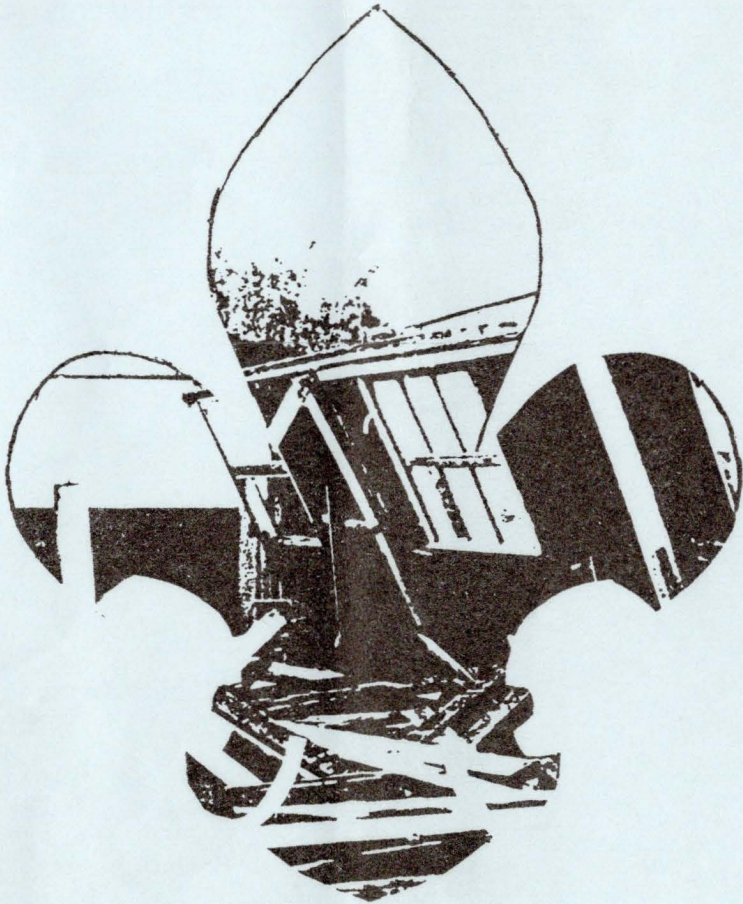


VENTURE

44



Number 71

VENTURE

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VENTURE 44. The magazine of the 44th Gloucester
(Sir Thomas Rich's School) V.S.U.

NUMBER 71

JUNE 1992

UNIT OFFICERS

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| Treasurer | Nick James |
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UNIT NEWS

With one campaign over, another one starts - I refer, of course to my school election efforts and the never ending campaign of the putting together of another Venture 44. Hopefully I do rather better in the latter as I came 3rd (last) in the election! Was it the plastic rose that put people off voting for me, or shall I blame the polls, like everyone else!

Another defeat, this time by a smaller margin, when the "Aldershots" (myself, Matt, Adrian, and dads Dave Wilton and Tom Kingsbury plus F.H. came second in the "more than" annual Quiz evening organised by the P.A. One point behind and a heated debate arose over the patron saint of Russia, as our team leader was sure it was St Cyril, but the question master wasn't. We later discovered that Cyril may have invented the russian alphabet, but is in fact the patron saint of near misses..

Things are moving on the hut front, and the old building has now gone! A new hut is to be erected behind the bowls green, we really have demolished a 17th century edifice? All is explained later)

Paul Kingsbury

It should be mentioned here that Paul has been incapacitated for some time with a broken wrist (Venture scout activity, what else!) and spent a few days in hospital. Also in hospital for a while recently was our resident artist, Mike Cheshire, who was stricken with a mystery illness.

Whilst Mike and Paul have been in and out quickly, I am sorry to report that Stuart Finch has spent a long time in hospital after being seriously injured when the car in which he was a passenger was involved in an accident earlier in the year. It is good to report that Stuart is making slow but sure progress, and he is receiving regular visits from unit members. He is now back home, and despite very serious head and leg injuries it looks as if Stuart will make a full recovery and we are sure all our readers will join us in sending our very best wishes to him.

-o-

100 CLUB

Winners in recent months of the fabulous £25 have been

| | | | |
|----------------|---------------|-----------------|----------------|
| <u>January</u> | Tom Kingsbury | <u>February</u> | Simon Williams |
| <u>March</u> | Tim Smith | <u>April</u> | Phil Champion |
| <u>May</u> | Tim Holford | <u>June</u> | John Holdaway |

Dear reader, are you a member of the Club? If not now would be a good time to join (from our point of view, at least!).

You will see later in this issue that the Unit is now faced with a big bill over the next few years in order to pay off a loan taken out to finance the necessary replacement of the old Scout Hut. The Club has 60 members at present, and another 40 would help no end. A cheque for £12 would cover a year's subscription. HOW ABOUT IT? Cheques payable to 44th Glos V.S.U.



At last, the inevitable, it could be put off no longer. The old Scout Hut has had it's final condemnation notice, and the demolition process has now run it's sad course. We were to start the sad task on March 31st, but didn't get going until the next day.....

In the process of stripping the interior several interesting finds have come to light which refolect the long and interesting history of the venerable edifice. A crumpled Citizen dated 12 June 1947 had some interesting cricket scores on the back page, and puzzled some of the workers who knew that the school has only been at Elmbridge since 1964. The hut, of course is much older, having been on the Barton Street site when the school moved, and at Innsworth prior to that (or so we thought.)

Investigation of some of the lower timbers, however, has revealed evidence of even greater antiquity. A piece of parchment was found, and despite the rather dated script and poor condition, we have been able to piece together the following facts which may interest the reader.

It seems that the original structure predates even the foundation of the school in 1666, as it was certainly in existence in 1642. It was then sited at Edgehill in Warwickshire, about 40 miles from Gloucester. The document strongly suggests that the building housed some

about 40 miles from Gloucester. The document strongly suggests that the building housed some of the volunteers who fought on the Royalist side in the Civil war, special troops under the direct command of Prince Rupert. They were to be his "secret weapon" at the great battle fought below the Edgehill escarpment that had such a profound effect on the fortunes of that war.

Rupert was a great traveller, a brilliant soldier, but also he was often impetuous, and unpredictable. Whilst travelling as a young man in China he had come across two inventions that he thought he could put to use in warfare in Europe - the fighting kite, and fireworks. He hit upon the ingenious idea of building large man carrying kites that could be launched from hilltops, the precursors of the modern hang glider. He planned to throw the army of Cromwell into confusion with an aerial attack from kites, dropping large fireworks into the ranks to scare both men and horses.

The day of the great battle dawned, but sadly it was cold and damp, and the hoped for thermal currents never developed. The kites, made of flimsy material, proved a disaster. Several never took off, and those that did crashed before even reaching the enemy line. It was when this happened that Rupert made the fateful decision that did so much to cost the king his throne, and head. Rather than allow the roundheads to capture his elite fliers and learn the secrets of the firework bearing kites, he led his army downhill onto the plain, thus forfeiting his advantage. Every history book will tell you the rest of the story. The gallant but ill-fated band, or Rupert's Avenging Furies as they became known, were all captured or killed, and flying went out of fashion in warfare until this century.

But what of the hut? Cromwell saw the value of a sturdy sectional building, and it was dismantled and dragged by ten oxen to the River Stour, thence to the Avon, and down the Severn to Gloucester. It was taken through the west gate and eventually re-erected somewhere near what is now Brunswick Road, where it was used as a barrack. (That probably explains some of the graffitti).

That is the story we have extracted from the parchment, which seems to be some sort of log book over the civil war period. With peace the hut seems to have fallen into disuse, and it's subsequent history is not recorded, but there is at least one interesting possibility. When Sir Thomas Rich founded our school in 1666 the prestigious building in Eastgate street was not ready for the first intake, and so according to the history of the school "the boys were accommodated in a temporary building beside the city wall somewhere between Barton Street and and Brunswick Road...."

Could it be, I wonder, that we have just dismantled the very first building that was graced with the noble name Sir Thomas Rich's School?

-o-

The latest situation regarding a new hut is that a Marley style building will be erected on the far side of the Bowls Green, at the cost of some £4200. Payment of this will come from Unit funds, together with a grant from the Parent's Association and an interest free loan from the school. Ex members who are not in the 100 Club could help us greatly by joining to help finance the building and keep the Unit going.



After nearly taking the roof off the new(ish) 6' 10" red van trying to park it in a 6'6" high multi-storey car park the hard core climbing posse (Brad, Jim, V.S.L and I) mosied on down to to the plush brand new National Indoor Arena in in Birmingham to view the spectacle of the '91 World Indoor Climbing Finals. It was the last day of the competition,

and included the men's semis, veterans comp, and the Women's and Men's finals.

Once we had inspected all the gear stands we headed for our seats to find that the mens Semi had already started, and we had missed our best british hope, Ben Moon. Watching all the other competitors, and seeeing some excellent performances - particularly from German Stefan Glowacz and Japanese Yuji Hirayama - we wondered whether Ben had performed well enough to qualify for the finals.

The Women's final then commenced, with a route on the 15 m high and 4.5 m horizontally overhanging wall which was certainly the most visually exciting of the day. The roof at about 13 m left the competitors hanging single handed whilst they chalked up for the next desperate move to heel hook up and conquer the overhang. there was everything to climb for as by winning this event several of them could gain valuable points towards the overall U.I.A.A. rankings. The winner was supposed to be the climber who got highest, but they were climbing well, and a



number of them reached the top, so a Women's Superfinal was called for, after the mens.

So the time came (eventually) for the big event - the Men's World Cup Final. We were pleased that Ben moon had made it, and we watched all the other competitors, mentally noting their attained spot heights, instantly recorded on the sophisticated computerised score board. The route was relentlessly overhanging, giving no chance for rest. The climbers really went for it, giving their all and climbing until they fell. So far no-one had reached the top, or looked like doing so, and when Ben started he had a hard task ahead. All the climbers were in "quarantine" whilst the others climbed, and had a short time to look at the wall and plan a route within set boundary markers. Our man took off and climbed powerfully, every move purposeful and his good rhythm allowed him to reach a good height, but would it be enough? The German challenge failed and the Japanese climber got tremendous applause as he powered up, but in the end the Frenchman Francois Lombard came up with the goods in a close contest. Another Frenchman, (Gary Lineker look-alike) Francois Legrand had already won the overall title, but was not climbing today due to injury

the Women's decider took place on the men's wall, with a few extra holds, and a Swiss/U.S.A. /France competition ended with another success for France as Isabelle Patissier got the highest.

Chris Bonnington was to present the prizes but being personal mates of his, we didn't hang around. The programme had massively over-run and Frank had missed a dinner party, Brad had missed Youth Club, Jim missed "Songs of Praise" and I missed my mum! But A GOOD DAY OUT!

Matt Wilton

FROM ALL POINTS

In the spring the young man's fancy lightly turns to....house-hunting, mortgages, patios, lawn weed-killer, and, I nearly forgot, getting married. On April 25th PADDY SMITH took the plunge, and Upton Bishop saw its biggest social event since brother Ali's 21st last year. It proved a bit of a reunion for some of our ex members (they were easy to find - just wait at the bar and they turn up!) DAVE WILSON, BRIAN HERBERT and RICH DREW from Paddy's year looked back on Spain '84, and DAVE WILLIAMS and GARETH ROSS were also present. So was TIM SMITH (the best man) who had a squash match in the morning but just got to the church on time!

A month later it was the turn of IAN FLETCHER, and the proceedings here were much enlivened by the presence of DAVE BROWN and KEV NEELY. I am sure you will join me in wishing all the best to Paddy and Mandi and to Ian and and Dori. And now farmer Tim has decided that what is good enough for brother Paddy is good enough for him, and is not going to be outdone by his brother and is going to tie the knot in July (cricket permitting.)

Another event that brought together some ex-members was the Old Richians dinner on April the 4th. JOHN PEPPERELL came down from Solihull, and GARETH BEAMISH came across from Bucks. He is now working for a petrol company and has spent time in South Africa in the mining industry.

From earlier generations it was good to see CHARLIE MOSS and JIM SOO. I last heard of Jim in Dublin in 1971, where he was working in a hotel. He has remained in the catering business, and now is in management, involved in contract catering for the N.H.S. in north London. He wished to be remembered to his contemporaries.

From Bath and the United States stories are heard concerning the wanderings of DAVE JERRARD. Dave has been spied travelling the states delivering cars - perhaps he will get a real job one day, but I doubt it! Information comes from JER HOBBS who is still working in the hospital in Bath, although he has moved house recently. Jer has also established links with the local Venture Scout unit who have been raising money for the ward in which he is working. Actual sightings of the *Jerrardius peregrinatus* have been made by RICH KERSWELL, now in his final year of research at M.I.T. Rich was home briefly at Christmas and plans to exchange the leafy groves of academia in Cambridge Mass for the perhaps rather less leafy groves (of the Byker variety?) of Newcastle upon Tyne. Rich is taking up a lectureship at the University in September of this year.

Also on Tyneside, MARK SIMMONS is now in residence and working in a museum in the city. He is one of several of our ex-members now congregating in Geordie land, as STEVE PRESTON has been spied at Newcastle Central station by Ian Fletcher a little while ago. Somewhat further afield, Mark's brother IAN is in Australia where he is learning Vietnamese prior to heading to Hanoi where he will be in the British Embassy for his next tour of duty.

And whilst on the subject of Oz, cue Jason!

KAKADU

In Darwin - major town of Northern Territory, Australia. Supposedly famous for the following, being bombed by the Japs in WWII, consuming more beer per capita than anywhere on the planet, and its national parks.

Decision day - do I pay big dollars for an organised tour, or hire a 4 wheel drive, and share costs with a group of like minded people? In the end I went for an organised tour, deciding that I wanted someone along who knew the area, flora, fauna, and aboriginal culture. As I was on a tight budget, I went for the cheapest, "Ivan's Tours" - 2½ days - bargain at \$175.

Essential gear included camera, bush hat, combat trousers, long sleeved top (I hadn't one) a slab of Coopers Ale (24 stubbies) and 25 litres of RID (famous ossie carcinogenic mosie repellent). All this packed in my day bag, bush hat on head and gortex boots afoot, I set off.

There were ten of us plus driver in an air conditioned 24 seater minibus - loads of room and you really need the air conditioning! The others were Irish, Danish, German and Ausie, so I was the only POME on board (Prisoner of Mother England, which should be the Ausies, not us!)

Kakadu Park is on the UNESCO World Heritage listing, and the name derives from Gagadija, the name of the tribe who inhabit the area. It was misheard by an English explorer - quite a common occurrence in Aus, as any kangaroo will tell you. It covers an area of nearly 20,000 km³, 48 km³ of which is a Uranium mine (there when the park was created in 1965). Since 1979 three stages

have been developed. It includes much of the catchment area for the Alligator River - another Englishman saw some crocs sunning themselves on the mudbanks and mistook them for alligators - really bright!

The land is occupied by several Aboriginal tribes who still live the traditional nomadic life, hunting and gathering in the park, which is managed jointly by the National Parks and Wild Life Service and two Aboriginal Community associations.

To Europeans the park seems to have but two seasons, the hot and wet, and the hot and dry, but the natives divide the yearly cycle into six seasons. It was vitally important for them to keep track of the seasons so they can move to sites of shelter and food as the year passes. There is evidence that the Aboriginals have inhabited the region for at least 25,000 years, and maybe as long as 40,000 years.

Aboriginal lifestyle was very efficient at food gathering, and less than 20% of the working day was spent on gathering and preparing food. This left plenty of time to develop culture and oral traditions, and one of the most impressive features of Kakadu is the rock art. Much of the paintings are extremely sacred, and only a few initiated elders of the tribes may visit these sites. At other places, however, visitors are encouraged, as long as they respect the sites as all have a spiritual significance to the natives.

Nourlangie is one place which is very ancient, and it is used as a shelter in the Wet. David Attenborough visited the site and found the paintings very faint, but they have now been restored and are now amongst the most vivid in Kakadu, or anywhere in the world.

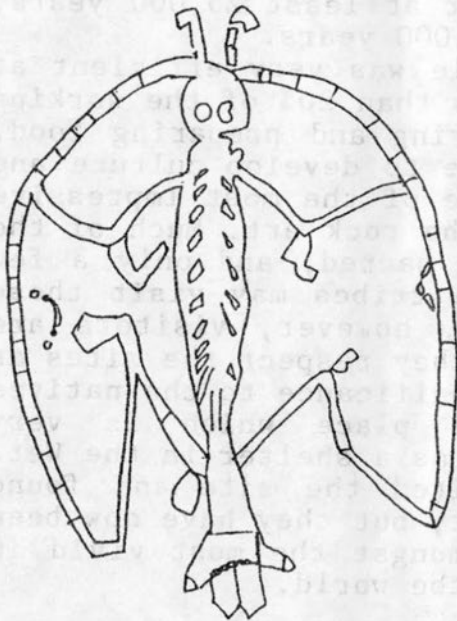
The rock art was important in many ways to the Aboriginal peoples, not the least as a visual reminder to the tribe of the stories of the ancestors which are part of the oral heritage which is passed down from generation to generation. As the natives have no tradition of the written word, the visual record of the myths and stories is very important to the identity of the tribe.

As none of the pigments used are carbon based, the age cannot be worked out by the C^{14} method, but different styles may be used as indicators of age.

Looking at the rock art really conveys the image of a culture rich in its heritage and in complete harmony with its environment.

It is easy to imagine yourself sitting by the fire at night, under the Southern Cross, listening to the tribal elders singing the creation of the world, and losing your self in the imagery of the word and picture.

It is a criminal shame Australians (of the old world ancestry) still are trying to impose a western materialistic spiritually dead life style on a people who do not want it, and cannot comprehend it.



Namarrgon Spirit of Thunder & Lightning

The main reason that most people go to Kakadu is not to see the rock art, but to see - and be terrified by - a creature older than the dinosaur...

The Crocodile!

Two types of croc are found in Aus, fresh and saltwater, but there are no alligators!

The freshwater beast is no great hazard to man, but the saltwater variety is another matter! They will eat anything they can catch - birds, fish, snakes, dingoes, wild pigs, cats and dogs, and sometimes the likes of you and me.

'Saltwater' is a misleading term, as these crocs can be found in freshwater rivers hundreds of miles inland. Big 'salties' can reach .7 metres in length, weigh over half a tonne, and can reach speeds onland in short bursts over 6 m.p.h. -more than just enough to make you run like Ben Johnson - and just don't fall over!

Your first sight of a croc is something you will never forget. the way they 'smile' and 'stare' at you makes them seem to possess an evil cunning. When you are only a few feet from a 5m



croc in a 10ft aluminium boat you recall that these animals have been around 165 million years and during that time they have developed into extremely efficient eating machines, and you suddenly think that you would like to be some where else!

All joking apart, in N.T. you should take great care around any stretch of water, as if you don't it may be the last mistake you make!

crocs were almost hunted to extinction, but since 1971 they have been protected and numbers are on the up. They are also commercially farmed and the products, leather and meat, are sold all over the world. Crocodile meat is very tasty and along with Barramundi (fish), kangaroo and emu should be tried if you get the chance.

Other things I can personally recommend are; drinking Cooper's Ale on the beach (the only decent Aussie beer)

bungy jumping

sitting on the beach

hitching 4000 km up the west coast

sitting on the beach

climbing Ayres Rock

swimming with dolphins

having a barbie on the beach

walking through tropical rain forests

playing football on the beach

sailing round Whitsunday Island and seeing humpbacked whales, and last but not least, eying up the sheilas on the beach (this last being the second most popular activity of the aussie male - the most popular being drinking beer....)

Australia is a wonderful place. In the cities the people are friendly and laid back, but it is the great outdoors, the natural beauty scale and emptiness, and the amazing wildlife make up memories that will stay long in my mind.

Jase Stone

