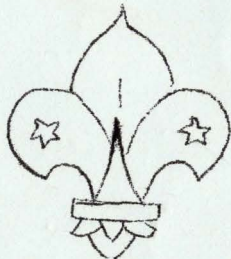
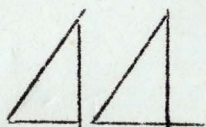
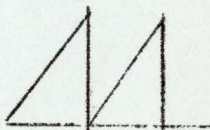


D.B.

53 Chalkin Rd



Venture



SEPTEMBER 1979

NUMBER

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

NUMBER THIRTY THREE

SEPTEMBER 1979

EDITOR Mark Simmons

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Chris Pashley

CHAIRMAN

Paul Jennings

SECRETARY

Nigel Brewster

TREASURER

Iain Weir

RECORDER

Mark Simmons

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EDITORIAL

As the new editor of Venture 44, I am following in the footsteps of my brother, Ian, who was editor from 1973 to 74. I hope that my efforts will be as interesting and as well written as his were, and also those of my immediate predecessor, Rob Dalton.

Since the last edition the Unit has been very active despite the occurrence of G.C.E. exams. Activities have included the visit to North Wales in the first week of July to continue with conservation work for the National Trust. A month later a smaller party was in North Wales again, this time near Dolgellau, for ten days of hill walking. A team entered the Round Cheltenham hike, but did not win it.

Golf fever seems to have struck the Unit. It is very rare now for there not to be at least one member over on the 'Pitch and Putt'. A very competitive and well attended tournament was held in July, with Paul Venn winning.

The start of the new school year has left the Unit with only a small membership of twelve, and new members are urgently needed. A recent recruit is Nigel Holden.

Finally, if anyone feels like putting pen to paper I would be very pleased to receive the resulting article for inclusion in the next regular issue. I would also be pleased to hear from any reader of any new ideas for the magazine they may have, or even criticisms of it - even if they do end up in the bin!

Mark Simons.

NOTES AND NEWS

Autumn is the time of the year when we say goodbye to members who are leaving school and seeking employment or further education, sometimes far from Gloucester. This year the number is unusually large, and we will be particularly sorry to lose all our senior officers who have formed the core of the Unit for several years now.

DAVE BROWN, our treasurer, will be going to Salford to study chemical engineering, sponsored by the National

Gas Board (or whatever that august body calls itself.) On observing the condition of a tent that he borrowed this summer, one hopes that they will teach him how to handle those little blue cylinders...

CHRIS COLLINS, our secretary is going to Cardiff to study geology, and no doubt teach the welsh to play badminton.

ROB DALTON, erstwhile editor of this magazine is now pointing his shoes towards Nottingham, where he will be studying English

IAN FLETCHER, chairman, is heading south to Plymouth to study biology

JON MAY will be in Bath, brushing up on his electron-ics.

It will be difficult to adequately replace this little group of loyal and experienced Venture Scouts, and the recently elected officers have a daunting task ahead of them.

As well as losing the holders of the key offices in the Unit we also say farewell to two other stalwarts in PETE GREEN and TONY(A.V.)JONES, and to complete the list PETER NEURATER, ROGER MATTHEWS, KEV NEELY, STEVE BALL, TRACY NEWPORT and MARK (ERIC) WALKER.

-o-

Readers may note that contrary to normal practice, no list of executive committee members is given in this issue. This is the result of a policy decision made at our recent A.G.M. Since the number in the Unit is at present small it was thought that the best way to proceed would be for the officers to form the nucleus of the committee and for them to formulate and publicise the agenda prior to the meeting so that any members who felt they had anything important to say on any matter could come along and take part. This system will be reviewed after several meetings.

#### AWARDS

I am pleased to report that DAVE BROWN has gained his Queen's Scout Award, and that IAIN WEIR, PAUL VENN, MARK SIMMONS and STEVE GRAIL now have their Venture Award.

F.H.



The annual "Round Cheltenham Walk" was advertised as a pleasant amble on a summer's day around the outskirts of the town - a few hills, perhaps, but frequent check-points with orange squash for the thirsty walker. Our entry form was sent in (late!) and we looked forward to a not too strenuous ramble on a sunny May day.

But, gentle reader....

### A STROLL IN THE COUNTRY

Prestbury  
Southam  
2  
4  
Cleeve Hill  
6  
Upper Hill  
8  
10  
Dowdeswell  
12

Upon meeting the van at 9 a.m., the weather in Gloucester was bright and sunny - no need for waterproofs. According to the V.S.L. we would be back by 5 p.m., so who needed food? We set off towards Prestbury with Iain, Steve, Nigel, the V.S.L. and myself, waiting in anticipation of starting the hike. We were not entering in competitively, so there was no hurry to get to the Scout Headquarters at Prestbury.

We arrived at about 10 a.m. under darkening clouds, but so what, it wouldn't rain now would it? After a few minutes we found that our entry had not arrived, and anyway everyone else had started, but undaunted we set out to catch up with the field.

We were all in high spirits at the start Nigel and Steve led the way, because they had the directions. The clouds looked darker now, and yes, it was actually raining, never mind, keep going, it would surely stop soon.

After walking for some seven miles we came to Cleeve Hill golf course which we had to get across. As we approached the summit, you could not help noticing that the wind had picked up, and was driving the rain at us, but we just smiled and kept on, it wasn't all that far now. We were on a seemingly endless straight road - and we were quite wet. It was coming up now to lunchtime, and it dawned on two of the intellectuals in the party that they had not brought

any food and as I was one, I will not tell you that Iain was the other. Fortunately our brother scouts did not let us starve!

We continued, and we managed to catch up with three young scouts who are probably still trying to find their way home.

By now we were very wet and walking across muddy fields meant heavy boots after a few slips. It continued raining and we continued walking, up and down, sliding and falling. At last we descended to Shurdington, by now passing many other tired walkers. As we entered a housing estate on the outskirts of town, Nigel said there was only five miles left.

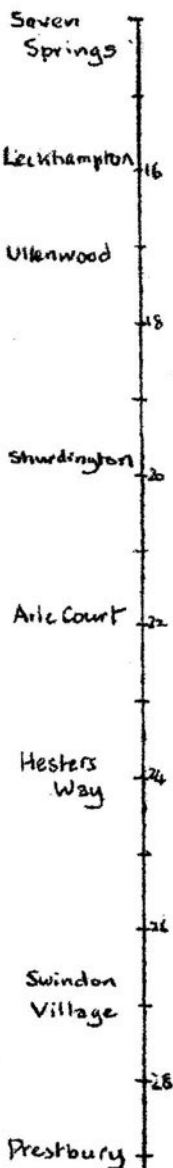
The time was now around 6.30 p.m. just a little after the ETA. The strain was beginning to tell. Feet ached, muscles were sore, but the rain had stopped - we couldn't get any wetter!

Then the real breakthrough! A sign saying 2 miles to Prestbury, and this gave us hope even though it was up a muddy hill. On the way the rain decided to refresh us. It was a relief to reach a road again, but where was Prestbury? At last a sign, which upon close inspection it read Prestbury  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles - some one on the council is a real comic!

The directions told us to go round the race course. On approaching the track we saw a big crowd of bedraggled scouts who seemed to be in trouble, but we rounded them up, and shepherded them in what seemed to be the right direction, and in no time, there was the van!

Even though I was dead on my feet and soaked, it was all worth it for the badge with a silver boot on it which I have treasured since and hung on my wall for posterity.

We returned home at 9 p.m. to anxious parents, after quite a stroll



PAUL VENN

## AN EXCURSION IN WALES



This year the camp was based at Voel Farm near Dolgellau, an area renowned for its wet weather when a party led by the V.S.L. arrives there. This tradition was unfortunately upheld.

The party was a small one, consisting of Iain Weir, Mark Simmons, the V.S.L., and myself. The main activity was hill walking, which occasionally turned into rock climbing without ropes, and getting into silly places. A full list of mountains conquered is cunningly included beside this article.

One dull evening we visited the local gold mines, using our new and expensive electric cutting lamps, and found a small piece of gold(?) - which was promptly lost, and a few dead sheep, which we narrowly missed being bombarded with.

Other excursions included visits to Harlech Barmouth, Bala, Tywyn, Porthmadog, Dolgellau and Fairbourne (aptly named by one of the party "a piece of England in Wales") and the Sheepdog Trials (which I am sure P.Venn would have won!)

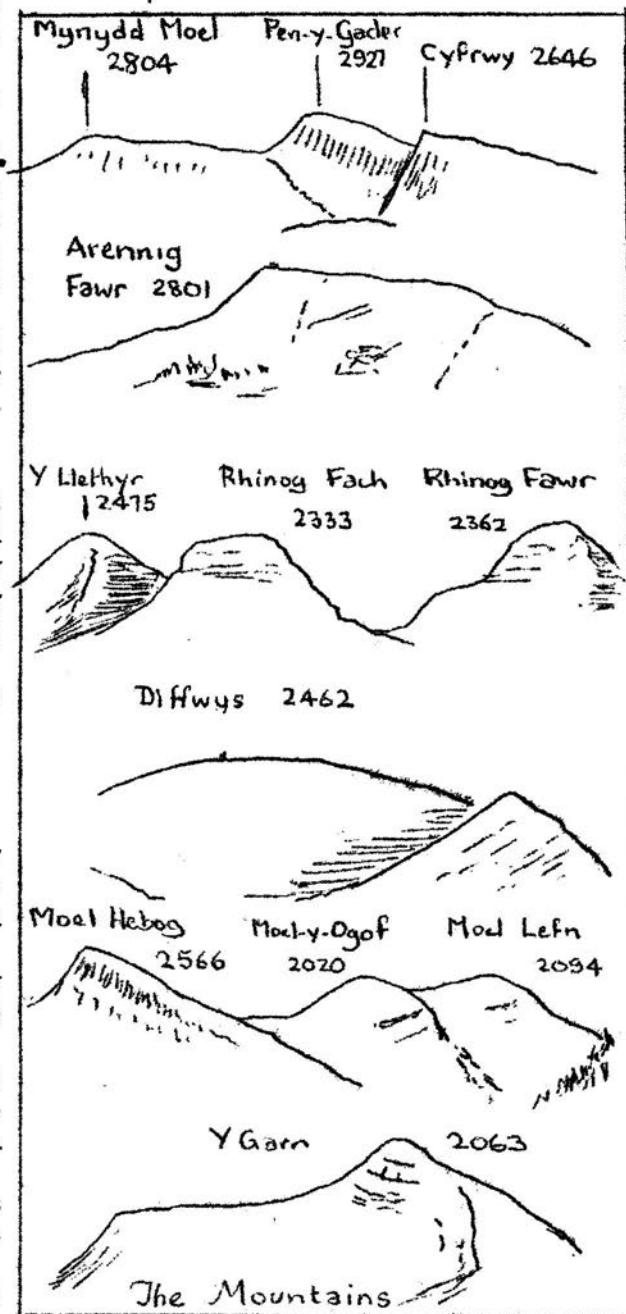
Just by coincidence we seemed to end up at a putting green most days, and after ten rounds on very varied courses the V.S.L. was victorious with 30 points after last hole drama on the Hereford links, Iain and I having 29 each and Mark less...

The menu must have challenged the best for its variety and inventiveness. We had a whole host of new 44th products, including exotic pan-cakes and fritters, cider cheese, tomato omelettes and burned tea towels, and we made history by being the first scout camp not to touch one single baked bean!

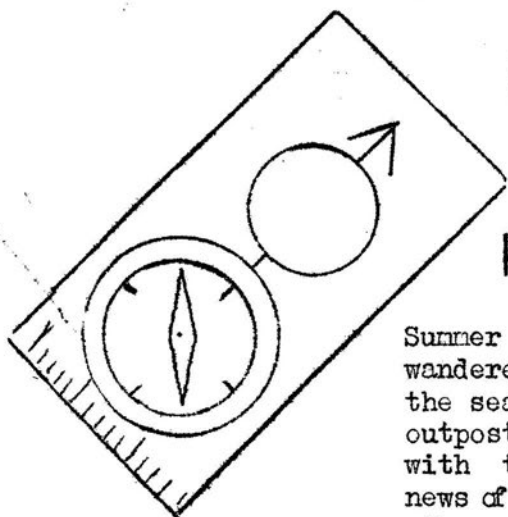
One mystery which haunted us through the ten days was the strange figure whom we christened the "Mad Hatchet Man". He ran from us when we approached him, but was constantly prowling around the V.S.L.'s tent (so he said), and on a dark night he followed us up the steep lane from the R\*y\*1 G\*\*rg\*.

Despite the small number on the camp we had a pleasant and memorable time

NIGEL BREWSTER







## FROM ALL POINTS

Summer comes, and with it the wanderers return from the sea the seats of learning and the outposts of empire, bringing with them strange tales and news of chance encounters with other ex-members.

So, strictly in alphabetical order, and with apologies to anyone left out, here are some gleanings - many from the lounge bar of the "Double Gloucester".

JOHN BARNES has recently been promoted, and rumour has it that a famous Ice-cream manufacturer will soon be changing its name to Barnes and Wall Ltd..

MARTIN BERRY has completed his course at Aston and will soon start work in Manchester. He is working at the Co-op headquarters - something to do with telling lorry drivers where to go!

ANDREW BURNS - Dr Burns, is staying in Leeds and hoping to gain employment in the chemical engineering industry.

ANDREW CHALKLEY, who was last heard of starting on the speedway circuit in Australia, has apparently ridden with great success and competed against some of the best riders in the world. However, several high speed spills have decided him to withdraw from the track.

STEVE CHALKLEY has reappeared in England - or rather Wales - new address, 18 Merthyr Road, Hirwaun. An interesting property, to say the least! More from Steve later!

NEIL D'YKE would like to hear from old friends. Neil is now working for the Southern Electricity Board, and

his address is 19 Elliott Rise, N.Ascot, Berks.

MARK EVANS is at present in Cambridge, working on an agricultural research project for three months.

TIM HOLFORD is back in Gloucester, and is living up at Edge. He is now a fully qualified vet, and is roundly cursing James Herriot for the image that he is expected to live up to. Anyone want a tame black rabbit?

DARRALL JONES has completed his pharmacy course and is seeking a job in one of the big drug firms. Like a good Venture scout, he will be spending a lot of time in Boots.....

ROW LLOYD has shaken off the dust of Keele, and has followed his fathers footsteps into the teaching trade, he started last week at a Maidenhead Grammar School.

MIKE PARTRIDGE has started soliciting in London(or something like that!)

NICK PEARCE is now working for a photographic firm in the big city, and has settled down in married life. His address is now 20 Roding Road, Clapton, London E5.

AUDIE POLLOCK is another following in fathers foot steps, and is living a hectic life as an itinerant steel erector, and part-time property speculator!

JOHN PRICE is constantly trying to avoid writing an article for this magazine by shooting off to odd places, rumour has it that he is at present in Egypt!

ANDY ROSE is now working in a bank - I hope he can tell the difference between the blue ones and the green ones!

IAN SIMMONS, our editor's brother, has finished his year in that hot-bed of revolution, the London School of Economics, and is going back to Oxford to get yet another degree. He estimates that he will be about forty by the time he finished his education - forty being an age and not a waist measurement!

JOHN SWEET has completed his course at Brunel University, and is now working with an engineering firm at Aylsbury.

JULIAN WILLIAMS is well established at Aberystwyth, although nobody, including himself, really knows what he is doing there!

KATHMANDU AND TROPICAL INDIA  
IN A BRITISH LEYLAND TIN BOX

To my passengers the Ramsgate Hovercraft was the start of a 6 week holiday trip, taking in Europe, Turkey, Iran Afghanistan, Pakistan and India, but to Denise and me it was the end of 4 months of planning and preparation- the fruition of an idea germinated four years ago. 10 months 20,000 miles, 3 broken springs, 2 burned valves, 9 punctures, 7 dents, numerous minor breakdowns and a thousand and one unforgettable experiences later we arrived back in England, after being hailed so by a Yugoslav shepherd "Mizziz Thatcher, hee hee!"

So much happened that I can only tell a little. In the best tradition of 44th style Venture scouting, we headed for the mountains. September 13th found us floundering in the snow at 13,500 ft - the Rhotang Pass, part of the great Himalayan Divide, marking the furthestmost point reached by the northward moving monsoon rains. To the south stretched dense pine forests and alpine meadows and majestic peaks reaching 20,000 ft. To the north, stark mountains devoid of vegetation. This is Lahoul and Spiti, accessible by vehicle for only 2 months of the year - life style desperately hard, infant mortality extremely high - in last year's winter, 400 people were killed in avalanches. None of this is reflected in the cheerful hospitable nature of the people who leapt into a river to help us push out of a makeshift ford, shared their rice and "dahl" (boiled lentils), pretended to be angry with their curious children who plagued us around the van, and then stood and stared at us themselves, as they smoked "beedies" - tobacco rolled in a leaf.

One incident that stands out was our meeting with Alan Halkland from Liverpool - he stood out at 100 yards with his wild blond hair, ankle length sheepskin coat and the squinting look that comes to people spending a long time in cold climates. His attire was completed with the remnants of several sweaters, tattered jeans through which local woollen breeches showed, and a split pair of "Dr Martins". He traded with the nomadic tribesmen deep in

the Himalaya collecting ancient caravanserai relics from the old trade routes, moving with a train of six ponies over passes sometimes up to 20,000 ft, living on dried goats meat, nuts (in fact a precise diet that though high in fat and low vitamin content enables the nomad to remain strong and healthy in cold and adverse conditions for long periods of time.) Rubbing the side of his nose with his finger he told me that next year he'd cross into China through a pass he had discovered and thought it was too high to be guarded.

It is a world apart from this on the Indian plains - travelling but 3 weeks after the awful floods that year, the results of these were obvious; roads would cease to exist for half a mile or so (a shovel was an essential tool); wretched people were camped at the roadside, waiting for a chance to rebuild their shacks. In Agra the flood marks were ten ft up the walls - stories abounded of mercenary boat owners demanding 100 rupees to pick up drowning people. Agra is famed for its monument of undying love, the Taj Mahal. I'm no poet (no cracks about being no writer either!) - anyone who knows me recognises me as a cultural slob - but I was moved greatly by the building. The sheer majesty and symmetry stuns all as they enter the gardens. Words or photographs cannot capture it, and seen at dawn or in moonlight it defies description.

All in all it was a great experience - where else could you be woken from your slumbers by an elephant scratching himself on the side of your van, or be surrounded by displaying peacocks? Where else could you sleep in a Maharajah's home with two bowing turbaned servants, marble baths, drinking Darjeeling tea on the veranda by the lake, with antelope on one side, wild pigeon on the other, and crocodiles in the water, and then be handed a bill in the morning of less than a pound for the two of us! Yes, there are hordes of people, there are millions of fleas, it stinks sometimes and it is hot and sweaty. You are in danger of dysentery, hepatitis, mosquito bite, shocked by lack of sanitation, but I guarantee that when you've learned to blow your nose without a handkerchief

and use water instead of bog paper, you can enjoy yourself - we certainly did!

STEVE CHALKLEY

FOOTNOTE

I looked over at Lefty and thought to myself, "He's looking his age - he's lost his gloss, and that lace is not going to last much longer!" I suppose he thinks the same when he looks at me with all those beady eyes.

Sometimes when Him Up There stops for a rest (hae does more often at his age) we stand together on a rock, and I wonder to myself, "What am I doing here?"

It's alright on the rocky bits - now Tryvan, or Crib Goch, Cader, or the Glyders, that's what we're used to, and I don't mind a bit of snow. Iceland - very hard - we really work our passage there, but some of the other places, well, there are some we weren't made for. Bogs are murder on the stitching, all that nasty black acid water. And road walking, well, as any self respecting pair of socks will tell you! Mind you, in all fairness Him Up There has been a bit more reasonable this year, and I was in the van with those training shoes a few times this year - not much good for heavy work, but we had some nice rests at Easter on Offa's Dyke because of them. And what about them fancy green wellingtons? A bit out of our class, they thought, but they've done a fair bit of work in wet weather this year, say that everybody wears them in Scandanavia. So, looks like we might have an easier time of it now, but mind you I do feel sorry for a good few pairs of boots I've met - when I think of some overweight out of condition clodhoppers forced round on the Cotswold Marathon and the like, well some people will never learn. Mind you, it's books, you see. They read it all in these books, you must always wear boots whenever you go hiking, so they tell me, but I do really wish that some people would show a little bit of common sense, not to mention consideration sometimes. Still there I go rambling on, Lefty always said my tongue was too long...

SIZE NINE





