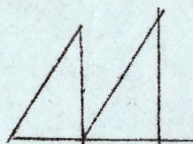


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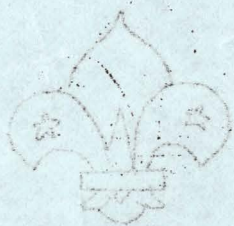


MARCH

1977

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

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UNIT OFFICERS

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

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All readers of this magazine are recommended to read the April edition of SCOUTING, where a reprint of an article from the Island Venture Special number of our journal is included, together with a rather dramatic picture of STREB.

NOTES AND NEWS

This edition of Venture 44 is somewhat different to those that have gone before in a number of ways. The one that is most apparent is the change in size and shape. This has been caused by two factors; firstly the difficulty in buying suitable foolscap duplicating paper in Gloucester, and secondly the use of A4 paper makes it easier to fit the magazine into conventional envelopes!

Another change involves editorial policy. There is no editor as such at the moment, and the responsibility of persuading people to contribute has been taken on for the time being by the executive as a whole. This seems to have been successful on this occasion.

Finally, as there are now nearly thirty ex-members paying to receive the magazine, a section has been included to try to give some indication of what those far from home are now up to, so I urge all our associate members to let me know any news about them that can be included in future issues.

-o-

As you will see from the following pages, the Unit has been quite busy of late, although perhaps the balance of the programme needs examining in the none too distant future as we seem a bit light on some of the service projects that have featured in the past.

There have been a few changes in the membership situation since the last issue, with the pressures of work forcing Pete Bright and Stuart Douglass to withdraw, but the vacancies have been quickly filled by Paul Jennings, and Paul Calver who joins his elder brother in the Unit. Our cunning chairman obviously suggested to young Paul that his application to join would be favourably viewed if he was prepared to write an article, so he did!

Gometra Footnote

After the efforts of the summer, Bunny Warren has returned to Mull, and is spending a few months looking

after the Little Theatre at Dervaig - supposedly the smallest theatre in Britain. He sends his regards to the Unit, and comments on the differences on the island now that there are no tourists!

Whilst pausing reflectively on a crowded ice rink at Bristol the other evening, I was approached by a small lad who said "I remember you on Gometra!" He turned out to be a scout from Cheltenham, and when I asked him how he had enjoyed "Island Venture" his answers clearly indicated that not only had he enjoyed it, but seemed to be able to recall it all in minute detail.

I have seen a number of other scouts who had been on the expedition, and it appears that they all regard it as the highlight of their scouting lives - a great tribute to the County Commissioner who conceived the idea as well as to those members of the Unit who helped to make it a success.



The District Gala.

As always in February the Swimming Gala comes along and we consider entering a team - usually the night before. This year Greg Bennett casually suggested he would lead a team to victory. As we have not won this event in recent years, a great plan was laid - this time we would select our team on Friday afternoon instead of Friday evening! Saturday came and Greg was joined at the pool by Andy Rose and Paul Calver. Chris Pashley, and later Chris Collins both raced back from other sports fixtures ready to swim if needed, but Greg had no need to call on reserves as our three swimmers made a clean sweep of all the Venture events, relieving a very surprised Church-down Unit of the trophy they have held for so long!

One observation though. There were plenty of supporters for most of the groups represented at the gala, but only a handful for the 44th. It would be a nice gesture to the swimmers if we could get some "fans" to cheer them on. After all, there are enough of us.



The Venture Scout 5-a-side tournament was held at the Beaufort Sports Centre on Saturday 19th of March. The teams were mainly from our Unit, in fact there were only five teams, the 44th A, B, and C, Quedgeley, and Christchurch.

It all started off with a mad rush with the V.S.L. racing around trying to get three full teams, with nobody knowing which team they were in or who was still to come. Eventually the A team got started - by the way, I was in that team of course! The other fabulous players - well, almost fabulous players, were Chris Pashley, Steve Preston, Dave Brown and Rob Dalton. Our opponents were a fierce looking lot in multicoloured garments, whilst naturally we wore proper white kit (a symbol of purity!) "We'll kill this lot" we thought, but actually drew 1:1.

The event was run on a league basis, and after the first match we went on to win all our others. Everything went smoothly until the last match when our B team which consisted of Wally, Mark Bennett, Jon May, Phil Gabb and my brother, met the C team of Sime Weston, Chris Collins Greg Bennett, Ben Emerson and the V.S.L. After Mark had apparently scored, the C team goalkeeper, who shall remain nameless, but drives a Bedford, complained to the ref (our A.V.S.L.) quoting a technicality about the laws and the goal was disallowed! However, in the end the B team did manage to win. The whole evening was great fun, and I would do it again with pleasure!

Paul Calver

FINAL RESULTS

	P	W	D	L	F	A	PTS
44th A	4	3	1	0	5	2	7
44th B	4	2	1	1	5	2	5
44th C	4	2	0	2	6	6	4
Quedgeley	4	1	1	2	3	7	3
Christchurch	4	0	1	3	3	7	1

(Unfortunately neither of the Unit's two teams in the School 5-a-side tournament have reached the finals.)

COTSWOLD MARATHON

OR Surely there is an easier way of getting blisters, OR I have always said that our team was the best, and we were able to walk on water at the end of the event (think about it!)

Where to start is always the problem I find when trying to write an account of an event and so I finally decided, after much thought (that hurt!), to start at the beginning.

Once upon a time I was in the Scout hut playing darts, and I heard mention of the 1977 marathon. This first utterance informed me that everybody else in the Unit who was mad enough to take part in this annual event had already formed teams, and I seemed to be out in the cold. After much searching, and many long journeys across the room, I unearthed the first member of my team in the somewhat strange form of Dave Brown. As each team had to have three members, one more s*ck*r was needed. This was solved once I learned that Ju (I have been told that this is the incorrect spelling) Williams wanted to do the Marathon again! I wrote to him and received a reply confirming his intention, and so training was started immediately. Training was quite fun, except that Dave was constantly running into things or people (Watch out all lamp-posts!)

Four other teams were formed by the Unit as follows; Steve Allen, Mark Evans and Mark Bennett; Chris Pashley, Steve Preston and Ian Fletcher; Simon Weston, Bren Noonan and Ian Howells, and the complete novice team of Jon May, Greg Bennett and Pete Green (and he was not the only one looking that colour at the finish!)

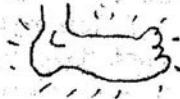
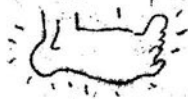
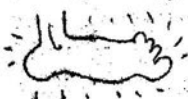
The day before the event, Ju came down from London and we met to discuss tactics. Then finally, the big day came. Mr Pashley drove us down to Murray Hall where the kit was checked. Then came a disaster in the form of Bren Noonan (I don't think I put that quite right) who informed us that the new Golf course on Robinswood Hill would cause an unexpected detour. In the end we took a

chance and followed the traditional route across the fog bound hill, arriving at the first check point in front of three teams that had set out before us. Then we raced on through Upton St Leonards, over Chosen Hill, through Churchdown, maintaining a sprint until the bottom of the Greenway. Memories of the previous year flooded back, when Ju had had stomach pains - but this year it was my turn for the stomach powders. Then there was the long climb into the Cotswolds proper. Names such as Ullenwood Cowley and Elkstone - where the V.S.L. told us we were well ahead and laughing (I knew I wasn't) - the Highway man, (we resisted the temptation of Arkells Real Ale!), Winstone, Edgeworth, Bisley, Slad, Bull's Cross and then Scottsquarry, all flew past (or crawled). We looked down over the light of Gloucester in the early hours, and we were spurred on to hobble quickly down through Harescombe, then the seemingly endless field to Tuffley. Once on the road again we ran the last quarter mile. The relief of seeing Murray Hall again after a 38 mile walk is quite unbelievable! We sprinted into the Hall, gave in our card, and sank down in chairs. Suddenly Steve Allen walked in through the door! We were shattered - he had done it again! But surely they could not have overtaken us and done it in six hours? They had set off two hours after us, since Mark Bennett had been rowing during the afternoon. They had been running much faster than us but Mark had overdone it, and had been retired at Elkstone. (A similar fate had befallen Chris and his team.)

With Steve Allen out we realised that we had done it! Our final time was 8 hours 28 minutes, beating the next team by one hour 37 minutes, but it was 45 minutes from the record time of the previous year. Well, my excuse is that the course was slightly longer this time!

Wally Champion.

(Full results from the marathon will be included in the next edition of the magazine.)



MIDLAND MYSTERY

This activity was designed to test the initiative of the six teams of two who participated in a 24 hour exercise in mid February. From Stratford-on-Avon we had to find out certain information about various towns situated in the south midlands, and produce proof of our having visited them.

Of the different routes chosen to visit the maximum number of places, two proved most popular; from Stratford to Alcester, Henley-in-Arden, Warwick & Leamington, or to Banbury and the surrounding villages, and hence to Warwick. In the majority of cases it was necessary to visit the town in question to get the information, but a few well chosen phone calls could save miles of walking. A bit of cheek was also very useful - for instance to find out some facts about Ragley Hall, we rang up Lord Hartford. To get a First Division football programme, we visited the home of Willie Bell, the Birmingham manager, and asked if he could help. He promptly brought us two programmes and autographed them!

Different teams had different ideas as to the best place to sleep. Greg Bennett & A.V., Wally & Ben Emerson Bren Noonan & Dick Chappell, and Ian Fletcher and Dave Brown, all with great imagination, thought the ultimate luxury was sleeping out, with the cold wind blowing through their hair, and rain beating on their faces! Hence car parks, back gardens and roadsides were all tried. But teams with more sophisticated ideas managed to find shelter for the night. Beef Calver and Andy Rose slept in an armchair each, whilst Pete Green and I got ourselves beds!

The activity was not without incident, however. Ian and Dave, after calling at a house at 11.00 p.m., to ask the inhabitants if they knew what the "Connecticut Connection" was, were surprised when a police car stopped them, Sweeny style to ask "Are you the lads who' have been asking about the Castle?"

"Yes" They truthfully replied.

"What's the game then?"

After some close interrogation in the bright head lights of the car, the police finally came to the conclusion that their intentions were honourable, and offered them a lift back to Banbury.

The sort of information or proof needed to get credit varied from collecting a platform ticket, a Banbury cake spa water and so on, to getting Omar Sharriff's autograph. (Bren got this from a co-operative passerby in Stratford).

Much of the information we had to collect was very interesting, such as finding out about the great fire of Warwick in 1694, which destroyed practically the whole town, leaving only the collegiate church still standing, or the Battle of Edge Hill in 1642.

It was noticeable how friendly and helpful all the people were when asked to help in any way. Perhaps they were glad to see some teenagers doing something constructive, instead of having nothing to do except writing on walls and generally being a nuisance. Mind you, I am not too sure how people feel when two idiots bang on the door in the middle of the night asking stupid questions!

Jon May



FROM ALL CORNERS

In no particular order, news from some of our associate members spread around the western world. First some extracts from a letter from NICK PEARCE, from Biarritz, in the south of France....

"The basis of my stay out here is acting as a language assistant in a french school, taking fairly small classes in all kinds of oral english practice. I have no intention of becoming a school teacher, especially after my experiences in class, which can be good and bad, but are very exhausting in nrevous energy... I give a few private lessons on the side and this has pushed my income to about £400 a month, which is incredible riches to me, especially when I have no tax to pay. The other side of the coin is that the cost of living is considerably high

-er than in fair Albion. Nevertheless I have never lived so well.

I am enjoying the full range of bourgeois comforts. I am set up in a one room flat, about 200 yds from the sea. The weather is very mild. In January, for instance, I took one class outside in the open air. Biarritz is a very classy seaside resort close to Spain. In winter it becomes a bit of a shanty town in atmosphere, with plenty of entertainment, but a lack of people. The one constant group of people here are the old folk who have retired here for the mild climate.

Despite the drawbacks, there are advantages in being here. The important one at the moment is that it is near the mountains, the Pyrenees. I have been with a party of school kids to ski. It was my first time, and despite my many falls I thoroughly enjoyed it! I am looking forward now to surfing in the summer, when the water is a little warmer, on the fierce Atlantic swell, which is really spectacular when a storm is blowing. I am playing rugby - this is the rugby country of France, like Gloucester or the Welsh valleys. I have also done some travelling, including an enjoyable trip to San Sebastian. In spite of its closeness, Spain is quite a contrast to France.

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Nearer home, but also established on the sunny south coast, PHIL STROUD is in residence in the charming village of Newton Ferrars, near Plymouth. It is uncertain what he is doing, but smuggling cannot be ruled out!

Meanwhile, in less clement weather conditions, ALLAN ROBBINS is now working with a forestry company in wild west Stirling.

Midst the dreaming spires of Oxford, the 44th presence is maintained by IAN SIMMONS, who carries all before him. Ian is, to quote, indulging in "all manner of lowly things beneath the dignity of man!" (All paid for by the state!)

Further east, in the teeming metropolis, a lone civil servant sits at the Land Registry, dreaming of a life on the ocean wave... JULIAN WILLIAMS, we understand has taken the plunge and applied again for the navy.

Also in the same area is our resident naval officer DAVE BARNES, who is completing a degree course at City University before returning to sea again.

Less settled in the old town is JOHN SWEET, who has suddenly and mysteriously left his former abode and moved to Ealing.

Another who has completely shaken the dusts of London from his heels is MARTIN BERRY, who is now at Aston University, reading transport studies (Train's Annual?)

Nearer home, two recent leavers, after a period of unemployment, are now at work, albeit temporarily. STEVE ALLEN is working on the cataloguing of material at the Music Library, whilst STEVE DAVIES is on the factory floor at Presweld, doing his best to hold back Britain's economic recovery.

After a weekend on leave KEITH FRANKLIN returned to R.A.F. Cosford, and was interested to find that his neighbour was in a state of extreme exhaustion and discomfort. On enquiring as to the reason for this, Keith learned that the lad in question was a venture scout from Stroud, and he had been on a thing called the "Cotswold Marathon" that weekend!

So PAUL DYER decided to try his hand at karate, and within a few minutes discovered he had hidden talent, as his first blow dislocated a kneecap - unfortunately one of his own - and he has been hobbling round on crutches ever since.

Finally, news from Nottingham, where ROB FRAGNELL is enjoying his time at University so, that he has sent in the following almost unsolicited testimonial..

Well, dragging myself out of the ever deepening rut of apathy, I decided to put pen to paper, but to what end?

My mind flashed back immediately to many enjoyable years spent at the old school. However, I realise now my big mistake in not joining the Venture Scouts until half way through the sixth form. Nevertheless in a short time I managed to participate in quite a few activities, but the one thing that stands out is how seldom things actually turned out the way they were planned.

I recall a canoeing trip on the Avon when a lot of

time was spent diving to the river bed trying, in vain, to rescue the spectacles of a certain person. Trips to the Bristol Ice rink, where I spent my time either falling over or picking myself up. The later equally applies to numerous ski runs on the dizzy heights of Robinswood hill - however, no broken bones (not for me, at least!) - and all great fun.

Rock climbing on Cleeve Hill was never as easy as it looked, and caving in the Forest of Dean had its fascination. Fate seemed to take me many times down Old Bow mine, on practise cave rescues, surveying, and finally, getting lost! Further adventures occurred whilst orienteering in Cranham Woods. I spent half an hour looking for a control misplaced by the organisers, and consequently was beaten by the V.S.L. The shame of it! Still, I got my own back by organising the next event, and had great pleasure in watching the old man puffing around the course on a hot Sunday afternoon.

In a rather rash moment I got involved in the Cotswold Marathon. Training was more eventful than the real thing, with lost maps, cars breaking down, and folk being stranded in remote places. Still it paid off, as I actually completed the route!

Of course I must not forget Island Venture (how can I!) This definitely was the highlight of my all too brief membership of the 44th. Leaping up mountains, lugging gear on and off boats, and superb trips round the little islands off Mull. I would strongly urge anyone in the Unit to go on a similar expedition if the opportunity arose - it is all valuable experience.

However, enough of my exploits in the Venture Scouts and on to something else. Some of you might well be asking just what is this guy doing now? Well, I am now at Nottingham University taking (none too seriously) a Geography degree course, and I thought that you might be interested in some of the non-academic aspects of the undergraduates life. Even if you are not contemplating going to University, it is worth asking yourself "Why not?" you could be missing a great time.

Of course, time is of the essence, and you get as much spare time as you are prepared to make. It is all

too easy to spend the day chatting over cups of coffee, attending the odd lecture, eating the occasional meal, and propping up the Union bar all the evening yet before another cup of coffee - I know, I've done it often! If, however, you are prepared to make the effort, it is easy to get out of this rut and really enjoy yourself. There are no end of clubs and societies that cover the traditional venture scout activities. Caving and potholing, mountaineering and rock climbing, hiking and orienteering canoeing and skiing all have their fanatical followers, who are all too keen to get you to join in with them. It is impossible to do them all, and for this reason I joined the Explorers Club, which indulges in a bit of everything. A weekend camp in Snowdonia, two or three rambles in the Pennines, a river crossing activity (not as easy as it sounds!) and plenty of interesting talks and slide shows, including one by Doug Scott.

During the summer a team of 12 (alas I am not one of them - but there always is next year!) are going on an 8 week scientific expedition to the Loppa peninsula in Arctic Norway. Hoping for sponsorship from the Royal Geographical Society, they already have promises of contributions from various food companies. This means a personal contribution of only £120 each. Naturally the amount of planning and forethought going into this project is vast, and by helping in this I am learning a lot about expedition organisation.

There are, of course, many other clubs which deal with a variety of activities; skittles and darts, table tennis and archery may well appeal to many, as would, I am sure, the Real Ale Society! (sounds like Venture Scout Unit to me, Ed.) There is a massive Sports Centre catering for many sports, and it is all free.

As you can see, there is fantastic scope for enjoying oneself at University, opportunities of a life time will arise. If you get the chance, then take it!

Rob Pragnell

A report on the Winter Hike in the Black Mountains will appear in the next issue.

HAVE YOU READ THE APRIL EDITION OF SCOUTING?

