

## OUTDOOR MEETS, 1939 to 1946.

Since the issue of our last Bulletin in 1939 the outdoor activities of our Association have naturally been considerably affected by six years of war. Following the opening of hostilities the increasing restrictions on travel led to fewer Meets and made it practically impossible to visit many of the usual climbing centres. However, even in the most difficult periods we carried on in a modest way, the humble bicycle making possible exploration of the countryside around Birmingham and helping to keep together in a sociable manner those members of the Association who were at home.

The high spots of activity in those anxious times were the holiday week-ends we spent in the Ogwen district, and during each year of the war we usually managed one in the Spring and another in the Autumn. Many of us still have vivid recollections of those wartime Meets: the crowded trains, the very late arrival at Ogwen Cottage on Friday nights, packed sardonically in Rowlands' taxi, and the scoldings we got from Mrs. Williams for coming in late after a day stretched to its longest so as to get the fullest enjoyment from our brief visit to the hills.

The end of hostilities quickly brought about an expansion of our activities, which were greatly facilitated by the acquisition of our Club Hut, Glan Dena, in the Ogwen Valley. The very welcome return of many of our young and active members from the Forces, together with a gratifying influx of keen new members, has been a great stimulus and has resulted in a very good attendance at the majority of our more recent Meets.

The following accounts of our Meets from 1939 to the present time is an attempt to record those earlier gatherings, snatched from the stress of war, as well as the post-war activities of the Association. It is hoped that many members will be interested to recall the various phases and vicissitudes through which we have passed during the last seven years.

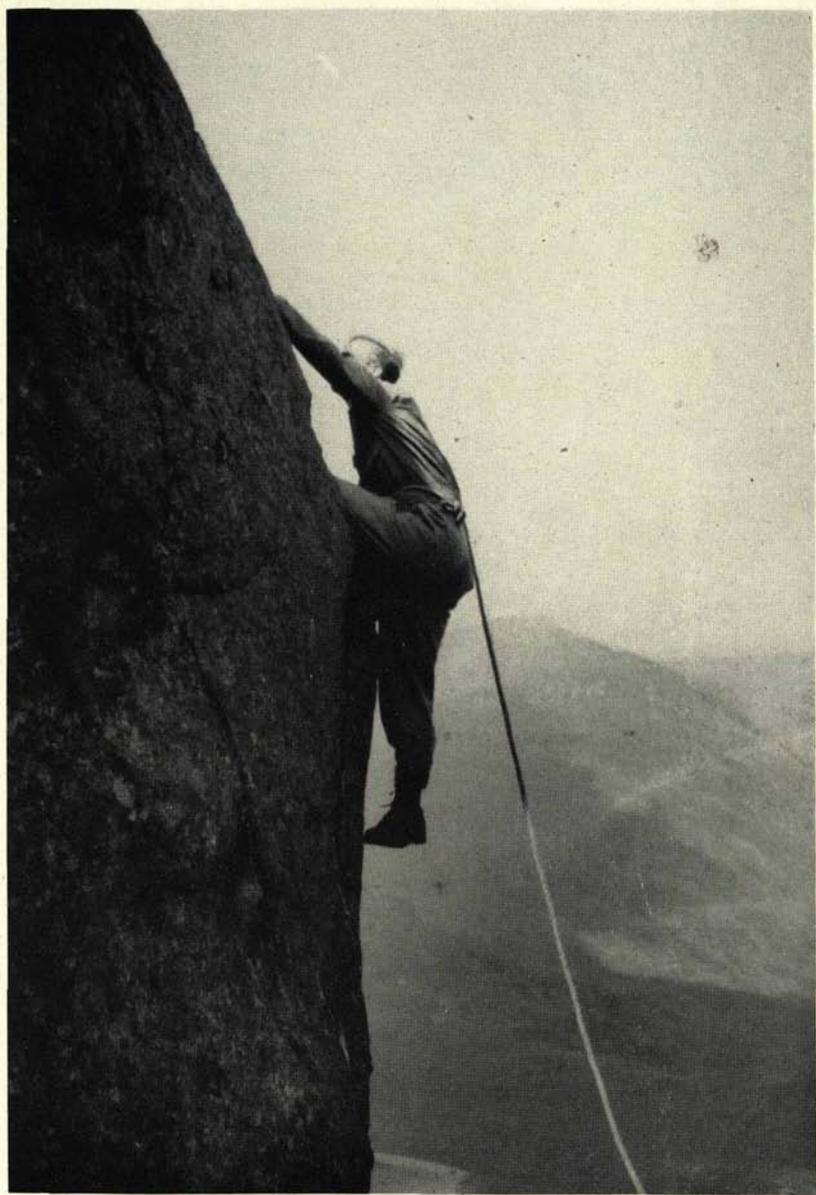
### *The War Years.*

During 1939 successful Holiday Meets were held at Capel Curig and Wastdale, together with visits to the Derbyshire rocks of Cratcliffe and Cromford. Camping week-ends were also spent in the New Radnor and Aran Fawddy Districts.

In the Winter of 1939-40 well-attended walks were held in the vicinity of Clent, Hopwas, Tamworth and Harvington. The war in 1940 caused a large reduction in the number of Meets. Six only were held, compared with twelve during the preceding year. Three of these were spent at the Guest House, Capel Curig, another was a joint Meet with the Rucksack Club at Cratcliffe, and the other two were local walks.

Petrol restrictions during 1941 created difficulties which were to some extent overcome by hiring motor coaches to take members to some of our usual haunts, and highly successful expeditions were conducted to Capel Curig, Brassington and Cannock Chase. The last named was particularly enjoyable, the party being most hospitably entertained to tea by our members, Mr. and Mrs. J. Best, at their home, at Colton.

During the Winter 1941-2 several successful local walks were held; public transport was the usual method of reaching the localities. Districts visited were Shenstone, Kinver and Claverdon. The first Climbing Meet in 1942 was held at Ogwen Cottage at Whitsuntide, our usual headquarters (the Guest House at Capel Curig) having been taken over as a First Aid Post. By the exercise of great economy sufficient basic petrol was available to transport 17 members and friends to this delightful spot.



HOME CLIMB

*F. H. Restall*

On this occasion our party included Dr. Bujak, a Polish mountaineer of considerable experience with some fine first ascents in the Himalayas to his credit, including the East Peak of Nanda Devi. His ability on rock and his charming personality made him a most welcome addition to the party. Shortly afterwards he became a full member of the Association.

It was during 1942 that the basic petrol ration came to an end. Before it did so, however, we held a very sociable and well-attended Meet at Brassington. This will be especially remembered by all those who were present, because of the delicious strawberries-and-cream tea provided on a most lavish scale by the leader, Mr. C. Machin. After tea, Mr. Machin conducted the party, replete as it was, to a curious pinnacle about 30 feet high in a nearby field, and any possible effects of over-indulgence were averted by making the ascent of this freak of nature by several amusing routes. At the end of the season a Climbing Meet attended by a small party was held at Pen-y-Pass. This party was most energetic, and climbs were made on Lliwedd, Tryfan, Craig-yr-Isfa, the Teyrn Slabs, and Lockwood's Chimney.

At the end of 1942 most of the Birmingham 'bus services on Sunday mornings were suspended. It was decided to try as an experiment a combined cycling and walking Meet—a venture that proved a considerable success. Many subsequent outings on the same lines were held, choosing different localities around Birmingham so as to give opportunity for as many members as possible to attend. A particularly happy Meet of this kind was held at the end of Summer 1944 and led by Mr. Wallace May, our President at that time. After a pleasant walk in the Oldberrow district the party were most hospitably entertained to tea by Mr. and Mrs. May at their delightful log cabin in the beautiful Warwickshire countryside. Extensive views were enjoyed on this occasion of the Edge Hill, the Cotswolds, the Malverns and Abberley Hills.

Our Climbing Meets had to be reduced to two per annum after 1942, and this remained the case until the cessation of hostilities. To cut down transport to the absolute minimum, and at the same time to afford the maximum climbing facilities in the time available, these were all held at Ogwen Cottage. It speaks well for the enthusiasm of our members that in spite of wartime difficulties all these Meets were very well supported. Indeed, the average attendance at North Wales Meets during the war years was 20. It became necessary to secure additional accommodation at Gwern-y-gof-Uchaf and other farms in the Ogwen Valley.

As a result, the amount of climbing done in this area was considerable, and climbs of a high standard were successfully tackled. Among these were the Great Gully Craig-yr-Isfa, the Direct Route Glyder Fach, Tennis Shoe and Holly Tree Wall Idwal Slabs, and some exploring on a crag high up to the right of the Devil's Kitchen cliffs. This latter was named by the party "Craig-yr-Kuba," Dr. Bujak being responsible for introducing them to this crag and "Kuba" being the name by which the Doctor was affectionately known to his friends. Dr. Bujak's tragic disappearance some little time later came as a great shock to the many friends he had made in this country.

In 1945 came the reintroduction of the basic petrol ration and with it an expansion in the number and scope of our Meets. One of the most noteworthy was the Joint Meet with the Rucksack Club at Cratcliffe, a highly enjoyable occasion in that it enabled us to renew what in pre-war days had been an invariable annual fixture with the Manchester Club. The most outstanding event of the year, a milestone in the history of the Association, was the acquisition of our Club Hut, Glan Dena, a full account of which appears elsewhere in this Journal.

*Post War.*

"V.E. Day" and "V.J. Day" ushered in the (so-called) piping days of peace, and a fortnight after the latter Eric Byne and party celebrated it by making the first complete ascent of the Central Bypass climb on Tryfan, which is fully described on another page.

Following the official opening of our Club Hut by the President, Mr. J. E. Grosvenor, on 22nd September 1945, it is only natural that most of our subsequent Welsh Meets have been held there. They have averaged about one a month, and all have been very well supported. This has also given us the opportunity of holding Joint Meets with other climbing clubs and thus returning the hospitality we have enjoyed on many past occasions.

Christmas 1945 saw a very cheery party gather at the Hut under the leadership of John Alexander, and the success of this first Christmas Party was rendered complete and unquestionable by the kindness of Mrs. Pratchett in undertaking the cooking. Her skill and capability produced a Christmas dinner comparable with the best of pre-war days; and a goose of phenomenal size, brought by John Alexander from London, cooked in the ovens of Gwern-y-gof-Uchaf, and rushed by fast car thence to the table, was delicious.

*1946.*

This year saw our outdoor activities fully restored to pre-war standards.

The year began with a Walking Meet in the Cotswolds, when a large party enjoyed a most pleasant walk starting and finishing at the pretty village of Ilmington.

Later in the same month a Meet was held in the Peak District, the party staying at Tunstead House, near Hayfield. In the afternoon of Saturday the leader, Cyril Machin, introduced some members to "mountaineering in reverse." In other words, he took them potholing. The "pot" visited was the Giant's Hole, Rushup Edge. All who went found the experience enjoyable but decidedly moist—those who went "under the curtain" extremely so, for this involved wriggling forward in eel-like fashion for some distance. A delightful walk by moonlight followed, over Kinder Scout with hard snow underfoot. Kinder was visited again the next day, and the Downfall, a staircase of solid ice, was a beautiful sight. Icicles twenty feet long were to be seen.

Two other highly successful Walking Meets were held during the year, one in the Church Stretton district and the other at Clifton-on-Teme.

Ten official Climbing Meets were held at the Hut and included Joint Meets with the Rucksack Club, Climber's Club, Manchester University Mountaineering Club and University of Birmingham Mountaineering Club. All our guests were well pleased with their visit, and congratulated us on having such a fine Club Hut. We look forward to a continuance of these Joint Meets with pleasure.

An invitation to visit the Manchester University Mountaineering Club Hut at Tyn-y-Weirglodd was gratefully accepted in July and our hosts introduced us to climbs on Y Garn, Craig-y-Bere, and in Cwm Silin, some of which were new to us.

One-day Climbing Meets were held at Cratcliffe with the Rucksack Club and Stanage Edge with members of Sheffield University Mountaineering Club.

An attempt at a Camping Meet met with rather poor support, probably owing to the rationing situation and the difficulty of obtaining and transporting camping equipment. The intrepid four who camped in Cwm Bychan were rewarded with a very jolly week-end and some enjoyable walking and scrambling on the Rhinogs in cool and misty but invigorating weather.

The most outstanding Meet of the year was probably the Easter Meet at Fort William. The snow and ice conditions on Ben Nevis were good, and twenty-four members, most of whom stayed at the Highland Hotel, enjoyed excellent sport. The Tower Ridge was ascended by several parties and in the gullies step-cutting practice was plentifully provided. One party had an exciting time in Number Two Gully after a fresh snowfall; the exit was heavily corniced but the leader, undismayed, cleverly forced at passage. There were also scrambles and ridge-walks amid the delightful scenery of the Ben's subsidiary peaks and glens. We were delighted to have with us on several expeditions our member Dr. Donald Duff of the Belford Hospital, Fort William. Since taking up his duties in the shadow of the Ben Dr. Duff has organised and taken a very active part in several mountain rescues in the district, including the rescue of at least one very well-known mountaineer.

Whitsuntide found an energetic party of twenty members at Burnthwaite in Wastdale. The weather was mainly good—during this week the Lakes were kinder in this respect than almost any other part of Britain—and most of the usual routes on Great Gable, Scafell, and Pillar were climbed as well as some outlying climbs. Napes Needle was climbed six times, New West on Pillar twice, and harder climbs included the Abbey Buttress and Scimitar Ridge on Gable and Juniper Buttress on Pike's Crag. Fell-walking was not neglected in this district of magnificent views, and long walks were enjoyed with the nominal object of imbibing tea in various valleys. The party returned very well pleased with this holiday and expressed the unanimous hope that a Lakes Meet will be an annual feature of the Association's outdoor programme.

1946 was fittingly terminated by the second Glan Dena Christmas Party. Our members Mr. and Mrs. Pratchett most nobly shouldered the difficult and arduous responsibility of leading this festive gathering. Not only did they undertake, at their own request, the catering for the entire party for the whole of Christmas Day, but followed this by putting on a magnificent dinner for 24 on the Saturday evening at the end of the same week. So wholeheartedly did they devote themselves to the welfare and comfort of the party that they did not allow themselves time to go out on the hills during the whole of the holiday. If incomparable "grub" and a time of good cheer that all those present will long remember is any criterion, then their hard work and self-sacrifice more than succeeded in their objective.

#### *The Future.*

In 1947 we look forward to widening still further our sphere of activities. Our programme includes four major Meets, and bookings indicate enthusiastic support for them all. At Easter we revisited Fort William, at Whitsuntide the Lakes and Skye. In July the Alpine Meet is to have Argentièrè as its centre, and there will be a party of twenty-five present.

There will be in addition regular Meets at Glan Dena, two Walking Meets, and visits to Cratcliffe and Black Rocks.

The weather we want cannot, unfortunately, be "laid on." But if 1947 bestirs itself to make amends for the pseudo-summer of 1946, then some splendid days on the hills are in store.

F.H.R.