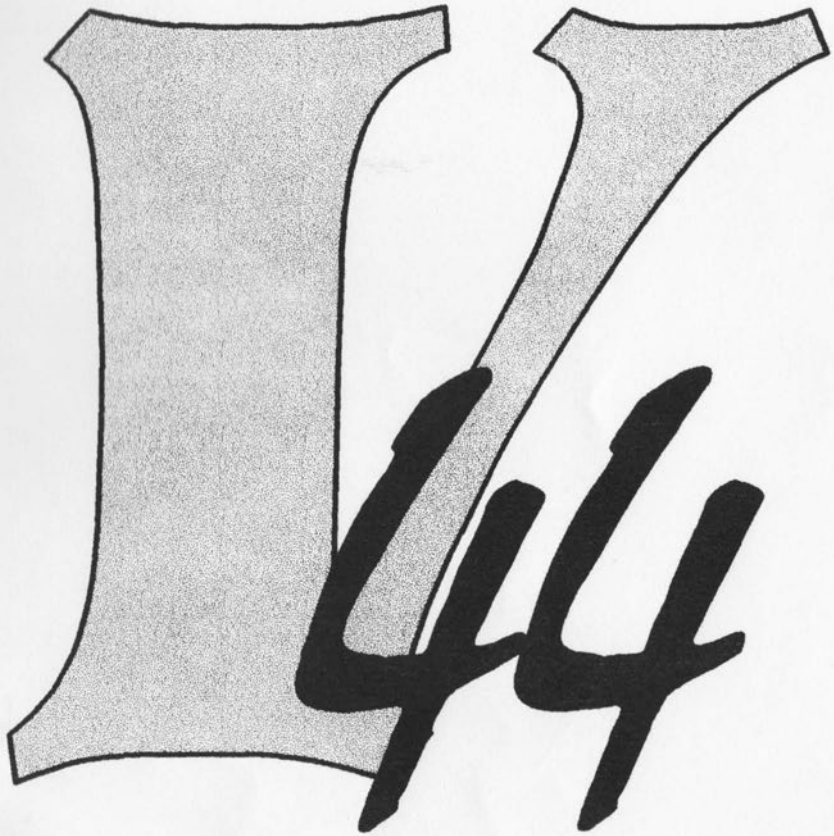


FEBRUARY
1
EDITION



44th Gloucester Venture Scout Unit

IN
THIS
ISSUE

Raft '97 Race

The Road to *INDOOR* Wembley.... *FOOTBALL*

	PAGE
EDITORIAL	4
CHAIRMAN'S SLOT	5
EXEC. COMMITTEE	6
RAFT '97 RACE	7
MURAL PAINTING	8
CLIMB '97	9
FOREST ACTIVITIES	10
INDOOR FOOTBALL	12
RAW RECRUITS	13
JOE SIMPSON	14
DAN WRIGHT	15
FROM ALL POINTS	18
JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR	20
UNIT ACTIVITIES	21
ANY OTHER BUSINESS?	24

Editorial

As you may have noticed, this year there are two editors for the Unit's magazine. Dan Bower and I hope to bring you some of the best 44th V.S.U. magazines. Of course we can only do this with help from you. For this edition we have been able to get quite a few articles from existing and old members of the unit. If anyone, though, parents, old members and other friends of the Unit want to write something for the unit, please feel free to do so. We would like to hear what other people are up to.

This year, with most of the Unit members on exam exclusion, the next magazine will be printed around the beginning of May. We will be back to the normal schedule after the summer holidays when the Expedition Special will be written.

Enjoy the magazine!

Dave Clifford

Ahem...well, here it is then. The 44th V.S.U. magazine has finally been completed. After all this typing, I now have callouses on my finger tips, why oh why are Nick's articles so long? This issue is jam packed with articles by almost every member of the unit. Every thing we have done since the last issue has been meticulously reported in these hallowed pages.

It is only when you are given the task of producing this magazine that you actually realise how energetic the Unit is. The number of activities that the Unit offers to its members is astounding, as you will see.

With the electronic era firmly here to stay, the Unit is branching across the web-ways of the Internet. If there are any budding writers out there who feel they wish to share their activities with the magazine's readers, they can now E-Mail us at: VSU44@Yahoo.com. We hope to hear from you all soon.

Daniel Bower

Chairman's Slot

Here is the first issue of '98, which accounts for what we've been up to since the summer expedition to Ireland. Activities have been various; including the County Raft Race (*again we were the best represented unit - come on, there must be some competition out there?!),* an organised navigation training programme, and an evening of archery.



We are currently trying to restart our "From All Points" section. This is where old unit members and friends send their scribblings from near and far. This time the highlights are last year's senior members' first impressions of university life. Also leaving the unit last year to take a gap year before Uni' was Dan "Mad Dog" Wright. In a flash he was off to Nepal to teach the local children English. Accompanying him was far too much kit, with which he wants to make an Everest Base Camp trip this February. We wish him the best of luck on his six-month adventure.

This last term we have been grateful for the help of another ex-member - Jason Stone - who has given time to teach some basic navigation amongst other things. We look forward to his continued support this spring.

David Proudlove has given us a valuable year as Venture Scout Leader for which we are most grateful. Phil Brown is now our full warrant leader, not to mention a force to be reckoned with when put in charge of a bow and arrow!

It remains for me to wish all readers an enjoyable and prosperous 1998.

Keep on Scouting!

Andrew Clifford

Executive Committee



Andy Clifford

Chairman

Oli Scarff

Secretary

James Cook

Treasurer

Will Godwin

Quartermaster

Gaz Edwards

Tuckshop Manager

Raft 97 Race

On the 21st September, the unit took part in the annual raft race between Ross-on-Wye and Lydney. This year the contest promised to be tight with the unit entering two of the eight rafts...



Much work had gone into these rafts in the build up to the event, especially on the senior raft. This raft had been stripped down, redesigned and rebuilt, in a transformation that astounded us all. Our own boat, *"The Grim Paddler"*, was repaired and made river worthy with the utmost haste. The main task was to creosote it, the smell (and oil slick), lingered in our wake.

Arriving at our starting point, we were surprised at how full the river was, previous years being so shallow that some rafts ran aground. Both rafts floated, so we heaved a sigh of relief, until a salvo of eggs splashed into the river beside us!

A dodgy signal began the race, with the unit's rafts starting well. A mix up between the senior raft and the Leckhampton raft enabled *"The Grim Paddler"* to nose into the lead. A fast and exciting race followed, with both the senior and Leckhampton rafts battling for first. *"The Grim Paddler"* had to settle for third, but the depth of the river and some fast currents enabled us to finish in the lightning time of 2hrs 20mins. The senior boat took a well-deserved second.



William Godwin

Venture Scout Academy of Fine Arts.... *Well, almost!*

I'm not saying that the walls of the Scout Hut used to be boring, but I never went there for inspiration in my artwork. The idea was put forward to cover the existing grey walls (*with some pictures*) with murals. There was unanimous agreement so unit members set about liven it up.



The walls now depict snowboarders, climbers, skiers, well-known logos and some awesome mountains. Admittedly, some are better than others, but all give a bit more life to the hut.

I hope we can continue to cover the walls using the great artistic talent available in the unit. Apparently it *is* there...

Chris Smith.

Climb '97

During December, a group of about ten of us went to Climb '97 at the NIA in Birmingham. It was staged in the main hall with most of the space used for seating. The main wall was one long, sloping overhang, about fifty feet high. The climbers had to 'free climb' as high as they could in the twenty minutes that they were given. Even though they had to use ropes, they were for safety purposes only and entrants were not allowed to rest by using them as support. As a result, if (when) they fell it would take some time for the rope to tighten, leaving a fall of anything up to twenty feet or so.

We were able to see the Men's semi-final, the Youth semi-final and the Women's final. It was breath-taking to watch, as often the contestants would get roughly to the same place. Each successive round was made more difficult by the removal of several possibly vital hand-holds.

As well as the competitions, there were a number of trade stands. These offered cheap clothing, tents and climbing equipment. I think that everyone was able to find a bargain or two.

Many thanks go to Mr Proudlove who drove the minibus for us.

Perran Spear

Year Seven Forest Activities



After the success of 1996, the responsibility for a fluent running of the Year 7s acclimatisation to the School and each other was given to Andy, the other observers and a few others including myself. All credit though must go to Andy who gave up a lot of his free time to prepare for the activities.

As the activities were being held in the Forest of Dean, the base for the Leaders was at Bracelands camp-site. Each morning the brave (and cold) few who decided to camp in sub-zero temperatures would walk to Symonds Yat. Here we would be greeted with a bus full of eager(?) Year 7s. We would split them into groups with in which they would work together to solve problems.



Some of the teachers would set up taxing problems for the new pupils to do whilst the remaining leaders would have the equally taxing job of navigating to the points, on time and with the right amount of pupils in tow.

The problems that faced the groups ranged from tying a large reef knot, filling a porous bucket with water to cross

an "acid" river. Most of the Year 7s completed the tasks with surprising ease, shaming many of the leaders' feeble efforts.



Year Seven Forest Activities

Once each team had completed 3 main activities it was time for lunch, but not before more 'excitement'. At a quarter of a mile away from the lunch spot, the newcomers were blindfolded and made to walk in chains holding onto the person in front. With a leader guiding them, they were taken over the Biblins suspension bridge over the River Wye. This brought out mixed emotions from the youngsters. Some loved it, others were petrified.

After lunch, the infamous Dan Wright set up a commando challenge in the forest. Two teams would have to poach each others' flag and steal the cotton bands from around their enemies' arms. This activity was thoroughly enjoyed by all. After watching the cunning tactics used by some of the year 7s, it seems we may have a few budding Mad Dog Dans joining the schools ranks.



Here the day ended and the tired year 7s trudged back to the mini-bus. The whole activity was enjoyed by all and I'd like to thank Andy and all the others who gave up their time for such a successful activity. I wish next year's organisers well in matching this year's event.

Oliver Scarff

The Road to *INDOOR* Wembley.... *FOOTBALL*

Recently the Venture Scouts have raised an Indoor Football team in order to participate in the Sir Thomas Rich's School Indoor Football League.

Our team has so far played three competition games. The fixtures were hard, the team being drawn against some of the best footballing talent in the school. The Ventures put on a good show in all of their matches, occasionally breaching the near impenetrable defences of the usually much older and larger opposition.



Needless to say, the team has yet to be held to a draw, then again, neither have we won...

On top of this, our team was offered a fixture against a rival Unit, Hucclecote VSU. After a spirited attempt the team came a worthy second.

Despite the inability to win matches, our team has developed from a rag-tag bunch of reluctant players into a well oiled fighting machine. It has given players the chance to have a considerable amount of fun and develop a sense of unity in the unit.

The team has one last game this season, so
"Come On You Ventures!!"

Tom Payne

Raw Recruits

Well there comes a time of year when the leaves turn golden brown and fall to the ground, and an air of tranquillity prevails. Unfortunately for some, this is also the time we start recruiting. Prospective members settle uneasily into the hot seat to undergo their interrogation...I mean nice social chat... to test their calibre. Here's one that made it....

I first heard about the unit in Year Seven when we they took us on activities. It wasn't until Year Eleven that I had enough spare time to make the commitment to join. So after a stressful interview and a gruelling trial period, I made it into the group, and I've never looked back...*honest!*

I have made a number of new friends, and have really enjoyed the excellent activities put on each Wednesday.

I've been able to go climbing and enjoy other skills that I have learned from Jason Stone, our intrepid explorer. What I've really enjoyed most, though, is working in the Tuckshop. I get to listen to good music, and I'm surrounded by chocolate; two of my favourite things!



Chris Smith

'OUR MAN IN NEPAL'
Daniel 'Mad Dog' Wright



Joe Simpson- TOUCHING THE VOID

One of the most amazing books I have ever read is *Touching The Void* by Joe Simpson. His death defying first ascent of the West Face of Siula Grande in the Peruvian Andes has been a source of inspiration and determination for me. My respect for this experienced mountaineer, now writer, increased further when I read his sequel to *Touching The Void*, which serves as his autobiography. *This Game Of Ghosts*, as it is titled, provides an insight into the extraordinary mentality behind mountaineering. Joe Simpson offers a chance to understand what seems to be a sport and passion for only the insane.

When I first heard that Mr Simpson was coming to Cheltenham to do a *Touching The Void* lecture I didn't know quite what to expect. Several members attended the evening lecture at Dean Close School and we were all totally awestruck by the spectacular photography which showed the true scale of his ordeal. I couldn't believe how Joe was able to go through this living nightmare again and again actually making fun of himself.

A sense of humour, passion for mountains, deep felt ethics and a down to earth nature makes Joe Simpson a person I will always admire. I wonder how much Venture Scouting has shaped his personality. It was through Venture Scouts that he first put his hands and feet to the rock face.

Andrew Clifford

Next Stop...

EVEREST



The next few pages amount to a short tribute to the ever intrepid explore, Daniel “Mad Dog” Wright. He is currently in Nepal undertaking... well I’ll let you read on to find out.

Throughout time man has tried to do the impossible, build tall buildings, fly to the moon, breathe underwater and of course try to get Labour to do something right for a change.

These days, people are able to fulfil their dreams, and it is the dream of a fellow Venture Scout, my brother, which this article is supposed to be about. You may have heard people referring to him. Words that often come up are SAS, Army, nutter, and Bloke. So who is this SAS Army Nutter of a Bloke, well it's Mad Dog Dan Wright!

For many years everyone in my house has had to live with Daniels hair brained schemes for mountaineering. Well that was until I also became interested in mountaineering so everyone just gave up on us and left in a great hurry before we both drove them mad! I don't blame them personally...

Anyway, Daniel passed his A levels and decided to take a year out having received a deferred place at Liverpool's John Moor University. After much scrimping and saving, Dan managed to get an air ticket out to Katmandu in Nepal. He will be teaching for four months, before trekking for a further five, including going up to Base Camp Three on Mt. Everest. Yes, that big rock with snow on whose name was probably the first word Dan learned to say.

He does seem to be enjoying himself, so much so that he has forgotten to send me a birthday present, the horrible big ***** Sorry, got a bit side tracked there.

At last! A letter, about time too, so enough of me, here's what he has to say for himself....

Nick Wright

From: Our Man in Nepal

To: Those in the Western world

Namaste: Greetings

Well here is the first installment of many to come.

Being 7000 miles from home tends to lose its rough edges after a while and doesn't seem so far away when the family you are staying with opens their arms to welcome you like the prodigal son. I now have a second mother and father, Amar and Baba, and three new brothers, Azay-23, Sanjay-20, and Sandeep-17. I am sharing a room with Azay and we are getting on very well. (deri ramrocha!!)

The house is very nice, with an open verandah outside our room, and a flat topped roof. If the weather is clear, I can stand on it and see the Himalayas in the distance, over the watershed hills. (They're really mountains with no snow)

Each day the temperature gets up to 26°C at times and at night it gets down to around 2°C. Everyone is wearing 3 or 4 layers of clothes and complaining of the cold. They can not understand how I can walk around in T-shirts and sleep with just a sheet over me at night. Don't get me wrong though, as I venture up to higher altitudes the temperature plummets to well below 0°C. However, most of the city people never go up above the surrounding hills.

I have now been up to a place called Nargarcot on my first Saturday holiday. From here I was able to see Everest in the distance. So far now, but soon (February) to be so close.

The food is great; dahl (lentil soup), baht (rice), tacarrie (curry), roti (chappatis) and for me: gripaya kalo chia dinhus (can I have black coffee please). Teaching is great, hard work but rewarding. I've been asked to run a Scout Group. I'm also doing Tai-Chi and Tae Kwon-Do. More to follow soon.

Daniel Wright

The Life of Tim...

Well, here I am finally at University. In the first year of High School it seems so far off, but it soon arrives. I'm at Bristol reading geology (*can't imagine who influenced me with Geology!*). I'm sure many of you are familiar to stories of student life, staying in bed 'till noon, eating baked beans and non stop drinking. I seem, however, to be missing all of these delights. I am enjoying University even though the work is quite hard, but that is what you would expect. The cooking is going well and I'm sure past Venture scout expeditions have helped with this.

I've joined two societies, the Christian Union and the Mountaineering Society (UBMC), and I am enjoying both of these. I have been away twice to the Peak District with the UBMC. The first time was to Birchen Edge where with perfect weather I did my first lead climb on the same weekend we also went to Stanage at the popular end. It was very busy and extremely windy. One of the Mountain Rescue members estimated that there were about a thousand people along the Stanage



Edge.

On the other weekend away we went to the Roaches. It was wet and windy but we were still able to do some climbing. My girlfriend Emma did her first lead climb that weekend and I'm sure that those of you who know her will think that is amazing! We have also been climbing in the Avon Gorge and the smaller Trym Valley. Trym Valley was vastly overgrown and the only way to the bottom of the cliff was to abseil. I set up the rope and chucked my bag to the bottom. Unfortunately, it had the harnesses and hardware in it! This meant I had to perform a traditional abseil to the bottom. This was all right until half way down where I swung out into space, cut my elbow and had to avoid lowering myself into brambles, not all that an easy job. Still, at least when we started climbing the rock was not polished, unlike in the Avon Gorge.



In January we are off to the Lake District. The weather will turn cold and snowy so we will be able to get some winter mountaineering in. Then in February our team from last year's Cotswold Marathon will be making a guest appearance in this year's event.

Venture Scouts has given a great deal to me and I hope one day I will be able to give something back. I have many great memories which I'm sure you know will never be forgotten.

Tim Andrews

Life at University

I am currently studying for a B.Sc in Geology at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth. 'Aber' as many people know it is located on the west coast of Wales, approximately half way up Cardigan Bay. The town itself is only small with half the population of 15,000 being students. The University was the first to be founded in the federal University of Wales and is currently celebrating its 125th anniversary.

The course that I am studying is single Honours Geology, which due to financial cut backs is being phased out over the next three years after a long history here at Aberystwyth. The course I do is modular and each module lasts twelve weeks. Students take a selection of modules, some core and some optional up to 120 credits. These modules then determine my progress in subsequent years. The course is aimed at those who have no prior geological knowledge though most of us on the course studied Geology at A-level. Most days I have a 9-5 schedule, though it is not all nonstop lectures and practicals and I get Wednesdays off at the moment. At present my lectures include geology, physical geography, environmental change and computer packages. All of these are interesting and this helps you stay motivated.

Outside of lectures I am in the University Swimming & Water Polo club, which trains seven times a week as well as having galas and polo matches. I am also involved in the local Scout group and the Geology society called the Ruddler Club. Recently I attended a Christmas camp with the Scout troop and walked up Cadair Idris with the Ruddler club. I was amazed whilst walking up Cadair Idris at how different it was to the last time that I went up there. It was possible this time to see Snowdonia National Park and the coast which were both obscured by heavy fog and rain last time.

I am thoroughly enjoying University life and have no doubt that I will enjoy the next three years of it.

Jody Ballard

Jesus Christ Superstar

Well yet another Christmas play has been finished, followed by mixed feelings of relief and remorse.

The most worrying part of the play was the crucifixion. As you may have realised Stephen Collins who played Jesus was not actually crucified ...*though I was tempted!* ... But merely hoisted onto a cross using a very complicated system of ropes and pulleys.

Mrs Stanley, being one of those Directors, wanted it to look as real and as clever as possible. Andy Clifford and I were put in charge of working it all out and executing Steve, *I mean the plan*, as well as possible.

After having wonderful fun playing ...I mean working... on the ropes we finally came up with an idea for solving the problem. It involved me climbing up above the stage to where the lights are and sitting on a beam. (*It's always me...*) Risking life and limb in the name of showbiz and nimbly dodging the man eating spiders and massive rodents I daringly moved out onto the beam to test our theories, and that's the last thing I remember.

I came to in a small white room with instruments all around me and the sound of heavy breathing. A black shadow fell over me and a voice, not all that different to James Earl Jones' voice when put through an amplifier, said,

"What are the Rebel plans? You will join the Dark side or die! You will join us..."

Oops, sorry, I seem to be getting a bit mixed up with Star Wars. I hadn't blacked out, it was just the lighting cable I had accidentally pulled out with my foot.

After putting quite a lot of our own time into the crucifixion (*we wouldn't want anything to go wrong now would we?*) we finally finished. The crucifixion went very well and everything was fine, apart from one thing that may seem petty. In the programme under the crucifixion it said,

"Many thanks to Andrew Clifford and Daniel Wright." I thought he was in Nepal?

Thankyou to Andy Clifford for his time and the Venture Scouts for the loan of the equipment.

Nick Wright

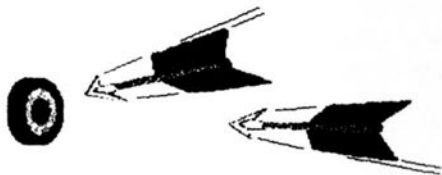
Archery



On the third of December, 1997, sixteen members of the unit who were not involved with “Jesus Christ Superstar”, tried their hand at some archery.

We were able to acquire the assistance of an able instructor which enabled the participants were taught the basics of the sport. The instructor arrived complete with three targets and an array of brightly coloured bows and arrows.

The evening was thoroughly enjoyed by all of those who took part. We were amazed at just how much science there is behind shooting with a simple longbow. Some of our number discovered a natural talent, whereas some others you would not trust with an apple on your head!



Due to the short winter evenings, we were unfortunately confined to the School’s gym. Hopefully though, we will be able to hold more archery sessions outside later in the year.

David Clifford

The Art of Navigation...

With Jason Stone

In the Autumn Term, Jason Stone, an ex-Venture, came to the unit to host two talks on navigational techniques. From looking at Pathfinder maps of Gloucester, we learned about map features such as contours, and how these equate to real life. We were given a basic lesson in using compasses correctly, and which compasses were the the best. Also covered in his short lectures was the choice of camping stove, and which stoves were best suited for specific conditions or countries.

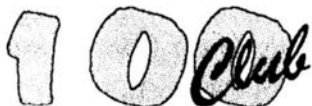
In order to practise our new-found skills, we undertook a practical exercise on Churchdown Hill to pinpoint our exact location by using a map and visible landmarks for bearings. Other practical exercises included navigating around the playing fields using compass bearings.

Just before the Christmas holidays, we had a further chance to test our new-found compass skills. We were taken up into the Cotswolds and simply dumped in the middle of nowhere. We were tasked to rendezvous with the mini-bus at an unknown location by following pre-laid clues and our maps and compasses. Unfortunately our skills weren't top-notch, and err... we ... err... got a little lost. Oh well, maybe next time.

Owen Morley

Charity Fund-Raising

The Unit participates annually in the National Meningitis Trust's sponsored "Five Valleys Walk". This autumn Meningitis was frequently in the headlines, so I thought it would be good to continue our support by doing some more fundraising. Through a collection of small change in the Tuckshop we were able to raise over £50. We also held a Tuckshop "Charity Christmas Raffle" which raised another £20. Although this is only a small contribution, hopefully we have been able to raise at least some awareness of a very worthwhile local based charity.



Unfortunately we have had a distinct lack of support for one of the Unit's main fund-raisers, the **100 Club**. For several months we had been running with a number of members well below our break-even point. This meant that we were actually losing money and of course it is not worth the hassle of running a system that causes the Unit to lose money.

The **100 Club** does not need an overwhelming number of members, and there are certainly enough people out there to make it a worthwhile venture.

With only a £12 annual subscription, and a monthly prize of £25, you really can not go wrong. If enough people express an interest in writing, we aim to start up again later this year.

Please support the 44th!!!

Andy Clifford

Phil Brown Infiltrates STRS!

We are pleased to announce that Phil Brown has successfully applied for a job as IT technician at Sir Thomas Rich's. This will hopefully enable the Unit to run more smoothly when exam exclusion begins.

EDITORIAL TEAM



Daniel Bower
&
David Clifford

