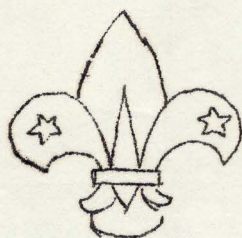


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Venture

44

AUGUST

1976

NUMBER TWENTY-ONE

VENTURE 44. A sort of magazine, by, for, and about the 44th
Gloucester (S.T.R.S.) Venture Scout Unit.

NUMBER TWENTY ONE

AUGUST 1976

EDITOR Steve Davies.

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It had been hoped to produce this issue of the magazine about a month ago, but various hold-ups have contributed to its late appearance - notably the time spent on preparing for "Island Venture 76". This event is now behind us, and a full account will be featured in the next issue



To mark the 21st issue of Venture 44, we are privileged to have this opportunity to print a letter from Mr Stocks, who continues, as ever, to take a keen interest in the affairs of the Unit and the progress of the magazine in particular.

Wolverhampton, 22 June.

It is a great pleasure to offer this contribution to Venture 44 on the occasion of the publication of its 21st issue. I send my warmest congratulations to all those who over the years have concerned themselves with recording the achievements of the School Venture Unit and linking past and present members in this magazine.

It seems a long time since I first visited the 44th Senior troop in its headquarters in St. Michael's Tower at the Cross. I well recall Mr Cooper's efforts which were fortunately successful to convince the M.E.B. that the two electric light bulbs which illuminated that extraordinary room had not burned enough electricity to warrant a bill for over £1000! Apparently some of the city's Christmas Illumination lights were responsible! It was always a lively Unit as Frank Henderson will testify and my hope is that a number of those passing through the Unit today will ultimately take out warrants and in their local Group help to solve the desperate problem of Scout leader shortage, as he has done.

The 44th has been extraordinary fortunate in having three dynamic leaders in John Cooper, Frank Henderson and now Bill Spear. So much depends on the enthusiasm and commitment of those who unselfishly give their energy, thought and time to the Scout movement. The reconstruction of the present Scout hut is an illustration of this. Committees are useful in producing ideas and formulating programmes but they never do the job itself. It is the individual's commitment which scouting has always demanded. Those who have given themselves in this way find that they receive infinitely more than they give - this is one of the paradoxes of life.

I shall always be grateful to the Venture Scouts of the

44th for the influence they had on life at Rich's. A school that stands still will die on its feet. The Unit has always been prepared to attempt the impossible - "to strive, to seek, to find and not to yield." It has supplied many fine leaders in school life who have brought to it vitality and freshness. They were not simply concerned with having a good time but were ready to play a useful and positive role in the life of the fifth and sixth forms. Now at a time when there is so much mediocrity and materialism in our society - and a school is a microcosm of society - it is imperative that this tradition at Rich's should continue.

I owe more than I can ever express to the Scout Movement. My father and two uncles each founded Scout Troops. I have found many of my friends from its ranks and my admiration for those who give it a lifetime of service knows no bounds. I am proud to be still a Vice-President of the Gloucester Scout Association and was glad to be able to attend its Annual General Meeting recently. I realised yet again what the young people in Scouting in Gloucester owe to those who give their lives to it. Many of my old scouts from Wolverhampton are doing just that and I hope the same will be true of the present Venture Scouts in the 44th.

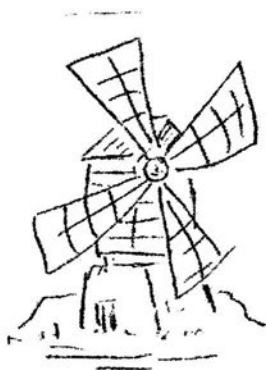
I extend my best wishes to all the Unit. Good luck in "Island Venture" and prove yourselves the best Venture Unit in Gloucestershire!

J.A.Stocks

NOTES & NEWS

June the 12th saw about 3000 cubs, all apparently with small capacity bladders, descend on Misarden Park for a rally to celebrate 60 years of Cub Scouting. Their apparent mission was to fill two large holes that we had laboriously dug out on the night before. In fact three holes were dug, but we hit a spring at the first attempt, and nearly lost three diggers! Any interested geologist may like to know that the soil at Misarden is three inches deep, then it is solid rock!

(cont page 16)

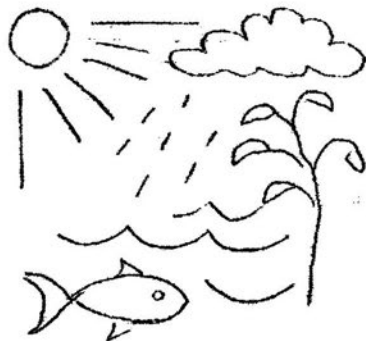
CENTRE FOR ALTERNATIVE TECHNOLOGY

This national centre is sited in North Wales in a disused slate quarry at Llwyngwern, near Corris. It aims to show that people can live on limited material resources with the minimum of waste and pollution, but without lowering the standard of living as we know it. The site is open to the public, who are welcomed to inspect the work that is being carried on with in the area.

The centre has been designed on a walk around basis, each exhibit is both described in the guidebook, (printed on 100% recycled paper) and by a placard, so that the uninitiated layman is catered for. The exhibits have been constructed by the centre staff and helpers - all unpaid - in the main, but some manufactured items are included in the displays.

All the energy reaching the earth emanates from the sun. Direct capture of this energy is shown by the use of solar cells, which are attached to the walls of the houses, and they can be used to trickle charge batteries in the daytime. Other methods of energy capture are far simpler - a water filled black "radiator" insulated in a glass jacket will provide hot water in the summer, and assist hot water production in the winter.

Many windmills, or windpumps are exhibited, the largest of which can generate 150 kw, although as the centre points out, even in sheltered districts a correctly sized windmill will produce 5 watts, and that can trickle charge a battery. The staff and volunteers live in several self-sufficient houses, the old quarrymen's cottages which have



been converted to provide their own heating, lighting and hot water, as well as controlled ventilation and insulation to reduce heat losses.

Food plays an important part in alternative technology - the centre boasts a large garden fed by manure and organic waste matter. Material is recycled to improve crop yields and no artificial fertiliser is used, except to demonstrate the efficiency of the organic fertiliser compared to itself. Also a fish culture pond is to be opened - utilising carp which feed on algae and plant matter.

The centre is impressive and shows that the layman can, with a little help, become more self-sufficient and thus less wasteful.

Steve Preston

The above article was prompted by a visit to the centre by a small group returning from Cader Idris at Whitsun.

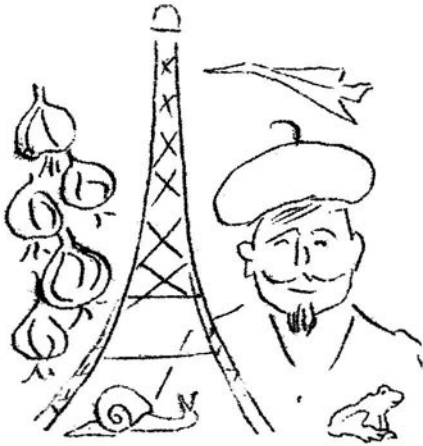
Also stimulated by the visit was the decision to build a wind powered generator to take to the western isles so that we could run a portable television, and hence see the Olympic Games during "Island Venture". Well, the portable T.V. didn't go, but a strange device made of tin cans and bicycle wheels did eventually get erected on a lonely scottish hillside. For the full story of "STREB", read the next edition of Venture 44.

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The Unit darts tournament was won, as expected, by Bren Noonan, who has since won a knockout tournament at The "Pike and Musket", beating in the process two Gloucester City players.

Mark Evans was seen at the Three Counties Show leading a Jersey cow around the show ring. He got third place in the class. The cow was not placed.

A group of 8 members of the Unit will be going up to North Wales later this month to help out on a service project for the National Trust.



The Secret of Success, or How to be an English Assistant.

Any budding linguist planning to "do time" in France should take note of the following.

First of all you should get in with the concierge (caretaker). If you play your cards right you can get your socks darned, free loo paper, and a credit account for all the telephone calls you make to the assistant you fancy in Paris. Then find out where

all the other assistants in your town live. It's great to be able to moan about how much you miss Dr Who, and cheese on toast, and to gloat over the latest drop in the pound because your pay is in Francs. If, as in my case, the other assistants can't speak English properly, ("Eee-ecky-by-thump!") or wear knee length M & S duffle-coats bought in 1960 ("I'll buy another one when this one is worn out!"), don't despair - just try to keep your sanity.

Always swear blindly that Napoleon wasn't such a bad guy after all, and it's not your fault if the Channel tunnel was stopped. Never mention Giscard, just talk about the Queen. When it comes to giving lessons, a good bit of indoctrination never goes amiss. Teach the kids to sing "God save the Queen" and then tell them to sing it louder. The teachers in the surrounding classrooms will quiver with socialist indignation.

So what is it really like you ask in despair? It all depends what you make of it! I've met assistants here who are stuck on their own for long periods and just yearn to go home. There are others who have the time of their lives, who really enjoy every minute of it. They are few, and have spent several months away from home, and know what independence is. My case, by what I've heard from others, is pretty typical. I had 3 or 4 rather uncomfortable weeks at the beginning, when

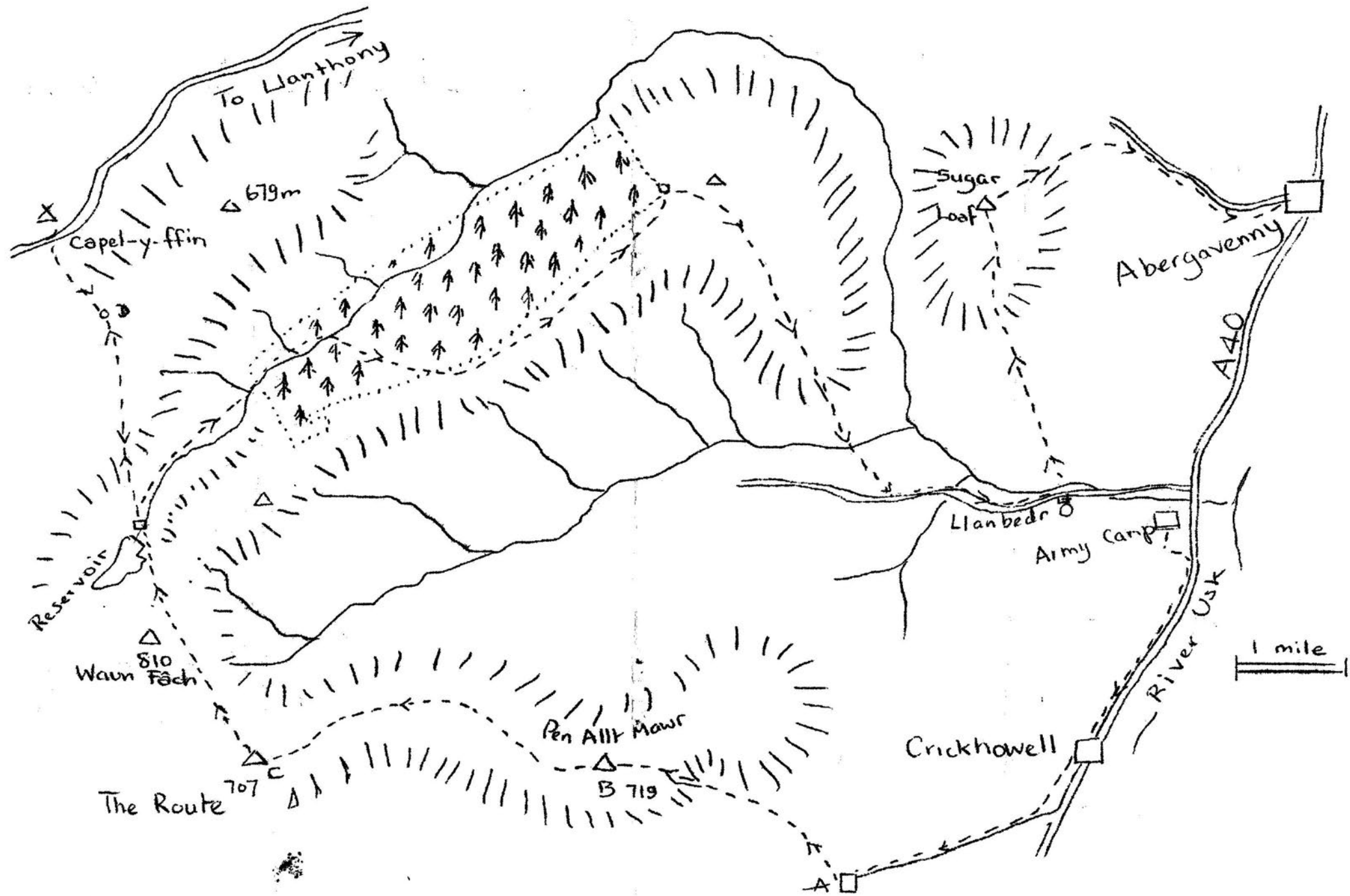
(Continued on page 15.)

BLACK MOUNTAIN MADNESS

After our success in the Cotswold Marathon the Unit decided to venture further afield, and so we entered a team in the Black Mountains Expedition organised by Gwent County. It entailed exercises in camping, initiative and navigation, as well as speed, and was staged over a weekend in July. Our team comprised of Mark Evans, Mark Bennett, Wally Champion and Steve Allen, with the V.S.L. providing the necessary back up. 22 teams took part, three of which had crossed the border.

The event, starting at the army camp at Crickhowell, was divided into two sections with a total distance of 30 miles. We were the first team to start on Saturday, but were somewhat delayed by the non-appearance of Mark Evans. After much frantic searching he was found, blissfully unaware of our panic, relaxing in the army toilets. We hastened on in the extremely hot weather, and the steep climb up to the second checkpoint at Pen Allt-mawr (719m) coupled with rucksacks filled with bricks (so Wally maintains) saw friction developing between several members of the team. However, the marshals had not yet arrived at this checkpoint, so we spurred on along the ridge to the next stop. Here we were allowed 30 minutes for lunch before we tried our skills on a navigation exercise. During this we passed over Waun Fach and down to the reservoir. Owing to a slight inaccuracy in the compass(?) we were awarded with no marks for our effort! Undeterred, we crossed the last ridge to our campsite at Capel-y-ffin. We had completed our first day's schedule in four hours, and were about two hours up on the next team.

Boots were removed, a sumptuous army meal consumed, supplemented by the V.S.L.'s larder, and then we retired to bed with eager anticipation of the morrow. A six-thirty "rise and shine" in a native accent brought streams of abuse from many tents. Nevertheless, we stirred our weary limbs, breakfasted, and with the honour of the Unit at stake, we retraced our steps to the reservoir. There, with the aid of our collaborator, who was later shot, we managed to get the dead



-ly virus and ourselves across the gorge. This successfully completed we followed the valley downstream then up through the plantations to the checkpoint on the ridge.

The next section was timed with a limit of one hour twenty minutes for a maximum score. So the tourists and sheep were confronted with the strange sight of 4 red faced Venture scouts, laden with kit, charging down a mountain and running along roads to make it by just nine minutes. Having overcome near mutiny as we overtook several cars, we started our final crippling ascent - the Sugar Loaf. This proved immensely popular as we lost Wally on the first stretch, but with a little gentle persuasion we got him to the top, meeting the V.S.L. Only one stage left now in the heat of the afternoon, the descent to Abergavenny, and the finish.

The rotund army chef had prepared an excellent meal, but Wally didn't seem to have much of an appetite. A two hour wait followed as other teams finished and the points were then tallied up. "Second, 20th Swansea, 219 points.....first, 44th Gloucester, 325 points!" We didn't hear what came after, and together with our trophies, we happily retraced our route out of Wales taking the shield from its native land for the first time.

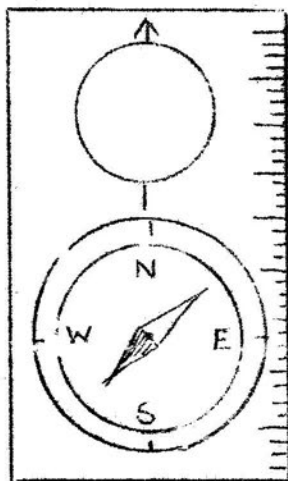
Many thanks must go to the V.S.L. for his support and encouragement ("You won't win, so you might as well forget it") and to those who took part and put up with me. Now the Unit has a double to aim for next year - O.K. Mark?

Steve Allen (aided and abetted by Mark Bennett)

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It was agreed at a general meeting in July that in future the subscription and membership fee should be £5 each year to be paid by the end of the second week in October. There will be no change in the associate membership subscription, this remains at £1, payable on January 1st each year.

Orienteering is a sport combining cross country running and map reading - the idea being to run round a given course with the aid of a map and a compass in the fastest time possible. Check points must be visited on the way as shown on the map, and to stand any chance of winning you must visit all the controls correctly. The successful competitor has to combine accuracy with speed - the challenge should appeal to anyone interested in outdoor activities.



An introductory event was organised for all members of the school and not surprisingly many of the competitors came from this Unit. The event, held in Cranham woods attracted 16 competitors - a little disappointing for the 5 organisers who had put a lot of hard work in to make this first event a success. All the competitors agreed the 5 km course was good - neither too long nor too short. The winning team, Steve Allen and Bren Noonan, completed the course in 50 minutes, a very good effort. Second places went to T. Stuart in 1 hour, and a very hot, red faced V.S.L. came in a creditable third in 63 minutes. Unfortunately the patent Spear Orienteering method appeared to hit some difficulties. It involved the principle that the shortest distance between two points is a straight line. This may be so, but brambles and undergrowth made it difficult to make good use of the fact, and so the A.V.S.L. ended up 10th in 1 hour 32 minutes.

On the 10th of May the first Gloucestershire inter school Orienteering competition was held. Five members of the Unit were among the 11 competitors from our school. The organisation was done by the North Gloucestershire Orienteering Club, and everything was handled very efficiently - but unfortunately one control was placed incorrectly, and this caused some

confusion. All the other controls, however, although rather inconspicuous, were correctly placed. It proved a very successful evening for Rich's teams; we had 4 teams in the first 7 places, with R.Thwaites and T.Stuart being placed first with a time of 1 hr 5 m. The V.S.L. was first in the staff section in 1 hour 22 minutes.

Everyone who has participated in the events so far has agreed that orienteering is an interesting sport, and I hope many more Venture Scouts will participate in forthcoming competitions. The formation of a Gloucestershire Schools Orienteering Association is at present in the balance, and I hope that with your support the association will soon be firmly established. It should provide good opportunities for successful sport for many Rich's competitors in the future.

Rob Pragnell.

For those who may be interested, here is a list of some of the N.G.O.C. training events during the next few months.

Saturday Sept 4th. Bracelands C.S.162 564130

Saturday Oct 9th. Brockworth O.S.143 890168

Saturday Nov 6th. Speech House O.S.162 623123

Saturday Dec 4th. Bracelands O.S. 162 564130

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We welcome two new members to the Unit - Steve Preston and Chris Collins. We will be losing a number of stalwarts in the near future, dependant on exam results, of course! We will certainly be saying goodbye to Clive Pattenden and to Rob Pragnell - whose organising powers will be greatly missed. Also Julian Williams has now left, after serving as secretary for the year. This position will be filled next year by Mark Evans. We extend our best wishes to all who are leaving, and hope that they will keep in touch.



ARTIFICIAL SKIING

Being an account of the 44th's incursion into the jet-setting art of winter (well, spring) sport.

On a warm sunny April afternoon, a dozen members of the Unit set out to learn to ski on "Piste Robinswood" reputedly the longest artificial ski slope in England. Greeted by the cheery face of the friendly instructor, we were kitted out with the polished pointed planks called skis. The length was a bit of a problem - I'm used to 12" of foot to stand on, but 5 foot - well!

The first thing the prospective skier discovers is that walking as normally as possible up the slope has drawbacks - beyond a certain angle progress forwards and upwards becomes impossible, but progress backwards becomes not only possible, but compulsive!

Skiing down the slope was the first exercise. Having reached a reasonable height, the momentum is usually sufficient to carry you to the bottom of the slope, and often beyond. Steering the skis is no problem. They decide where they are going, and that is that. You are spared the necessity of making decisions. Quite often, however, the skis seem to be strangely attracted to other long pieces of wood, such as trees fence posts, or to other skis on the feet of other skiers. These objects provided very convenient braking devices, and when not available, hands and backsides were useful for that purpose also. Some skiers quickly developed special skills - notably Keith Franklin, who showed it was possible to ski not only on the nylon, but also on grass, gravel, and concrete! His braking technique, which involved ramming the fronts of his skis into a wire fence some distance from the slope, was much admired by passers by.

To ascend the main slope we used a fiendish device worthy of the torture chambers of the spanish inquisition - the ski

tow. Its terrible progress was never to be halted so when you stopped, and it didn't, problems occurred. This terrible device took a particular dislike to Dave Brown and attempted to kill him on a number of occasions.

"Very, very, very good!" was the standard comment of the instructor, regardless of performance - either of olympic potential or being tangled up with crossed skis - a frequent occurrence!

Skiing is regarded as a dangerous sport, although the likelihood of avalanches on Robinswood Hill is not particularly great. Fortunately most of the injuries incurred during the four weeks of the course were minor ones, bruises, friction burns, and damaged pride - whoops! I forgot the V.S.L's broken hand - sorry!

Pete Bright.

SKIING ON REAL SNOW (WELL, NOT QUITE)

Three members of our Unit formed part of a group who spent some time in the Cairngorms this Easter. After meeting up at Leeds, where we spent several days engaged in cultural activities, such as going to the theatre, visiting Malham Cove, and seeing Leeds United twice, we set off for Scotland on Easter Sunday. We arrived at Glen Muick, on the Queen's Balmoral estate in the evening. We had a contact in the Aberdeen University Mountain Rescue team, so we had the use of their hut, which afforded the most luxurious accommodation a Venture Scout had enjoyed all year!

The weather was good all week - it was almost too good for walking in the mountains. On the Monday we climbed the local peak, Lochnagar, 3768 ft. This was quite a gentle climb, which didn't suit some people. A patch of snow gave us a chance to practise braking with ice-axes. The next day, Mark was on Lochnagar again whilst Frank and I penetrated the wild country east of Glen Muick to collect some rocks. We were impressed by the huge number of deer and hares to be seen in the area.

Wednesday was the big day for us. We climbed Ben Macdui,

4296 ft, the second highest peak in Britain. After a false start when we had to return to Braemar to get some sunglasses we set off from the Linn of Dee for the 20 mile round walk. There were five of us, and we made good progress up Derry Cairngorm, and arrived on the high plateau where we saw the only reasonable snow of the week, but still not enough to ski on. We had brought with us lots of pairs of skis, but had no opportunity to use them. This was a bit of a disappointment but we soon got over it - Mark by climbing everything that he could see including a 60ft pine tree, and me by collecting a lot of rocks.

Thursday was a day used for recovery - we had spent ten hours out on the hills the day before - and we climbed up to the corrie below Lochnagar and looked for the smoky variety of quartz, but alas did not find any of that either.

We set off south on Friday, and after another night in Leeds we returned eventually to Gloucester and unpacked the skis. At least they produced no broken bones...

Chris Pashley.

The Secret of Success.. continued from page 6

I was stuck on my own for quite long periods, and I did get pretty depressed. The only thing to do was to go out and not let it get you down. By the end of those few weeks, I was so into the rhythm of school life, and had made so many contacts that the time began to fly by. I really began to enjoy myself and have done ever since. The process of leaving the security of home had to be got over sooner or later, and for me it was reasonably painless.

Whilst in France, I have done a great deal of travelling (assistants are very well paid) made a great deal of progress in my French, without making any great effort, and gained an immense amount of experience. All this may sound like something out of a bad student prospectus, but I really can thoroughly recommend the whole course to anyone who is interested.

See you in the Fountain.....

John Price.

Notes and News (continued from various pages.)

With the Boston Marathon only a month away work has started on a new "racing double" canoe. The revolutionary new design (not revolutionary in the sense that it will readily turn over) is aimed at producing something rather longer, and perhaps lighter than the craft used in the event last year. It is hoped that the crew of Wally Champion, who is building the boat, and A.N.Other - who seems to have been in the Unit for a long time - will be able to break the six hour barrier this year.

At long last the Unit 5-a-side soccer team has won the School Trophy. The final of this event was a bit of an anti-climax, as we won fairly comfortably. The winning team of John Penry-Williams, Roger Smith, Chris Pashley, Bren Noonan, and Ian Fletcher, supported by Darrall Jones, had a blend of youth and experience, where as most teams in the competition were based on-year groups.

Large quantities of firewood have been sawn up recently for distribution by Glosaid to old folk. A good number of members have been decorating, gardening, etc. in conjunction with Glosaid. There is always much work of this nature to be done, and I hope that all new members will appreciate that involvement in projects of this nature is an integral part of the life of the Unit.

The next edition is expected in early October, and I leave you with this quotation, make of it what you will..

A chieftan to the Highlans bound
Said "Boatman, do not tarry
And I'll give you a silver pound
To row us o'er the ferry"

F.H.

