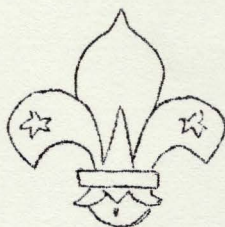


44



Venture

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VENTURE 44. A sort of magazine, by, for, and about, the 44th
Gloucester (Sir Thomas Rich) Venture Scout Unit.

Number Twenty three

January 1977

Editor; Pete Bright.

UNIT OFFICERS.

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|-----------|---------------|
| V.S.L. | F.Henderson |
| A.V.S.L. | W.R.Spear |
| Secretary | Mark Evans |
| Chairman | Steve Preston |
| Treasurer | Chris Pashley |
| Q.M. | Phil Champion |
| Recorder | Dave Brown |
| Executive | Simon Weston |
| | Ian Fletcher |

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EDITORIAL

"The moving finger writes and having writ moves on" or at least that was the object in the Rhubiyat, and having been invited to write the Editorial for the 23rd edition of the magazine, I hope my finger has a similar degree of mobility.

Firstly may I offer the Unit's good wishes to our A.V.S.L Bill Spear on his engagement to Rebecca Cooper, and hopethat in this venture they both have much happiness.

We have continued our varied activities of late and we extend a welcome to Mr I.Davies who, as a keen rock-climber is passing on his experience and creating an enthusiastic interest in this pursuit.

Already the Cotswold Marathon is being discussed and members are, even now, dashing up and down hills through the rain, snow and mud preparing to break last years record and win the trophy for the fourth successive year.

Those members of the Unit who took part in the Lake District hike (in North Wales, of course) over the new year had their fair share of snow but returned happy with the complete quota of toes and fingers.

Arrangements are being made for us to have an insight in to the workings of the Fire Brigade in the coming months. As there are members who are occasionally 'up the pole', it should prove an interesting experience to descend rapidly for a change!

The thought of an editorial naturally leads me to the subject of newspapers, and it seems an opportune moment for me to ask for the continued support of all our members and friends in the collection of this material, the proceeds of which are so important to our funds.

After having to plead for material and write, the editorial for this magazine, I now know why Steve Davies became pale before each edition. May I take this opportunity, on behalf of the Unit, to thank boyh him and Steve Allen for their tremendous efforts for the Unit and wish them both successful University careers.

Pete Bright.

NOTES AND NEWS

Quite a lot has happened in the Unit since the last "stand-ard" edition of this magazine, some of which are recorded here.

As far as the composition of the Unit is concerned, we welcome three new members, Greg Bennett, Peter Green and Rob Dalton. We also lose three, all of whom, in very different ways have contributed a great deal to the life of this Unit over the past few years. In November we said goodbye to Keith Franklin, who has joined the R.A.F. Whilst on leave at Christ mas, complete with short back and sides, Keith joined a group of skiers as we entertained the crowds on Painswick Beacon. A marked improvement in his style was noted - he did not hit a fence. There are no fences on Painswick Beacon...

Two of our senior members have left after $3\frac{1}{2}$ years each in the 44th. Steve Allen has been chairman for nearly two years, and we shall miss his determination and drive, especially when it comes to the Cotswold Marathon. Steve Davies, long serving member of the executive and past editor of Venture 44, has also left, heading eventually for the University of Kent. Some of Steve's thoughts on Venture Scouting are printed elsewhere in this issue (whilst many are probably unprintable!)

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On the sporting side, badminton has crept into the Unit programme. Unfortunately nobody is good enough to compete with Chris Collins, who seems incapable of losing points against the opposition that the rest of us can provide. Recently Chris travelled to Derby, wherr he was classed as one of the top 32 under sixteen players in the country.

The district darts tournament was won once more by the Unit, with Andy Rose and Mark Calver beating Phil Champion and Dave Brown in the final. Mark Calver has organised our internal tournament with Chris Pashley beating Andy in the final. Highlight of this competition was an 8 dart 301 by a certain V.S.L. to beat an unbelieving Gr*g B*mm*tt..

The Boston Marathon was indulged in, as usual, with the Champion secret weapon piloted by Wally and Simon Weston showing its true colours (blue) by veering to the right all the way from Lincoln to Boston. Meanwhile, Ben Emerson and Greg Bennett took the number two craft the $31\frac{1}{4}$ miles in a very creditable time.

Preparations are now underway for the District 5 a side, and Swimming Gala

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On the training and award side, the executive wrote to National H.Q. a few months ago to seek approval for a modified version of the Venture Award scheme to be used in the Unit. On the basis of this a number of Venture Awards have been gained since September; Keith Franklin, Dick Chappell, Simon Weston and Ian Fletcher - Simon finished off his by giving the Executive a demonstration and discourse on Lepidoptera, followed by tea and biscuits! Also more recently - yesterday, in fact, Chris Pashley was interviewed by the District Commissioner, and has gained his Queen's Scout Award. Congratulations to all of these!

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There has been a change of officers with "Big Steve" going into the local industrial scene, and his place as chairman has been taken by "Little Steve" Preston. He has undertaken the task on the condition that at each meeting he must have a glass of water on the table before him, so that he can work out the calcium ion content.

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The experiment of demanding all the subscriptions to be paid by mid October seems to have been a great success and it has enabled the treasurer to open a new deposit account with the sum of £120. The number of associate members at University etc. looks like reaching a record total as well this year.

Mark Evans had a new jersey for Christmas. He keeps it in the field at the end of Winnycroft Lane...

F.H.

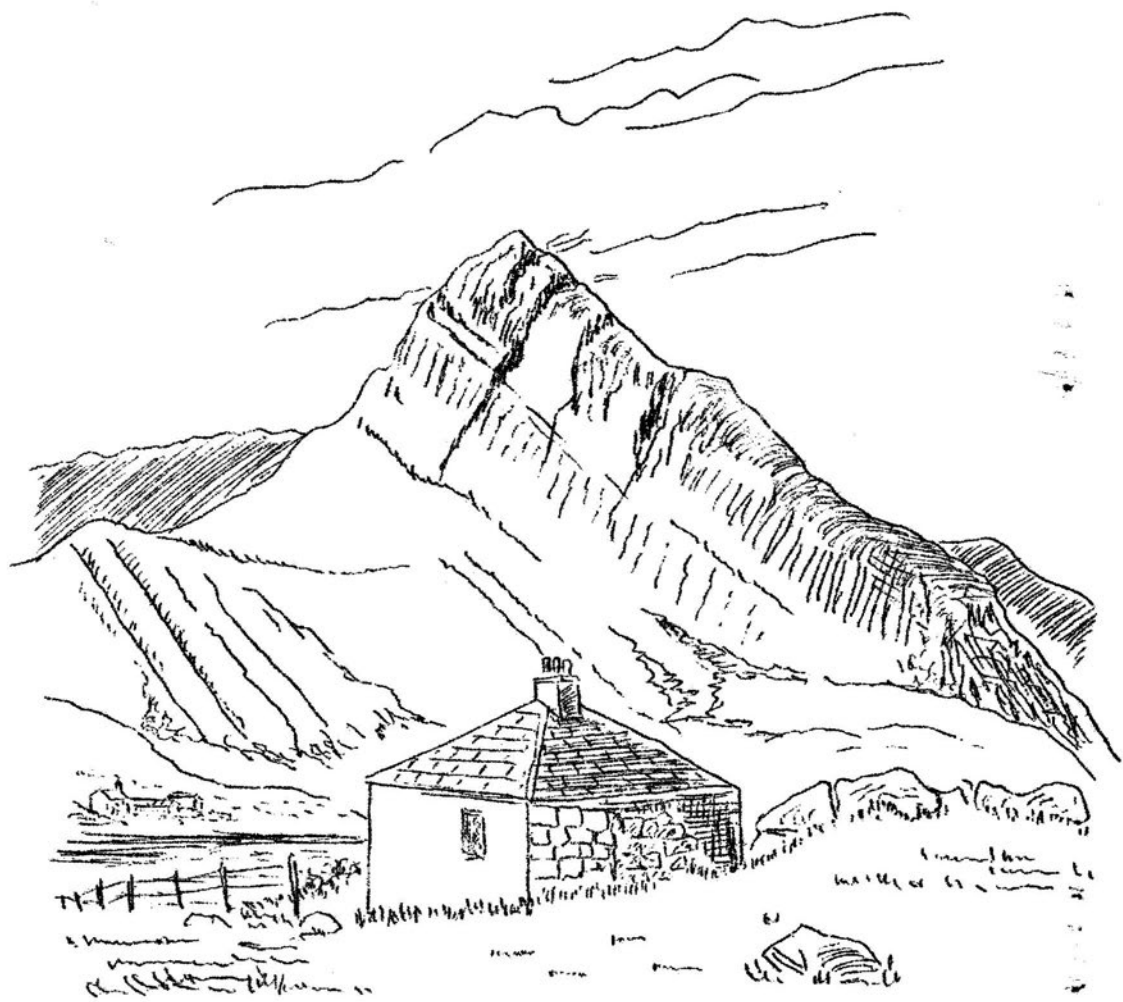
North Wales Summer 76

We arrived at school on a bright August Monday morning to find the V.S.L. packing crates of dehydrated food, and mid-st laughter, groans, swearwords, and cries of "Constipation! Why can't we have REAL food? I hate ryvita! I'm off home!" we intrepid scouts together with Row Lloyd and the V.S.L. set off. As usual the journey was hot, cramped and boring, but we eventually arrived at the quaint but crowded town of Betws-y-Coed. There we took liquid refreshment, and after a journey of six miles, we arrived at Capel Curig. We were nearing our destination, and excitement ran high. A few miles more, there it was! "What a dump!" came from the back of the bus, and several faces dropped when the dirty white cottage was seen. It was this place that would be our home for ten days?

"At least we'll have it to ourselves" (V.S.L.). We didn't as a party of Conservation Corps volunteers was in residence, and they didn't let us forget it. That night we stayed in preparing ourselves mentally for the morrow. The arrival at midnight of a drunken horde of assorted conservators didn't do much to help matters!

Tuesday. We were introduced to the warden (ex-Richian) Simon Lapington, and he introduced us to work! The day was spent on several jobs which included making a path up to Llyn Idwal, digging ditches for drainage and laying turf. It soon got very tiring! That night Phil Gabb (cooking the dinner) in trying to decide if either C***** (sweet thing) or D**** (she delivers our paper!) fancied him, burned the curry! We also discovered that nearby Bethesda (to our delight!) had 5 pubs within 100yds. Nice place. Wish I was eighteen.

Wednesday. The conservators pushed off and we readjusted. We were split into several small groups to do several interesting jobs which ranged from pulling up a gate on Anglesey - Phil and Andy Rose - the path again for Dave Brown, Wally and myself, whilst A.V., F.H. and Row were up on the mountains collecting litter. That evening the meal was cooked properly by



The cottage and Fryfan

Dave and I, and the evening was spent playing cards, which included a game of spoons played with dry cream crackers!

Thursday. This was to be a difficult day! We each had to carry two 10ft long very heavy fence stakes up Crib Goch, one of the 3000ft peaks in the Snowdon range. We had some help in the form of two landrovers for part of the way (fun riding on the back of one of those!) but for the last part we went straight up! We made it, and then went on and had lunch at the top of Snowdon for good measure! This was marred only by the fact that liquid refreshment was 25p per $\frac{1}{2}$ pint, and the long weary walk back to the landrovers! That evening, we noticed a large forest fire beyond Capel Curig - it was difficult to miss! This fire effectively put paid to the Friday job of taking down and old fence in the wood - it burned it down!

Friday to Monday. Because we had worked so hard, we were given the holiday weekend off. We spent the time seeking a beach (doesn't anyone swim in North Wales?) and visiting Caernarvon, Conwy, Beaumaris, Llandudno, and Bangor (dump). Tryvan was climbed by nearly everybody and the step from Adam to Eve was made by some. Wild nights were spent in the entertainment centres of Bethesda, Bangor and Betws, and sometimes we were up until nearly half past nine at night!

Tuesday. On this day a lot of things were settled. Phil decided that D**** had more to offer, but he became completely demoralised when we decided that his kind of loving didn't offer D**** much! We learned of novel uses for soapy water... more importantly, we finished off our stretch of path. It involved digging slate from a small quarry and carrying it, in tin baths up the hillside. Cut fingers and sore arms and shoulders were the problem here. By working from nine till three in the afternoon we achieved our objective, and that evening we retired to Betws to relax and spend any spare cash after a pleasant but exhausting day.

Wednesday. We quickly packed, said our goodbyes, and then made our boring homeward journey.

In retrospect, I think we all enjoyed our stay at Bodesi and hope that in future we might be able to pay another visit to the little house on the mountainside

Ian Fletcher

Bodesi was revisited at half term when a group of nine was able to take advantage of a break in the bad weather and see how a month of continuous rain had affected the surface of the path. Some evidence of our labour remained, and we were able to carry on work there, but our hearts sank when Simon told us that he wanted us to carry about 80 fence stakes for him! However, it was not to be Crib Goch this time, and we had plenty of time to complete the job and also conquer a few odd peaks, including, of course Tryfan. However, the highlight of the trip proved to be the ascent of Hope, a climb on the Idwal Slabs. This was done by Mark Evans and Steve Davies, led by Mr Iowyn Davies and due to the treacherous conditions a grand total of $7\frac{1}{2}$ hours was spent on what was expected to be a short and easy climb

MEANWHILE....

As some scaled the rugged heights of Wales, another small expeditionary force set out nearer to home...

"A NICE HIKE," SAID SIMON, "EXCEPT FOR THE WALKING.."

The response was overwhelming when the idea of this hike was first mentioned, but because of fitness factors, only a small team was picked. After less than five minutes planning, over about two weeks, the big day came, and we met at the hut at 9.20 a.m. Minor difficulties overcome (such as one of the party being without overtrousers, and also a rucksack too small to carry the required kit), we set off. After half an hour we stopped for extra supplies at Simon's house, and a cup of tea. At last we were really on our way. We sprinted - not literally - up Crickley Hill, and then on to SevenSprings. We looked into the muddy little hole there, and decided that anyone coming to see this must be mad, and then continued on to Andoversford. But here a serious drawback was encountered. There was no railway bridge over the road as the map had said (speaking maps, folk!). Could this be the perfect crime that nobody had noticed? No, it was just that the map was out of date. Once this was established, we plodded on to Winchcombe. En route we passed Belas Knap (a burial mound, not a sleep

-ing place) but decided, because of two parked cars, it would be crowded, and was not worth making a detour up a very steep hill to see it.

On reaching a brow of a hill overlooking our immediate destination, we were so invigorated that we ran down to Winchcombe (well, we didn't have much choice, as it was a 1 in 6 hill!). We were lucky in finding a campsite when we were directed to a farm by the friendly local policeman. After parking our tent - not on a yellow line, but a green field - our first meal was cooked. We then decided to visit the local attractions. We finally found one to suit our needs after visiting three other establishments.

The following day was the hardest and most boring of the three. As we weaved our way through Winchcombe we stopped at least five times in less than a mile - each time to be asked by some kind person whether we were lost! (The ***** cheek of it!). Once out of the maze of tiny roads, we marched to Evesham. On reaching there we asked a policeman for directions and soon found our goal (not gaol, as some might think would be more appropriate). After getting our fish and chips, we were moved on for loitering with intent to sit on a factory wall by a foreman. We had just restarted our walk when mutiny occurred. Someone suggested that the leader didn't know where we were. Once the exact (well, almost exact) position had been explained, the dissident fell back into the ranks, after he had been suitably kicked, and the party moved on, reaching Eckington in the dark following a short stop in Pershore.

The man at the Post Office told us of a farmer who might give us a campsite and suggested we rang him up. As I looked up his number in a call box, the phone rang. Taken aback by this I lifted the receiver, only to be asked if it was a dog's home. Once the truth was known, he hung up, and I slipped the leash on Wally and we bowed out. Our instructions as how the farm was reached were rather vague, so we missed it and ended up at a lock, where we eventually camped. The meal was quickly cooked and consumed, even though someone was rather heavy handed with the rice, and it was not exactly ready.

Next day started foggy and cold with the promise of imm-

inent rain. We set off on the last stage of the walk. We soon picked up a canine friend, but finding he had barked up the wrong path, and the pace was rather fast, he deserted us. We pressed on through Bredon and Tewkesbury to Coombe Hill where lunch was taken - If I find the person who took it there will be trouble! At this time a girl made her day (says Simon) by smiling at him. Then to Staverton, and quiz time. An ingenious game was played called "Spot the Cathedral tower". The fog was so thick that the game hasn't actually been finished yet. From Staverton every step seemed a tremendous effort but Wally looked fine (sic). As we passed the Greyhound track, we were greeted by a friend on a bicycle with the comment "You must be ***** mad!" we were actually bleeding a little, but we had nearly finished our walk of 60 miles, which took about 20 hours walking time.

Simon Weston (with amendments by Wal)

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SO YOU WANT TO BE ~~A ROCK AND ROLL STAR?~~
~~A FILM DIRECTOR?~~
~~AN ENGINE DRIVER?~~
 A VENTURE SCOUT?

Then join the 44th.....

According to the Hindu belief a man must fulfil his worldly ambitions, desires and needs before he can renounce them in favour of a more spiritually inclined life. Much the same is true of Venture Scouting, or rather we can say that only at the end of the experience can one assess its validity. What then (if anything) is good about Venture Scouting?

Perhaps the quivering novice is first attracted by the He-man image of Venture Scouts. Rugged, bearded men boldly striding through blizzard and rain equipped with the barest of essentials, or maybe the sight of our recent chairman and Oxford University hopeful ploughing forward relentlessly, like a Viking chief to lead his faint-hearted men to yet another Cotswold Marathon victory? No? Alternatively could it be that the fearful adolescent mind complete with psychoses, neuroses identity crises and so on finds in the splendid Venture Scout

uniform and well established hierarchy an answer to his own inner cries for security? I feel that neither of these truly explains the basis of the great mystique of Venture Scouting.

What then remains? What is beneath the veneer? Although freedom is a term of high abstraction, this should not disguise its existence, if not as a concrete reality, but as a real experience to be realised again and again whilst indulging in V.S. activities. "But how?" A thousand voices clamour! Freedom, like death, comes to every man, and it came to me (I refer now to freedom) while pitching tents in remote corners of Norway, while walking over hills in Wales and whilst munching cheese and drinking beer with starry eyed companions in front of various fires. This tremendous sensation of freedom, although transitory and fleeting is of great importance.

Undoubtedly there are still men with stiff upper lips and moustaches who never see the sun setting on the British Empire and who still claim that it is serving in the army that makes you a man. I have heard the same sentiments expressed concerning Venture Scouting. However, I beg to differ - but possibly one more closely resembles a man when one leaves than when one enters a Unit, and this is due to the many varied and unusual experiences that may be encountered whilst caving, rock climbing, canoeing and so on. Why are these particular experiences (i.e. timor mortis) vital? Because they teach you things about yourself - and how can you come to terms with, and help or understand others if you don't understand yourself? Unfortunately sitting in a classroom one learns precious little about oneself.

Freedom and personality development are two vital aspects of Venture Scouting perhaps not fully recognised by all its advocates. Finally I shall dwell on the huge esoteric value of the experience.

People in general are more apt to identify scouting with the idea of a corporate movement composed of different groups doing various things, and this, of course goes right to the core of Scouting. Nevertheless these group activities also offer many moments for inner contemplation if you are so inclined. I shall illustrate this with a specific example.

The recent half term camp saw me climbing(?) the Idwal Slabs. About half way through the climb I suddenly found myself seemingly alone on the face. My grip was weak and below my feet, a good way below, I could just make out a group of people who were no doubt engaged in learned debate on the type of hold I was using, the various possibilities of the route ahead, and of course, my enormous courage. At that moment I realised that the human leg is not in fact part of the human body, but an independant life form in symbiotic relationship with the rest, and the same is arguably true about the arms. This conclusion was derived from the observation of my own legs, which had both started ~~trembling~~, indeed, shaking violently whilst endeavouring to traverse the rock face in opposite directions. Struggling to make them listen to the voice of reason it dawned on me that my life depended on the thin piece of rope attached at one end to my torso, and disappearing over the ridge of rock above me. Even worse, I was becoming suspicious of the knot. I began sweating profusely and a particularly bad bout of timor mortis set in. At this point, I was made aware of the higher imaginative faculty of the human mind. Before long mine had produced various bizarre plans for escaping from my predicament, one of which involved an attempt to signal the R.A.F. helicopter which periodically circled the mountain and to ask the driver whether he could arrange to take me back to base for a cup of tea without further delay!

Enough of this! Having decided to end this woeful attempt to amuse I shall finish with a final word to all 44th Venture Scouts. Have a good year, and don't be afraid to enjoy yourselves!

Steve Davies.

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Regular readers may be surprised to be receiving another issue of this pulication so soon after the last - and even more to learn that Number 24 is expected out by mid March!

Contributions for the next issue are still welcomed. Why not try YOUR hand at a bit of creative writing!

