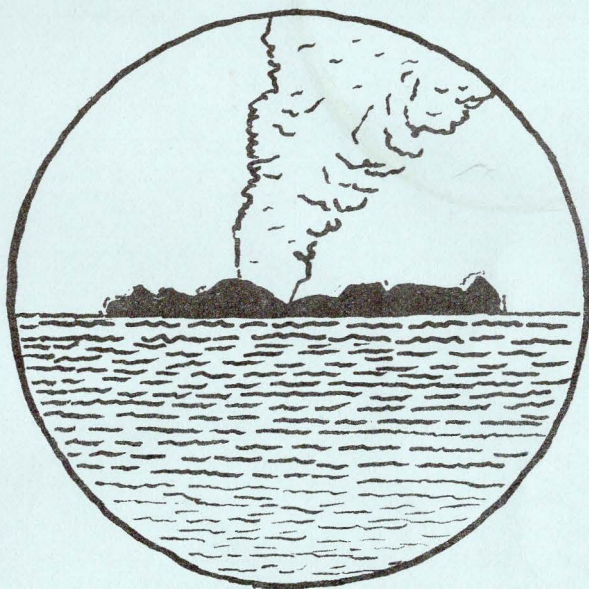


44th Gloucester Venture Scout Unit

ICELAND 78



A Venture 44 Special November 78

Iceland 78

PROLOGUE

The following is an account of the summer expedition of the 44th Gloucester Venture Scout Unit to Southern Iceland.

The party consisted of the following members and associate members of the Unit.

Dave Brown	John Kearsey
Chris Collins	Jon May
Phil Champion	Chris Pashley
Jan Daines	Steve Preston
Ian Fletcher	Tim Sergeant
Pete Green	Bill Spear
Frank Henderson	Phil Stroud

We would like to record our thanks here to all those whose assistance and support enabled the expedition to take place, and in particular to the following:

Dick Phillips, our tour operator, who did the bulk of the organising for us, and who was a constant source of information and support on this trip, as he was on our previous visit in 1972.

Paul and Judi Stephens, our indefatigable guides, without whom we would probably still be somewhere between Sveinstindur and Skaelingar!

We are also indebted to the following for financial assistance without which the expedition could not have taken place.

The Friends of Sir Thomas Rich's School
Priday Metford Ltd
T.Wall and Sons Ltd
Muir Hill Ltd
Pressweld Ltd
Bryce Berger Ltd

In the following pages the account of the journey is based on the diary compiled by Phil Champion. Much has been omitted due to lack of space, and some has been altered to protect us from libel actions! Various articles from the other members of the party are included with a title where appropriate, and notes on the geology have been inserted at intervals (C.J.C.). The diagrams are mostly by Pete Green who drew them whilst wearing shorts.

A fully illustrated log of the expedition, containing the full texts of all the articles will be available for inspection in a few weeks.

The Saga begins

Friday 25th August

Just before 5.00 a.m. I left home with my little bag of sandwiches, and walked to meet Dave and Jon.... we wandered along the cold silent streets to arrive outside the school, where several parents were saying fond farewells to their sons.

We arrived at Glasgow airport about 1.30 p.m. and met the advance party of Chris P., Jon and Frank. The next few hours were spent in sorting out and repacking rucksacs.

The flight, being my first, was really exhilarating..... soon the islands off western Scotland could be seen below and memories of previous expeditions to Mull and Gometra came flooding back.

Before long we had dropped down from brilliant sunshine into thick fog and we were at Keflavik. From here we went by bus to the Loftleider Hotel. Chris C., Jim and myself were left behind, but we all met up again eventually in Reykjavik. We walked through drizzle to the Youth Hostel where we were sent on to a school, which acted as an overspill annexe.... we soon settled down to a night disturbed by noisy cars and low flying aircraft.

First Impressions

The first time that I met most of the party was in a corner of the Double Gloucester two days before we left. At Glasgow airport we eventually all assembled - little did we know then that we only had a one way ticket!

As an outsider most of the party were unknown to me, but Chris gave me a briefing on who to watch out for! Soon these strangers would be the only people I was to see as we would be deep in the uninhabited interior of Southern Iceland.

First impressions of the country were pretty dismal as we left Keflavik in cold drizzle. Things began to improve as we reached the mountains, and as I began to get to know all the party.

There was so much that happened during the two weeks, and it is difficult to decide which of the things we saw and did left the greatest impression. However one really memorable thing was the way I was made to feel welcome, and the way in which everyone accepted each other, working together as a team, and overcoming the various hardships that we faced. It was a terrific experience and I would like to thank the 44th for allowing me the chance to share in it!

J.D.

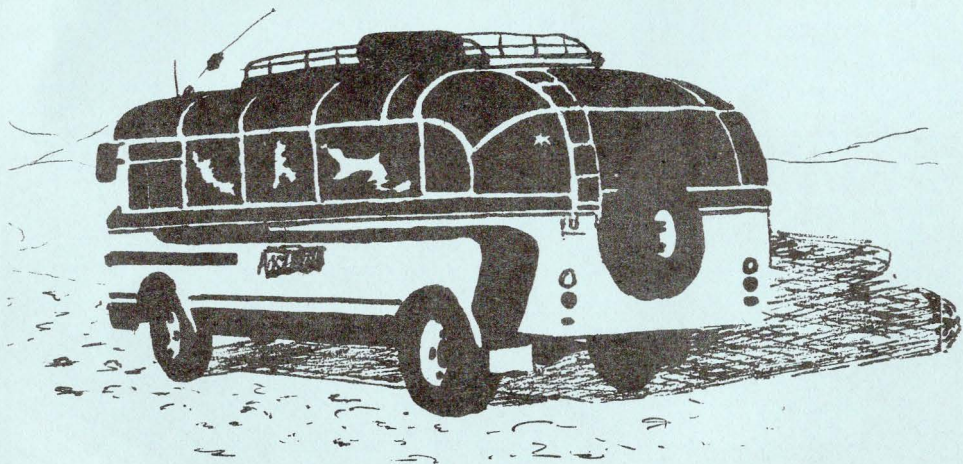
Saturday 26th August

We crawled out of our sleeping bags at 7.00 a.m.... breakfast of porridge and fishpaste...

At 9.30 a.m. a bus arrived and we werx on our way

We spent four hours bouncing along through first farmland, and then barren basaltic country. At Landmannalaugar we had lunch, and tested the water in the hot springs. Our guides, Paul and Judi, joined the bus here. Three more hours of river crossing and steep gradients, and the bus halted by a precipitous river bank. We collected our gear and food, and set off into the unknown.

After about an hour of hard slog, we saw our destination, the small hut by the Skafta river, below Sveinstindur. We tasted our first Icelandic delicacy, Skyr....



Sunday 27th August

Paul started breakfast at about 8.20am. At 10.00 a.m. we set off to the base of nearby Sreinstindur..... from the summit, 1090 m, we could see the great Langisjón lake stretching to the mist clad Vatnajökull icecap.....

That evening was spent playing silly games, tossing the caber, and tug-of-war - won by Dave and myself.

The expedition proper started in the high palagonite mountains, the main rock type being a volcanic breccia. This rock consists of angular fragments of fine grained black basalt in a matrix of fine yellow brown soft material. It is thought to be produced by sub glacial lava flows. The rock weathers rapidly, and the very crumbly nature proved a major hazard for us on our walk, as it was the main constituent of the mountains we had to cross.

Near our first hut was a cliff with superb pillow lavas - rounded balls of basalt formed when lava is extruded under water. Basalt is the commonest rock by far in Iceland, and 98 % of the rocks are of volcanic origin.



The Art of Coarse Cooking...or.. How

I learned to live with a mess tin....

Breakfast

The party stared uneasily at the row of mess-tins on the floor. After a generally disturbed night at Sveinstindur, we were in no state to object to the steaming pot on the primus. But what was in it? Only our hosts, Paul and Judi Stevens knew. We waited with bated breath. Judi smiled "It's porridge!" Panic struck the party... Jan - a devout porridge hater - collapsed immediately..... Phil and John rushed for the door - but Paul was too quick for them. Others stood and quailed.

"Everyone on these tours has porridge!" Judi snarled, and our stomachs turned as she filled each mess-tin with the 'porridge'.

How we survived I'll never know, but worse was to follow. Paul hit us with a second course of sausages and baked beans. Now I'm not saying that the sausages were of dubious quality, but Chris was tempted to put a saddle on his! However even this was swallowed, washed down with some rather peculiar coffee.

That was breakfast, but the final blow came from Judi:
"Now, who's going to wash up?"

Lunch

Porridge, although harmless in itself, can still have adverse effects, such as filling the stomach while still leaving the eater with a somewhat empty feeling. So by the time we reached the summit of Sveinstindur we were actually hungry again! We anticipated a feast of various sandwiches: jam, fishpaste, chocolate paste...we knew, we had prepared them. However when we came back for a fifth sandwich they had all gone! Even half-term camps were never as bad as that. Dark mutinous mutterings abounded while the V.S.L. was heard to declare that the local moss was inedible - shame.

We returned to the hut our intestines blocked but our stomachs full of air.

Dinner

This was met with the same apprehension as breakfast had been. The first course turned out to be water with lengths of string posing as oxtails. This was followed by a main course of farmhouse stew, mash and carrots. Once we realised that the meal was real it was consumed with great gusto. Then the third course, apple dice and custard. Yet horrorstruck, we soon realised our folly. The onslaught of hot water, stew and apple on our unsuspecting stomachs quickly counteracted the filling effect of the morning's porridge. From then on, a lot of us were going to be regular in being 'irregular'. Taking a walk was going to have a whole new meaning for us!

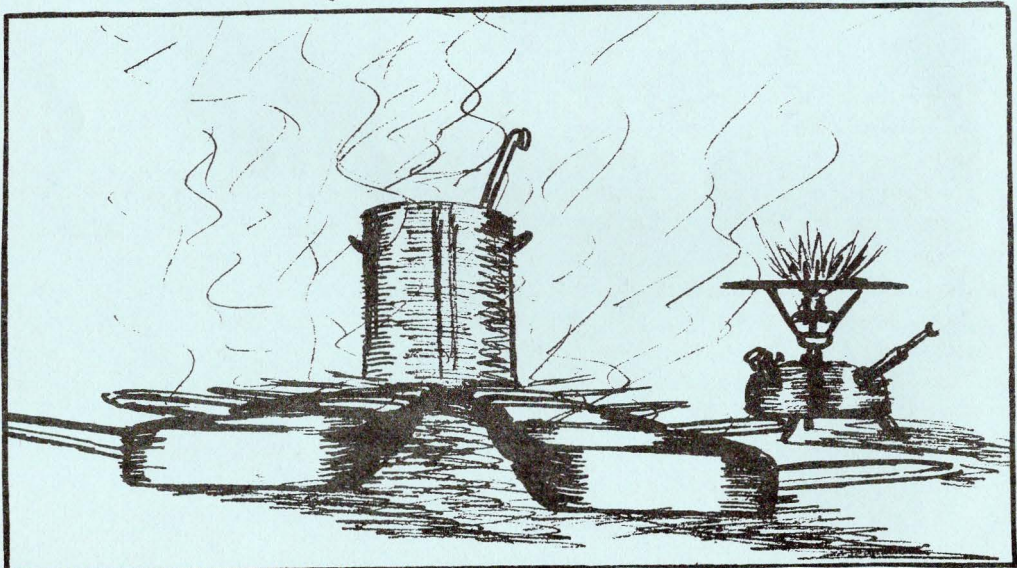
We were later subjected to a further indignity of cocoa, but went to bed content, knowing that we had withstood a whole day's food and might just survive the long days ahead.

.....

And so it went on for the rest of the tour. We never knew what was going to turn up next on the 'menu', nevertheless if it was put in front of us we generally ate it - and also most of the party are still around to tell the tale!

In truth, the standard of the cooking was very good and mealtimes were a real pleasure. After a hard day's walking, to face a 3-course meal was encouraging to say the least. The result of being well-fed showed not only in the way that we tackled the hiking but in the general spirit of all the tour members throughout the two weeks.

Napoleon once said, "An army marches on its stomach" - the 44th certainly did!



From Sveinstindur we could see the long and remarkably straight line of craters along the Laki fissure from which the devastating lava flows of 1782 poured. These caused the greatest disaster in the history of the island. We saw that all the nearby hills and valleys seemed to be aligned with the fissure, running approx NE SW. This was the direction of the great Eldgja fissure we walked along several days later.

Monday 28th August

We left the hut after cleaning it up and two hours later made our first major river crossing. Socks were removed on this occasion..... Lunch was taken at the entrance to the deep gorge below Uxartindar. Passing through the gorge we encountered a natural snow bridge covered in black sand.....

We arrived at Skælingan before 4.00 p.m. The two huts were encircled by wierd formations of "toothpaste lava"..... later on as we lay on the mossy stable floor we heard part of the saga of the burning of Njal.....

It was here that Judi began her black mark list..... Jan received two black marks for disliking porridge..

Beside the Skafta river we came onto the Laki lava - the largest known flow in historic time - 545km². Nicknamed 'toothpaste' lava, it presented a fantastic array of columns, bridges caverns and tunnels, which we decided were the result of molten lava flowing away from below a solidifying crust on a flow that occupied the Skafta valley in 1782.

Tuesday 29th August

A cloudy morning greeted us after a wet and windy night.... Our route took us along a river to the base of Gjóttindur (935m), but due to the thick mist and high winds, we were not able to reach the top, so we dropped over the edge of the great Eldgjá fissure. We had to plough ankle deep through sharp black cinder down to the flat valley floor.....

We arrived at the double waterfall and natural bridge of Ofærafoss at about 1.00 p.m. Lunch included a strange banana flavoured bar..... Pete decided to put his cagoule on...

Four hours of hard walking took us by two more natural bridges and an interesting blue pool before we saw the welcome sight of the hut at Alftavotn.....



Wednesday 30th August

A stormy night was spent with me trying to guess when the tarpaulin above my head would blow away and let the rain in.....

Before we left the clouds broke and we saw the sun for the first time in several days

We followed a stream to the base of a steep mountain and lunched for the first time on ships biscuits and sardines..... Splashing through the many small streams of Ofæradalur we reached the slopes of Laugarháls, and then descended to the tin tent at Strutslaug.....



Strutslaug hut.

Peter R. Green 1978.

A Hot Pool for a Cool Fool!

After devouring the day's culinary delights, we were advised by Phil and John 'to take the waters.' Well who could resist the thought of a bath after a week of hard walking? A strong, bitter wind scoured the hillside, and caused slight trepidation at the prospect of an outdoor bath. Goose pimples appeared as the winds zoomed up and through my breeches. We wrapped up thoroughly and scrambled down the hillside, along to the 'bath', just surviving a treacherous river crossing on the way.

The hot water originated from the natural springs in the area. Water bubbled up from underground sources, and in doing so left iron deposits on the surface. The hot water is a paradise for certain algae - the so-called 'G-nurds' - which lie around in the still waters of the streams. The 'bath' was a shallow pool created by the damming of a few hot streams. Its water was murky since the silt from the bottom had already been disturbed by eager bathers, who were now urging us to get in. They described the sensation of bathing in the pool.

So, first a toe, then a foot and thirdly a splash as I took the plunge! Sitting up to my neck in gorgeously hot water, surrounded by the bitter cold was a fantastic experience never to be forgotten. There was no comparison with an ordinary household bath. Currents of hot water in full flow oozed down into the pool creating areas of varying warmth. Swimming was just possible at the risk of a collision with lurking boulders - back-crawl was the most popular stroke. Grit also proved to be an irritating pain.

A quick dash for the soap and clean Venture Scouts emerged from a week's grime. Soon the warmth of the water penetrated deeply in a relaxing manner, prompting some tuneful(?) singing from the bathers. This was bliss.....to stare up at the late evening sky, the first star, gazing at the surrounding snow-spotted mountains and the high rhyolite behind us with its deep-seated warmth capped by the Torfajokull ice field.

With the dusk ever thickening, all too soon it was time to get out - not a very nice prospect. Surprisingly, upon exit from the 'tub' the cold blasts could not pierce our warm inner glow. After a fifteen minute walk back to the hut, cocoa and a warm sleeping bag finished our trip to the baths. In this idyllic condition sleep came moments after the night's installment of the Saga.

Ah, sweet dreams of Strutslaug.

S.J.P.

Thursday 31st August

..... Returning from my early morning dip, I enjoyed my breakfast before we set off for a day on and around the Torfajökull Ice cap. It was very windy; and the summit was covered in cloud. Paul decided to visit the "sulphur spring" on the way. We could smell the sulphur before we got there. The bubbling hot water had melted the surrounding ice to form a wierd network of caves and tunnels. After lunch I entertained the party by slipping off a step I had cut in the ice and disappearing down one of the holes formed by the spring....

Up on the top the wind was extremely fierce. We viewed the surrounding ice-caps.... Frank then suggested a little walk to some distant columns of steam, and the next two hours were spent crossing the glacier, with its crevasses and moraines before eventually going down into a complex of steep-sided ravines and finally reaching a huge, steaming sulphur pile.

After spending half an hour watching hot mud pools bubbling away, and trying to break off samples from the evil-looking sulphur mass. We started back on the long three hour trip and arrived at 7.30 p.m., hungry, and chilled by the icy winds.

Here we explored the rhyolite plateau, and found an area punctured by hot springs, sulphur piles and boiling mud holes. Specimens of the soft yellow crystalline sulphur were carefully packed. Other interesting rocks collected were rhyolite, a light coloured acidic lava and more interesting, pitchstone, a jet black rock with a tar-like lustre which often contains flecks of the white mineral, felspar.

The next day was one of the geological high lights. We discovered some obsidian. This rock is volcanic glass, usually black, although we also found some green specimens. It breaks into fragments with razor-sharp edges, and the first-aid kit was soon in use! The conchoidal fracture of the rock is one of its interesting properties.



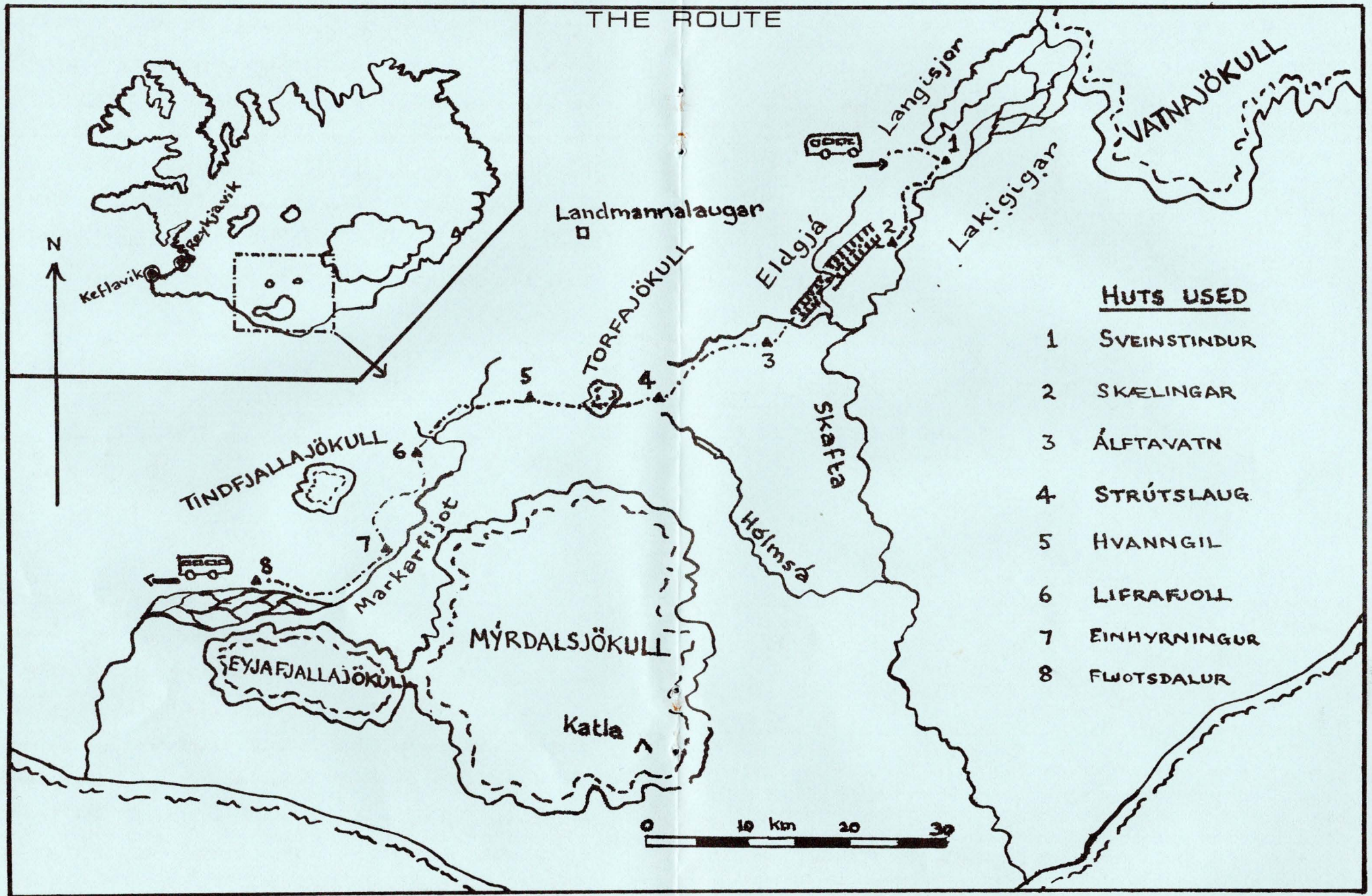
Friday 1st September

Fine weather with few clouds in the sky... I decided to wash a few socks. In fact I only washed 3 socks, due to losing one on the way to the stream..... We ascended Torfajökull again in glorious sunshine but before reaching the top we turned south towards the valley of the Kaldaklof river. We slid down a steep snow slope..... Once in the valley our feet were soon soaked by numerous river crossings.....



We climbed up between Slettafell and the Einstigsfjall on a pony track and before long we saw Hvanngil hut..... We arrived at 5.40pm

After a further chapter of Njals saga we settled to sleep, but about 1.00 a.m. we awoke to the lights of cars; then voices, and then the trap door opened and a head appeared. Icelandic oaths were muttered.... one brave Iclander came and found some floor space.....



Properly Equipped

Can you imagine being stuck in the uninhabited wilds of Iceland, miles from anywhere, when suddenly a vital piece of equipment breaks - for example, the sole comes away from the boot of some unsuspecting hiker? Well, I could and judging by the money spent in 'Backpackers' in Cheltenham, so could many others in the party. In fact, for some of us the bill for equipment was as high as the cost of the expedition itself.

Probably the most important item on the list for this trip was the footwear. It's tough enough walking in rough terrain with heavy packs (30lbs +) without blisters to worry about. With that in mind, any new boots were chosen so that they were large enough to be worn with two pairs of thick woollen socks, and strong enough to withstand an anticipated heavy battering in Iceland. The idea behind the two pairs of socks is that the inner pair moves with the foot while the outer pair moves with the boot. So any rubbing that takes place occurs between the two layers of wool. However new boots still had to be worn in well before the start of the trip. Three of the older pairs of boots taken to Iceland did suffer irreparable damage during the course of the expedition.

As a party, some of us had minor problems with packs, one Karrimor model being the main object of criticism. The fault was in the attachment of the straps to the frame. Instead of a more robust arrangement as on more expensive models, its straps were joined on by a thin wire twist, something like a key-ring. Sometimes when stress was put on the join, e.g. by the bouncing motion of walking downhill, the twist could unwind and suddenly the unsuspecting hiker might have to chase a rapidly descending rucksack!

On the brochure, or rather advisory leaflet, issued by Dick Phillips, walkers were advised to wear normal gear for mountain walking. This is basically: a couple of thick sweaters; trousers or cords - not jeans; thick shirts; an anorak and waterproofs. Most of us dispensed with an anorak because our waterproofs were also windproof. It would only have been unwanted extra weight to carry. We were further advised to bring shorts for use when crossing rivers, but although some of us wore them regularly the fashion never caught on. Whenever another knee or sparkling pale leg was revealed, the resulting hoots of laughter usually led to a rapid re-covering of the bare flesh. However, six members

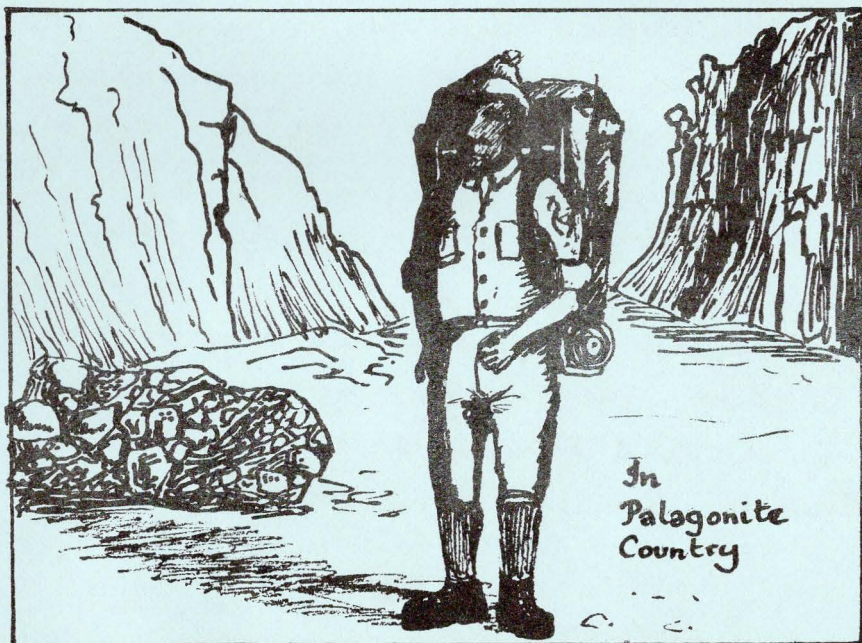
We slept in expedition sleeping bags, resting on top of 'Karrimats' - long foam insulation pads. These mats were very essential items of equipment when sleeping on rough, cold floors as found in some of our overnight stops.

In case of emergency we took with us several 'survival bags'. These are large thick polythene insulation sacks, used to prevent exposure in the open. Fortunately, their only function on our trip was as a floor covering to keep the 'Karrimats' clean.

Apart from our kit and essential food, other items in our packs were for personal use, e.g. dice, playing cards, cameras, reading matter, medicinal flasks, washing kit, & notebooks etc. Training shoes were also included so that our tired feet could relax in the evenings.

All in all, quite a lot to carry on your back for two weeks!

J.C.M



MILEAGE

Gloucester to Glasgow	350miles
Glasgow to Reykjavik	700miles
Reykjavik/Tour/Reyk.	250miles
Reykjavik-Gloucester	1050miles
Mileage walked	120miles

TOTAL DISTANCE 2470miles (approx)

Saturday 2nd September

We left the hut surrounded by the tents of the weekend trippers and continued along the pony track, crossing several rapid rivers... We dropped down eventually to the hut at Krokur where we brewed up. Before this we had to cross the Markarfljot. We went over in groups of three, with the heaviest upstream. It proved to be an easy crossing.... After the tea break we immediately had another crossing.....

We plodded along the banks of the Hvit maga and soon reached our destination, a cave, complete with wooden door situated below Lifrarfjoll..... Dave, Chris C., John, Pete and I spent the night squeezed together on the narrow wooden ledge whilst the rest were braving the rough wind and rain in tents.....

(Before the evening meal a traffic jam formed by the ford between the tents and the cave - but the two Landrovers eventually moved on!)

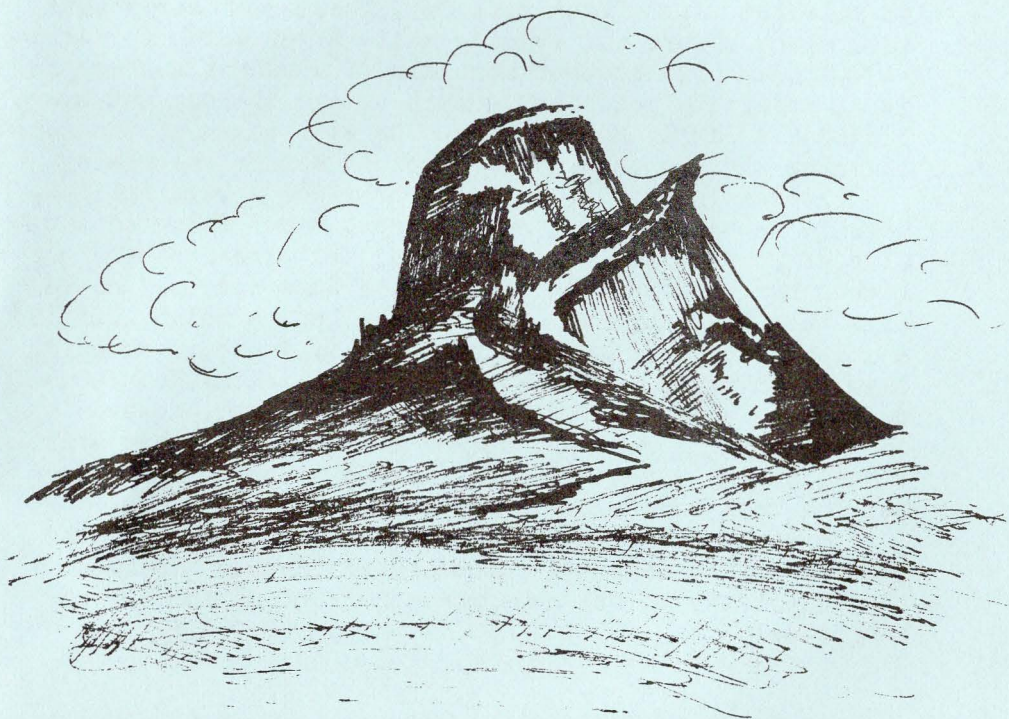


← ICELANDIC
SWEATER

Sunday 3rd September

At 12.00 noon we set off in slight rain after singing a few well known hymns... About half an hour later waterproofs were shed.....

Lunch was eaten at the beginning of the deep and dramatic gorge into which the river Markarfljót plunged.... we headed over stony wastes dotted with small flowers... My ankle started to play up just before we reached the hut below the fantastically shaped hill of Einhyrningur (641m)...



EVENING ACTIVITIES

I think most of us had preconceived ideas as to what we would be up against during the walk. Up in the morning, packing, and off to the next hut, eating, and settling to a cramped night. Most of this crystallised, but the tour contained a few bonus items...

By mid-tour not only were we walking 17 km or so per day, but after a brief rest for the evening meal, a few of us were off again. At Lifrarfjoll, after an extended days walking, we scaled the nearby 3000ft peak. The ascent was fast and fairly straight forward. A magnificent view in the fading evening light was afforded over a bit of the route we had followed from the summit, and a fast moving scantily clad apparition loomed up before us when we turned to go down. Guess who! The descent over a mass of loose ash in near darkness was entertaining, but our leader eventually got us back.

At Einhyrningar we invaded the steep sides of Markarfljot gorge and filled a plastic bucket with bilberries. These were carried throughout the next day to be incorporated into the biggest trifle ever consumed by the 44th to celebrate Ian's 18th birthday. The mammoth berry hunt took place before our evening meal, after which we decided to climb yet another mountain! The ascent was rapid in an effort to reach the summit before the sun set over Tindfjallajokull. Many photographs were taken of the sun touching the ice on Eyjafjallajokull across the valley.

The last night in the hills provided a rare delight. Despite the high winds, one intrepid hiker ventured outside at about 11pm, and discovered that the northern lights had been switched on for us. Some were so moved that they laid survival bags on the lawn - which Phil S. and I had cut that afternoon - and lay in their sleeping bags, staring up at the ever changing lights. Soon some modicum of sanity returned, and we retreated. However at about 2.30am, I went out to see if the lights were still there, and my movements awoke several others, who joined me. The best show was over by then, however.

It would be wrong to think that the expedition was just a 'walk'; it was a patchwork of diverse experiences that will stay in the memories of all of us for a very long time!

C.C.R.P.

Monday 4th September

I had spent the night under the table as I had arrived too late to claim a bunk... much tea consumed by many of the party meant that I had a disturbed night...

We plodded along the valley and crossed the cold, opaque, rapidly flowing Gilsá (knee deep) before it flowed into the Markarflot..... After we had climbed the shoulder of Þórólfsfjell, down onto the plain, and the sprint started to find out who would reach Flótsdalur first!

Tuesday 5th September

.... We set off to climb to a hut below Bláfjall (1001m) with the wind blowing hard. We reached the hut very cold indeed..... The party split up and a small group reached the summit.....

The volcanoes Hekla and Surtsey were seen from a distance. Both have erupted in recent years. Lurking below the Myrdalsjokull is the vent of Katla. An eruption is expected at any time, and when it comes masses of ice will be melted and flood water will sweep all before it, and alter the map of Iceland yet again.

In the evening Paul gave us a slide show. It was the night of the Northern Lights.

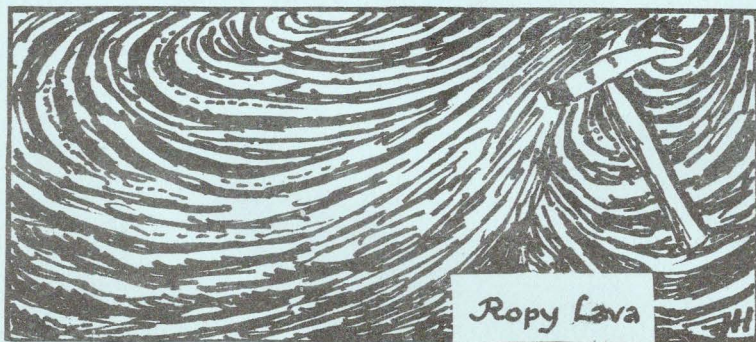
Wednesday 6th September

Goodbye to Fljótsdal - and to Paul and Judi..... Bus to Hvalsvollur, a supermarket! Then the magnificent waterfall at Gullfoss.....

Geysir. We watched fascinated as the clear blue pool of Strokkur seethed before hurling itself into the air..... 60ft columns of hot water, always just too quick for Jan's camera!

Thingvellir.... fissures and chasms, and Icelandic history, and before we knew it, we were back in Reykjavik once again.

Massive lava flows at Thingvellir clearly show surface features which are seen on some of the modern Hawaiian flows. The cooling lava forms a skin which wrinkles up to look like coils of rope.



The plain is scarred by a large number of vertical fissures. Some had clear water in them and appeared bottomless, whilst in the largest of them a river flowed. These fissures are reminders of the forces that are tearing Iceland apart at present, and are a continuation of the great crack in the surface of the earth which runs down the middle of the Atlantic ocean.



WHICH HUT?



The Consumers Guide to Icelandic Accomodation

D.B.

- NAME Sveinstindur RATING *
Single floor, open plan, raised platform at back. Cold running water 300m. Sleep 6 comfortably - 14 more interesting. Spade. Sports equip - rope, etc available at no extra cost.
- NAME Skaelinger RATING **
Two building development. Hut interesting..Stable with wall to wall mess, spacious accomodation for 14. C.R.W. 10m. Toilet facilities "comfortable".
- NAME Alftavotn RATING **
Two floors. Storeroom/drying room below. Upstairs kitchen/dining room/bedroom. C.R.W. 20m, dripping water through roof. Only HALF a spade!
- NAME Strutslaug RATING ***
Early 70's development. Tent shaped galvanised iron structure. Upstairs platform to sleep one gymnast. Floor sleeps 13 at a pinch. H.W. baths 500m is added luxury. Extensive lawns..
- NAME Hvanngil RATING ***
Two floor, lux. spacious. Stable below, with hay. 14 mattress. Disadv - possibly haunted - strange voices and lights at night.
- NAME Lifrarfjoll RATING No star.
Small cave, sleeps no-one comfortably. Cold water inside - running down walls. Ventilation by means of large gap between door and frame. Yard/Chapel convenient. River running through front garden.
- NAME Einhyrningur RATING ****
One up, one down, v.lux. Tasteful design. Ten bed + plenty floor space. Large table, benches. Walls with no holes, likewise ceilings! Gas cooker!!
- NAME Fljotsdalur RATING *****
Two storeys, real rooms, beds, furniture, electricity (home made) telephone, books, and a little inside room for ones convenience. Lawn on roof.

Thursday 7th September
Reykjavik.....



The Capital of the North

First impressions are usually very significant. Our arrival at Keflavik International Airport was, to say the least, gloomy. We were greeted by typical Icelandic weather - heavy cloud and drizzle.

After some delay in collecting baggage, Icelandic money and duty-free goods, most of us set off in the 'bus from the airport to the capital - Reykjavik. Our journey in a steamed-up 'bus, listening to unintelligible Radio Iceland, took us past a desolate scene of lava and ash, sparsely vegetated here and there.

My digest informs me that Iceland has a population of 218,000 of which 98,000 live in Reykjavik - hence the capital is slightly larger than Gloucester. Our route to the airline terminal took us through spacious suburbs of detached houses and blocks of flats, all rather drab in the gloom and drizzle. Then, closer to the centre, older more interesting buildings. These were constructed externally of corrugated iron but painted in drab colours to add to the generally sombre impression. This was further added to by the long walk, whilst laden with food and kit, to the Youth Hostel which was just up the road from the British Ambassador's residence. In fact we were to spend our first night in Iceland in a classroom of a secondary school which served as a Hostel annexe.

The corridors were strewn with drying tents and the members kitchen was occupied by a crowd of voluble French. The rather uncertain spirits of our party were revived by a brew of tea and a slice each of Mrs Kearsey's excellent fruit cake. This spurred us to write 42 postcards between us which were duly dispatched back to blighty!

The following day we set off for the mountains, to come back after our Torfajokull tour, and by then people, traffic and buildings had acquired novelty value.

On our return we had time to explore this northern city and favourite ports of call were shops selling various tourist goods, particularly the famous Icelandic woollen sweaters. Other purchases included fruit soup, whalemeat fish pudding, books and postcards. Among sights seen was the Naval Fishery Protection vessel "Aegir" - one time star of the epic 'Cod Wars'. Also the National Museum about which the less said the better.

Supper that evening included fruit soup and 'skyr' - a local delicacy, not unlike yoghurt, but not much like it either. Later on, Thor's Cafe being closed, those still with money to burn squandered krone on popcorn. Popcorn Reykjavik style was highly popular among the youth of the capital. It was on sale at many late-night kiosks in the city centre and its main characteristic was its very evident proportion of salt!

This and the numbers of mobile and dangerously fast young people added yet another bizarre note to an already richly orchestrated symphony of the strange and unusual that we met in Iceland.

WRS.

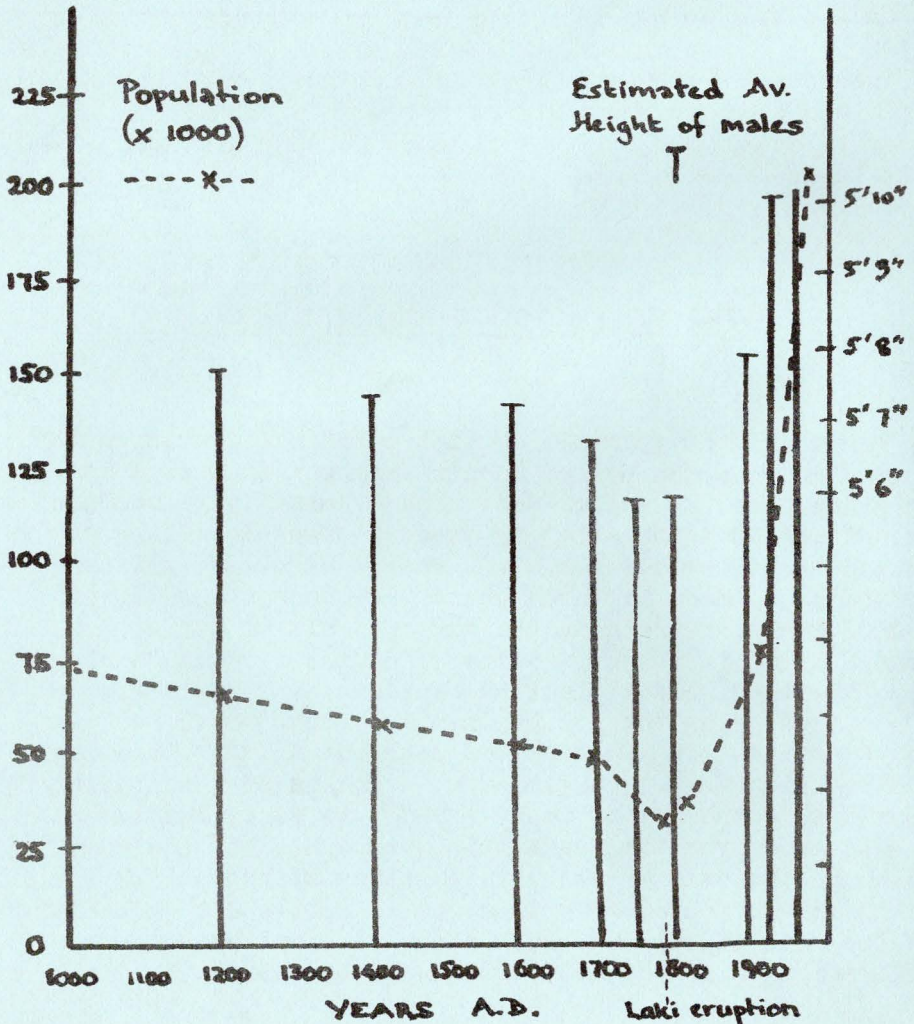
THE BAY OF SMOKE

It was about the year 870 AD that political pressures in Norway drove a man called Ingolf Arnarson to seek a home in a new land. He sailed west, and eventually reached an island well off the existing trade routes. According to custom, he threw overboard his sacred high seat pillars, intending to make his home where they were washed up. (it would mean that the gods had directed him to the spot.) Ingolf lived in temporary quarters for three years, exploring the land, and at last he came across his pillars on the strand below the low peninsula of Reykjanes. He saw the steam drifting up from the many hot springs boiling and bubbling in the neighbourhood, and named the locality Reykjavik - the Bay of Smoke - and this early settlement was to grow over the years into the capital of Iceland. Although the name of the city involves smoke, unlike the normal run of European cities, it is completely smokeless as the hot springs have been tapped to provide all domestic and much of the industrial heating needed.

FH

Population Changes In Iceland

"By the 1700's humans were on the verge of extinction in Iceland, and it seems reasonable to attribute at least part of the numerical dwindling and physical shrinkage to economic hardships caused by the cooling climate. The 20th Century, has brought population to an all time high in a period of milder climate and urbanisation."



Friday 8th September

.... We arrived at the airport to discover that the flight was delayed.....departure lounge.....disaster! Our bookings had been cancelled. After much confusion however we eventually boarded the plane, and despite some trouble with the customs at Glasgow we were back in Gloucester by 10.30 p.m.

So ended 2 glorious weeks of new and exciting experiences for me. Just reserve me a place on the next expedition to Iceland!

EPILOGUE by R.Dalton (Editor)

Just two months after the end of the tour, I am delighted to be able to write the epilogue to this souvenir magazine.

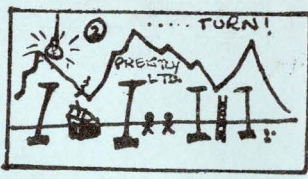
Although I was unable to participate on the trip, through the written experiences of the group, I can now imagine the porridge, the 'tub' at Strútslaug, the different huts and above all, the awe that people felt in the middle of the desolate wastes.

Regular 'Venture 44' readers will realise that this issue is of superior quality to our normal issues. I think that the extra effort has been worthwhile and my thanks go to all who gave help in any way, and especially the V.S.L.

They were obviously an incredible 14 days.



THE REAL ÞING



By now you will probably have gathered that a group of fearless young men went on a gruelling ten day tour of South West Iceland.

That is what we have all been led to believe....but I know the true story. I received it from a very reliable source of information who, not unnaturally, wishes to remain anonymous.

The fact is that we didn't even leave the country. It was all a con-trick.....just one big rip-off! The journey up to Glasgow was real and we did check in at the airport lounge. However this is where the true account begins...

We got on board the 'plane, the engines started up and we supposedly took off. Of course what actually happened was that a giant crane lifted the 'plane off the ground, and a vast roll of canvas scenery was wheeled underneath us to give the appearance of flying.

Eventually we 'arrived' at Keflavik Airport. Since a lot of the fake hoardings were incomplete, thick mist was used to hide the unfinished sections. This method was used quite often on our tour, but that was when I first became suspicious.

We stayed at a school - an old army hut - and saw a great deal of very effective scenery in 'Reykjavik'...all those house and shop facades, they must have taken a long time to be built.

As you know, the next day we left the 'town', after a night of loud tape recordings of low-flying aircraft and drunk Icelanders, (who spoke with Scottish accents), for town atmosphere. Our destination was in fact a very wild area of Scotland. At this point, I must say that I have tremendous respect for the Designer of these wonderful sets.

Anyroad, we walked round and round in circles for ten days. Our fake maps were very realistic, but we were told that using compasses wouldn't help much because of the peculiar properties of the rocks - a likely story! Talking of rocks, I was also informed that suitable specimens of types unknown to us had been left at strategic points all

along our route, just to add authenticity to the trick.

The huts we stayed in were changed from time to time, although there was never much difference between them. In fact, even the food stores in each stop were the same, and what is more they were BRITISH - proves my point, eh?

So the tour continued and we eventually finished the sights of 'Iceland', of which Strokkur and other things are shown below.

However I enjoyed the deception. Somehow I'm not so sure that my source is as reliable as he claims. Sometimes I felt that I really was in Iceland!

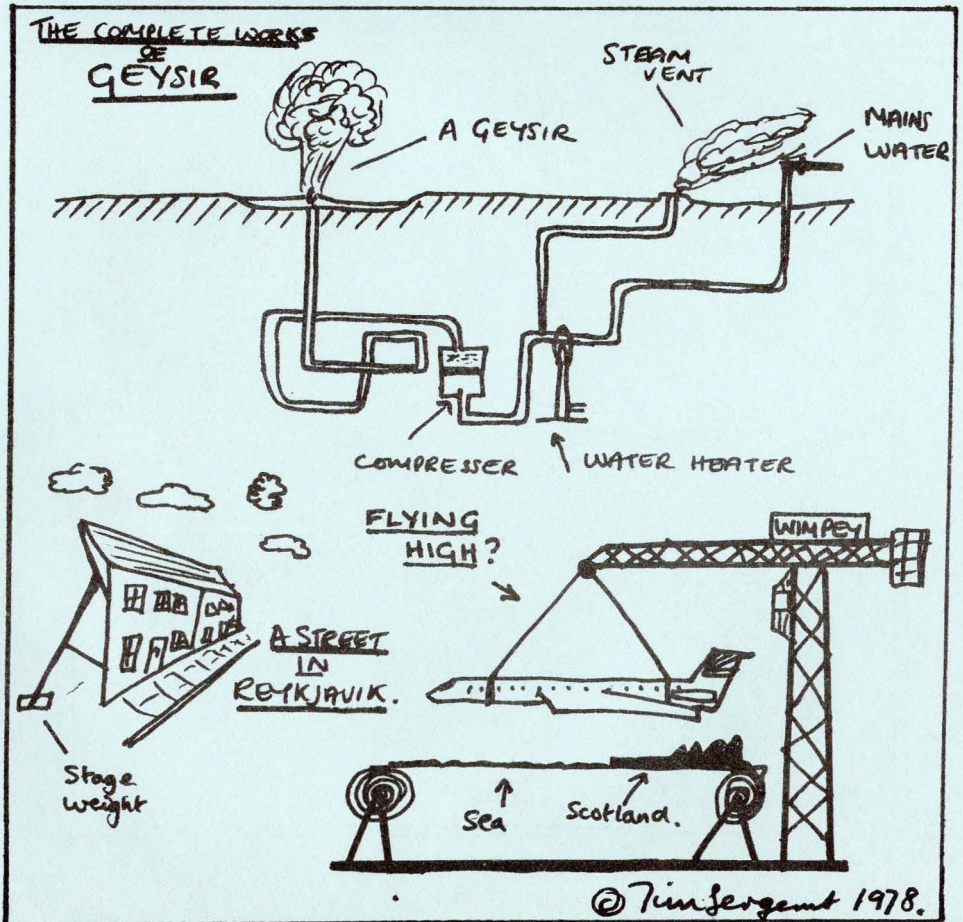
T.S.

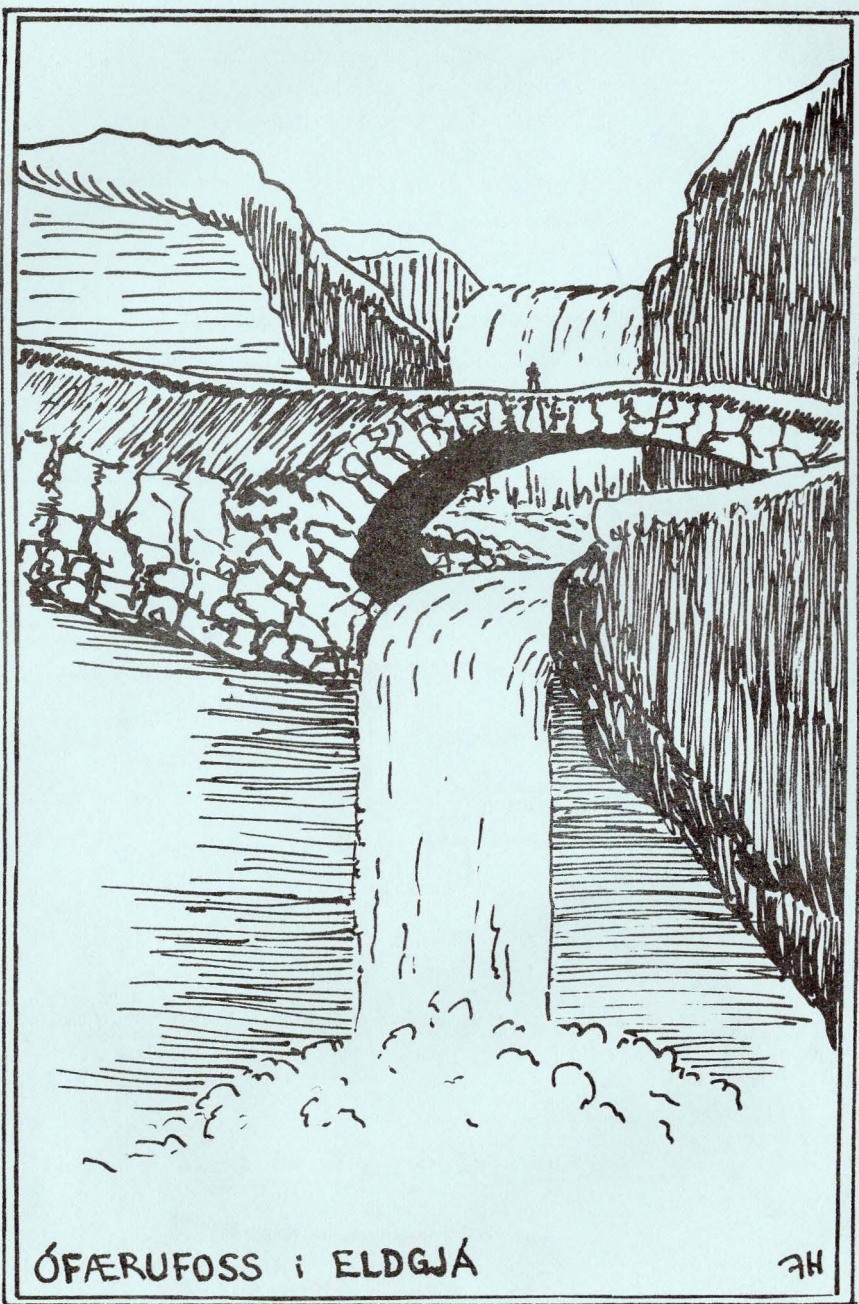
"God has not yet finished Iceland"

Desmond Bagley 1970

"Fantastic" S.J. Preston and others

1978





ÓFÆRUFOSI ; ELDGJÁ

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