

EXTRACT FROM THE RUCKSACK CLUB JOURNAL 1947

CLIMBS AND EXCURSIONS

THE CLIMBER'S GRAND TOUR

Having got a bee in my bonnet that a climber can, and should, be a good walker I decided to do something really serious. Now it seemed somewhat hard to find something that would satisfy the climber-cum-walker, and after looking at books and maps the idea that all the main crags in North Wales could be climbed in one day - plus the little jaunt - seemed feasible. The net result of this mental meandering caused me to nip out of bed one morning at four o'clock - the middle of the night, and extremely dark, too !

I crept out of the Capel Curig Hostel (for I didn't wish to be seen for fear of being accused of doubtful mental balance) and my trusty motor cycle took me through the quiet night to the Rucksack Hut in the Ogwen Valley.

At about ten to five, I started off from this Tin Shanty on my hair-brained effort to see if I could walk to, and climb the most representative climb on Craig-y-Ysfa, Tryfan, Glyder Fach, Idwal Slabs, Devil's Kitchen, Clogwyn dur Arddu, Lliwedd, and return to the starting post. Sounds more like a madhatter's bad dream interspaced with an uncertain phobia! Still, I set off like a bloke with something on his mind (slight pressure, no doubt!), and made a bee-line for Craig-y-Ysfa. The long slog up there was greatly relieved by the delightful sight of Tryfan cloaked in misty, dark-blue wraith-like clouds creeping by and exaggerating its towering isolation. I floundered on through dark and bog; the earth and mountains all my own for the while. Over the col and down into a bowl of daylight, arriving at the foot of Great Gully by 06-15.

A magnificent sun-rise drenched the wet walls of the Gully in gorgeous flames of red, lighting and firing the Gully into a furnace of colour. Slow and laborious effort, pantings and gruntings, with some doubtful language on that . . . Chimney pitch, but ever reaching for the top. A nasty loss of balance on the next to the last pitch set my heart a-thumping, and I climbed on and out of this truly' flaming ' Gully at 06-49. I took a last peep at the now fully-risen sun, turned and set off in haste for Tryfan. Back at the Tin Shanty at 07-40 and then popped into Williams' Farm for a cup of tea. This was a rational moment, but the Gods were against me, for the fire was not yet alight. On and up to Heather Terrace reaching the foot of Grooved Arete at 08-45. Climbed fairly happily (just a shade nervous) and reached the top of the climb by 09-20.

On and up to the summit for breakfast - a whopping cheese 'loaf'. I gazed around and down at the earth below; a glorious silent intentness my sole companion; the morning freshness seeping through me. While dreaming I rudely awoke, gathered my scattered wits, and dashed on like a mad March hare to Glyder Fach and the Capstan. Started on the Direct Route at 10-30 and climbed easily and happily to a blinking crack at the top, where I had trouble with my language and my feet! A violent scraping noise of boots against rocks is surely most exciting, don't you think ? Down an old-fashioned way (i.e., a gully) to Llyn Bochlwyd, round Gribbin Facet and on to Idwal Slabs, where I turned my back on a crowd of tourists and literally ran up the Tennis Shoe in the frightening time of 16 minutes and slithered down the Ordinary with trouser brakes slipping badly. The time now was 12-30, and I must dash on to the Devil's Kitchen, but thought better about the dashing for it was a real summer's day (the first for nearly two months) and I was most

heartily cussing my warm clothes.

I climbed up into and very quickly out of the top in the surprising time of nine minutes. It was now 13-15 so I sat down for dinner and aired my clothes while the sun shone on me as it has not done this last three months. I moved on quickly and navigated magnificently to Humphries (the one and only tea shop) in Nant Peris to learn the heart-rendering news that the house was closed. My God, no tea ? Yes, no tea, and looking up from Nant Peris at that piled up mass of earth and stone which is called (among other things) Snowdon, I gave a distinct shudder and my legs came to a hasty halt. A hopeless seizure from careless lubrication! It was no use. Oh! I couldn't go on. Still a most carefully laid attack on a wee house produced a glass of milk (what would the Rigger blokes say to that!) and insidious chatter procured another glass which was followed by yet another and some biscuits! A final bantering remark about one for the road, gave me yet a fourth glass of milk. Thus fortified I urged my leadened legs up the holy terror of a soul-searing, servile slog up the precipitous side of Snowdon to Clogwyn Station. Went very slow and took an hour-and-a-half. Here I joined those jaded tourists in impractical clothes of gaudy hue, tight shoes and blisters, pained expressions of enjoyment, while struggling to the top if it killed them. I was nearly half-dead, so I didn't count! I most regretfully passed Clogwyn dur Arddu without climbing Longland's which frightens me a little, and more so on my own! Still I think this should be done and there is just about time, too.

On and up to Snowdon summit and I fell down the Pig Track to below (most unfortunately) Lliwedd, and looking up at this last hurdle, I looked even higher and prayed for strength! It was, indeed, a tired mountaineer who sat (collapsed really) at the foot of Route II some time later and munched his last sandwich (The route down the Pig Track and up to Lliwedd again doesn't seem so good as taking the ridge and scrambling down just before the West Face of Lliwedd. Perhaps this would have been better.)

Moving easily I started up Route II and climbed to the nasty slab where I put on rubbers in case of trouble, but luckily finding no worry I resumed in boots and made for the summit arriving there at 18-30. I had reached the base at 17-30 and spent three-quarters of an hour on the climb. Only sorry I had no one to share my silly feeling of elation on the top of Lliwedd, for the slog over to Ogwen seemed in the bag. 'I gazed and gazed . . . ' and dreamed on in the pleasant evening sun until seven o'clock and then dashed down to Pen-y-Pass. Yes, I dashed all right, fortified with the mental mirage of a mile-long counter covered with scintillating glasses of cool beer. I reached for my first jug of beer at half-past seven and listened to the internal splashing. I stumbled out at eight with blown cheeks and tried to restrain an Eastern custom. Still, I had to move hard now for the light was fading quickly and erupting merrily, I surged on to the top of the Miner's Track and then ran down via Little Tryfan, in bad light, falling and sloshing through bog in unhappy succession. Slowed down and eventually made for the light shining from the Chapel next door to the Rucksack Club Hut. A fine light to draw one down from the wild mountain-side and I reached the Club Hut at 21-35 to end a fine stimulating day, though I was sorry indeed I hadn't 'done' Longland's climb. Now I hope some one will follow on and improve something worth doing and produce a great event later out of my floundering.

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