tackled the latter cavern.

We reached the entrance by way of Easgill. It was a cold day and where water usually runs there was thick ice. The entrance is very small - about 12 inches in height by 17 inches wide.

We lit our lamps and laying flat in our stomachs wriggled forward, propelling ourselves with elbows. There was no room to lift ones head and movement was slow and strenuous. Some twenty five feet in the passage became larger and we were able to crouch and rest. We moved on again snake like. Ten minutes passed and then we were standing in a large chamber at the top of a rope ladder. We climbed down to another passage and then through narrow water tunnels which varied in height and width. Sometimes we moved quickly but for most of the way we were forced to adopt a slow pace. Stalactite and Stalagmite formations became more frequent as we moved inwards. Further passages took us down a rock face, through a waterfall and along wonderfully decorated passages.

Some tunnels were running with water, others were bone dry. After an hour and a half we gauged our position to be about half way and over a mile from the entrance. Soon after our forward progress was stopped by a blocked passage. We then realised that somewhere back we had taken the wrong turning. We weren't at all

perturbed for it had been a wonderful excursion anyway. We should have been able to shout to members who had descended Lancaster Pot but with missing the way this was not possible.

We started on the return journey. At one point we stopped to light up a stalactite formation with candles in order to take some photographs. They were a magnificent sight.

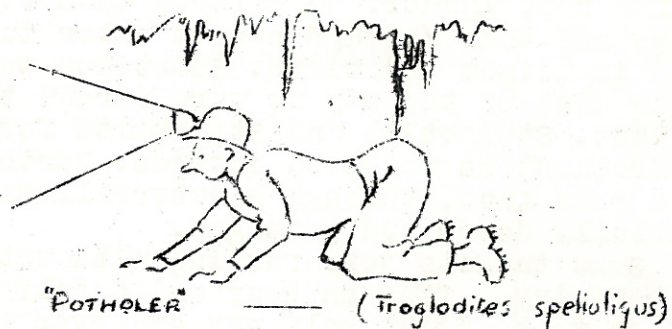
We moved to the bottom of the ladder and to the beginning of the outlet passage. This part is known as Slaughterhouse Passage. It has seemed hard when we entered but now it seemed even worse. We reached the exit some half hour later and crawled out into the gathering dusk.

We had been underground for over three and a half hours.

The lamps on our helmets were still shining as we walked down the frozen beck on our way to meet the other party at the coach.

We all agreed it had been a fine days sport.

Brian Bradley.



CLIMBING AROUND WASDALE.

During last summer I spent an enjoyable week centred in Wasdale. It is an ideal centre giving access to three of the major crags of Lakeland; Pillar Rock, The Napes Ridges and Scawfell.

This is by no means all the climbing available; Boat Howe, Gable Crag, Green Gable Crags, Pikes Crag and Overbeck and Yowbarrow are easily accessible from this centre.

Accommodation is not too plentiful, the Westdale Hotel or Burnside being the best. There is no bus service up the valley and campers need all supplied with them as the nearest shop is at Gosforth.

Now a few words about the crags. A high standard of climbing is necessary in rainy conditions and experience is essential particularly a knowledge of the area surrounding the crags, Pillar Rock and Scawfell are particularly tricky to get off in misty conditions.

The climbing on Pillar is good and well graded, "The New West" being very popular with the average climber.

Boat Howe comes next, the climbing is good but hard. Up grade all climbs one (i.e. Diff treat as severe) to the grading in the Guide Book. Treat Green Gable Crags the same, the best climbing on Green Gable being Epsilon.

Gable Crag is of particular structure and most of the best climbing is in the hard class.

Now we come to the Napes. The climbing is excellent and well graded. Abbey Buttress should be regarded as severe in nails. Buzzard Wall and yete climbs are not worth doing and Chantry Buttress is loose on the top pite pitch.

Pikes Crag comes next, the climbing is good and well graded. Wall and Crack and Jumper Buttress are excellent climbs, in fact they are the best on the crag.

Scawfell needs no introduction, most of the climbing is hard. Slingsby's and Keswick Brothers are the best for the average climber.

Lastly, Overbeck and Yowbarrow, again the climbing is good but the rock takes a long time to dry out. I might point out here that the Napes Ridges dry out very quickly.

I have given no locations as these can be obtained from the Guide Book. I have simply tried to give a guide to climbers who have not visited the crags. To give some idea of standards, to save precious minutes deciding what to do and save disappointment in attempting and having to turn back.

Lastly, I hope my remarks will help others to spend many happy days in this area.

J.D.J.W.

YEARNING.

I would, that I could once again,
 around the cooker sit,
And hearken to it's soft refrain,
 and feel so jolly fit.

Instead of home lifes silken chains,
 The uneventful round,
I long to be mid snow swept plains,
 With rucksack outward bound.

With the crunch, crunch crunch of cramponed feet,
 With fifty pounds per man,
Not enough pemmican or biscuit to eat,
 Well done lads, up tent, outspan.

W.D.C.

(Adapted from an original by Nelson
in the South Polar Times, B.A.E 1910)

THE CAIRNGORMS.

The Cairngorms are the lofty group of mountains some 250 sq miles in extent between the rivers Dee and Spey occupying a position roughly midway between the east and west coasts of N.E. Scotland. They contain the second highest mountain in the British Isles, Ben-Macdhui 4296 ft and three other distinct mountains over 4000 ft, Braeriach 4248 ft, Cairn-Toul 4241 ft and Cairngorm 4084 ft.

A feature of the Cairngorms is that in traversing all the peaks one need not descend lower than approx 2500 ft once the mountain plateau is reached; the conquest of the remaining peaks therefore is made easier.

Embraced within this area is a wealth of river, loch, forest scenery and remote lofty mountains which is not to be matched within similar compass anywhere else in the British Isles.

The greater part of the Cairngorms are covered by native scotch pine and silver birch and also to be found on the edge of the forests and lochs. For the most part the undergrowth consists of lichens and mosses and the mountains are covered in heather and short grass in lesser proportions. The high vegetation is definitely of arctic origin.

The charm of the region to the nature lover cannot be sufficiently accentuated and to the more keen amateur or expert Botanist or Zoologist the area presents something of a paradise in wild life.

The Cairngorms appear to have been formed during the Ice Age by erosion and denudation.

The formation of the valleys appears to have been caused by the huge glaciers which covered the region during the ice age. Examples of the moraines can be seen such as the boulder field in the Lairig-Ghru near the Pools of Dee. The mountaineer must not look in the Cairngorms for the jagged ridges and precipitous valley sides to be found in Glencoe and Skye. The huge forests of Glenmore and Rothiemurcus are the remains of the great Caledonian Forest which covered Scotland during prehistoric times.

To write of the Cairngorms recalls to my mind days spent on the great hills in the region of Cairngorm and Coire-Cas, or traversing on ski the wind swept plateaux, anxious times on occasions when everything was blotted out by the blizzard. I have seen my shadow cast as a broken spectre across the snows on Ben-Macdhui and for a moment almost wondered whether it could be the Gey M Man who is reputed to haunt the district.

I visited the Cairngorms with J.B. in late March, 1952 and a lasting memory will be the days spent on skis on Coire-Cas under the summit of Cairngorm with a clear blue sky, a crisp north east wind and the loose snow being blown skywards from the lip of the Coire like a huge glistening fountain in the sunlight. During that year we talked of visiting Norway, of high camps in the Jotunheim and devouring thick juicy steaks in some luxurious hotel in Bergen: we were not disappointed as the Cairngorms fulfilled, if not excelled all that we expected of them.

The Cairngorms owing to their position retain the snow longer than any other mountain range in the British Isles. The best ski slopes are on the Spey side of the mountains in the region of Coire-Cas, Coire-na-Ciste and Coire-an-Lochain. The best time for skiing is between January and April although skiers who are prepared to go high can ski well into May and even June.

Excellent snow and ice climbing can be had in the abundant gullies mostly on the east side of the summits. The area is an excellent training ground for budding Alpinists by reason of its extreme weather and remoteness. Frank Smythe once wrote, that while training Commandos in the area during the last war he experienced blizzards in the Cairngorms of far greater severity than anything he experienced while climbing Everest.

I remember well one cloudless evening standing on a small hill behind Aviemore and gazing across to the Cairngorms, The visibility was such that is often met with on clear frosty evenings, the lofty peaks were snow covered and

brightly lit by a full moon, the waters of Loch Morlich were shining in the moonlight and the whole splendour of the mountains and the valley of Glenmore would have to be seen to be appreciated; one could easily imagine that this was the Rhone Valley in the French Alps and not Scotland in late March.

From our first visit to the region - which can best be termed a reconnaissance, for we only touched on the fringe of this fine range of mountains - one important fact was learnt, that to cover the area thoroughly one must be prepared to camp - the nearer the mountains the better - Glenmore Lodge or Clach Bharraig being ideal sites. And to future parties a word of advice - go well equipped and self contained and leave nothing to chance, the slopes of Ben Macdhui make an inhospitable if not somewhat eerie bivouac.

"I must go back to the high hills,
the wind washed moors & rain washed fells,
I want to wander by the foaming ghylls,
and smell the heather and the peaty smells"

W.A.C.