

## THE RUCKSACK CLUB HUT.

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DIDSBURY,

*January, 1913.*

TO THE EDITOR OF

*The Rucksack Club Journal.*

DEAR SIR,

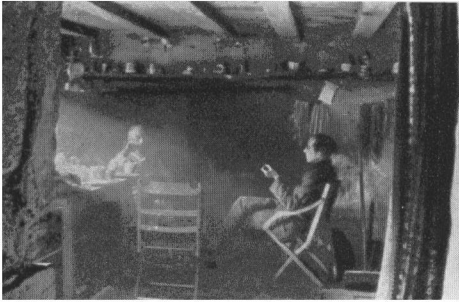
I am struggling to get the article on our Club Hut off my hands, and finding myself without a becoming sense of proportion in literary matters, it seems necessary to consult you as to what sort of material to include in an account for the *Journal*. It really is a puzzle. They are so many trifling but significant incidents connected therewith; they won't arrange themselves comfortably in my mind, but will remain a jumbled-up mass of incoherency, steadily resisting any kind of sorting process.

Where to begin is the first difficulty. Should I tell how, after the informing discussions as to the costs of roofing materials, the virtues of slate as against those of corrugated iron and felt, Thomson flashed down to Cwm Eigiau with Jeffcoat and Porter to inspect, and did discover the lonely cottage, how they interviewed the landlord through a chink of the closed door, wandered over the great wastes in search of food and found the kindly Harrisons? Or should it begin with an account of the Club Committee meeting when the proposals were made? tell how readily the idea was taken up; how Jeff had prepared a most convincing map to show position, a scale drawing of plan and section with photos to make it real; how Minor looked almost pleased to part with ready cash to pay initial expenses and the elders beamed blessings on the scheme; how, afterwards, lists of necessaries were made and got themselves lost; how some of the purchases were made with special attention to economy by visiting the sixpenny and penny bazaars and a crockery shop where the man dived down a cellar and searched in





*Photo by G. A. Lister*  
THE CLUB HUT—EXTERIOR.



*Photo by A. E. Watson*  
THE CLUB HUT—INTERIOR.

dark places to find odd basins, jugs, cups and plates that wouldn't mind being broken; how I was despatched one day to Taly-y-Cafn with personal luggage consisting of doors, blankets, jam, butter, roof tiles, rucksacks, beef, cement, various baulks of timber and beds? I can see that guard now! Jeff hustled round and busied himself with getting in my "luggage" so successfully that the guard thought there were at least six of us travelling. At the Junction I watched it being put out on the platform from a convenient distance. The stationmaster at Tal-y-Cafn was genial and housed the lot for me until next day, when Jeff arrived and a cart came to carry our goods to Cwm Eigiau.

The horse and driver were fine fellows. We loaded up and the horse staggered along the road as far as Talybont and then demanded food and sleep, after which he refused to proceed without a mate.

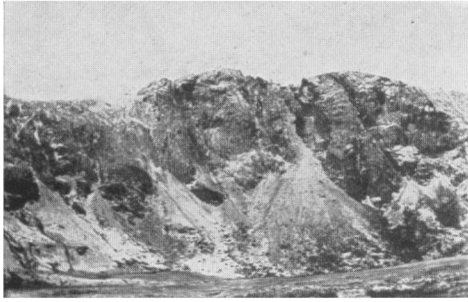
It will always remain a wonder to me that they ever reached the top of that hill to Rowlyn Isa. Jeff whispered sweet things to the mare, and looked charmed at the least progress. Time and energy brought the top and then began the long rocky plug to Llyn Eigiau and up to the cottage in the Cwm. A dusky and curious inhabitant followed us and asked if we intended to sleep there. He wouldn't for fifty pounds! we didn't offer more, being glad to be left alone with our amazing heap of variety outside the cottage, though we were sorry for the horse and driver having to drag all the way back to Talybont after nine p.m. The night was fine, no need to hurry everything inside. Fire, food and sleep followed. But not much sleep: the sun was up very early and bored holes of light through our closed eyelids; we got up, cleared everything out into the sun, and then began a strange experience. It seemed necessary to scrape the walls and ceiling, or rather the rafters, which had been white-washed. The dust of generations had gathered on many layers of whitewash. The rafters under the slate roof gave alarming quantities of cobwebs and dust. I interviewed that, while Jeff scraped and scraped at the rafters below with a trowel. I joined in at scraping after decking myself in his manner. He looked like one of those Druid Priests one has seen in framed certificates of the order, a piece of canvas with a hole in it for the head draped his shoulders, and over his nose and mouth a cloth was tied so that it hung down like a beard. What his sister would have said if she could have seen,

I can sympathise with. It was effective anyway; next to scraping came the attempt to persuade an evil-smelling liquid compound of carbolic and size to leave the bucket and extend itself on the ceiling and walls. (Try it, dear sir.)

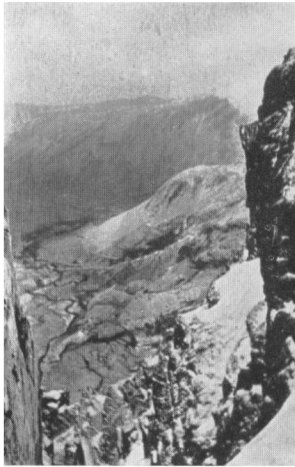
The whole Cwm reeked with carbolic and looked blurred. Soon the walls dried and became ready for a film of a dainty-coloured distemper, a lovely light green, so pretty in the powder form. But three coats were necessary before a sign of colour appeared on the walls! what about the floor? It was a good stone floor in the morning, by evening it might be mistaken for a many-coloured bog. It had to be washed and again washed, so that when the sun was going and Jack Uttley and Johnson came they could march about on it with muddy boots. To my dismay we got busier than ever. With candles, saws, hammers and other tools, with a deal of tongue, a cupboard was begun and nearly finished that night. We tried to sleep. Oh, what snores! what carbolic! The whole world of sleep was made up of carbolic and strange sounds, mixed with ideas of what should be done next. Before breakfast Jeff and Jack went to bathe at the point where the bridge crosses the stream. There is a deep pool there which invites diving. Unfortunately the water was so cold that Jack without knowing it used his great toe as a push-off on a boulder below water and damaged it. I shall not easily forget the vision I have of Uttley during those days at the Hut. He worked constantly, very much bent to miss the low rafters with a slipper on one foot and a climbing boot on the other, and limping. I got so used to having his face on a level with my own that I quite resented the later realisation of my own short stature. His skill with silly, awkward-looking bits of wood surprised me. They became shelves and doors all neat and well-behaved, just as his fancy dictated and we desired.

The walls had begun to dry and looked quite nice when some fiend (I think Jeff), decided they must have another coat. The brush had grown old, with whiskers thin and scarce. But it had to be done. Meanwhile Johnson was down at the river bed finding sand for mixing with cement; his process demanded all the buckets and similar articles. The price of buckets rose fearfully, for you can't very well mix distemper in quantity on a plate. He brought up a heap of gravel and proved a most enterprising "Bricky." By using

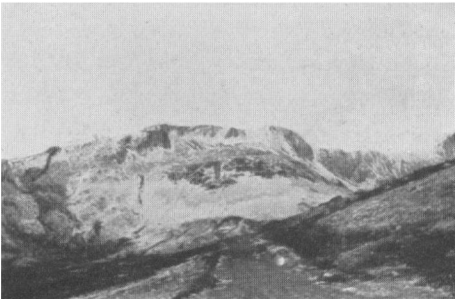




CRAIG-YR-YSFA.



EXIT FROM AMPHITHEATRE, CRAIG-YR-YSFA.



PEN HELIG AT MIDNIGHT.

*Photos by A. E. Watson*

sponge cloths as sieves he managed to obtain a nice store of small gravel near enough to sand.

Jeff had mounted the roof and kept demanding tiles and more and more hods of mortar, until one began to wonder whether he was purposely dropping it through the roof. He kept very stern and never came down till the new row of ridge-tiles looked tight and trim from end to end. Then Johnson got a bit of his own way and pointed up the wall at the chimney end. Smoke came through all over it instead of going up the chimney.

Many pages might be filled with an account of the doings of those few days. Monday morning came too quickly, saying "go back to your desks and duties, samples and prices, specifications and dulness." So at 3-30 a.m. we were up and about, seeing to breakfast and tidying up in general. At five a.m. we departed, leaving *Reality*, to take on the disguise commonly called civilisation. Anyhow, the Hut was now habitable, dry and comfortable in addition. Its thick walls will resist the weather for some generations more, and its situation will attract the lover of the vast and solitary places for all time. It is peculiarly well placed from our point of view. How tame it would have been if it were near the usual way of the tourist and casual, where one might go almost next door for any commodity. Instead, we have this home high up in the big spaces where no one goes unless he love such a place.

It is about eight miles from Tal-y-Cafn Station; the first three are through pretty country; wood, field and stream; after that, wild mountain track. The track leads up to and beyond the Hut to some old slate quarries not now worked. After passing Rowllyn Isa, above Tal-y-bont, no height is made until the further end of Llyn Eigiau is reached, where a bridge is crossed and a gentle slope leads to the Hut in three or four minutes from the bridge.

Afon Eigiau drains the magnificent Cwm Eigiau, one of the finest in Wales. On the south side Moel Elio, Pen Llithrig, Pen Helig show their steepest and finest slopes. Pen Helig in particular takes a beautiful shape on this side. Craig-yr-ysfa frowns at you from the high end, whilst the north side is held by the smiling slopes of Gledr Ffordd.

The beauty of the Cwm is untellable; spring, summer, autumn, winter, each paint it with different hues, and it responds to each in



its own perfect way. In storm, sun, snow or rain it is divinely beautiful. One day it tells of stress and energy, another of quiet and ease, but whether threatening or smiling it is on such a magnificent scale that strength comes to you anyway.

Those who wander will find the Hut a good starting or calling place; the Carnedds and their neighbours are all round. The climber has one of the finest British crags within fifteen to twenty minutes from his door, besides the almost unexplored Crags of Lly Dullyn and Mellyn in half-an-hour. Then there are some shorter but stiff problems just above the Hut on Craig Eigiau. Either Tryfaen, the Glyders or the Black Ladders may be reached within two hours.

Here are a few photos. taken by Mr. E. A. Watson, which shew the character of the country round Cwm Eigiau. They were taken during the snowy time we had January 26th, 1913. The other two charming pictures by the same gentleman shew the interior and exterior of the Hut.

There seems little more to add. This letter has grown so long that I think you might prefer to take it instead of a more formal article. I would like before closing to record my keen sense of gratitude to the Club for so quickly and ably taking up the scheme. The visits to Cwm Eigiau since the opening of the Hut have given more than was hoped for in the way of freedom and happiness. Do you know those lines of R. L. Stevenson's? They go some way towards a perfect expression of what Cwm Eigiau makes one feel :

O to dream, O to wake and wander  
 There, and with delight to take and render,  
 Through the trance of silence, quiet breath !  
 Lo ! for there, among the flow'rs and grasses,  
 Only the mightier movement sounds and passes—  
 Only winds and rivers, life and death.

*Robert Louis Stevenson.*

Sincerely yours,

T. WYLDBORE.



PEN-Y-WEN WEN, FROM BWLCH-Y-MARCHOG.



NORTH CRAG, CRAIG-YR-YSFA.



NEAR THE HUT.

*Photos by A. E. Watson*

