

In Eskdale from August 16th to September 12th 1930 the C.H.A. Mountaineering Club, (aka Tricouni Club), held its first major meet. At this meet J.E.B. (Jerry) Wright and a small team of professional Lake district Guides, assisted by semi-professionals and volunteers from the club, helped the assembled Club members tackle a large number of climbs. From his personal observations Jerry was able to compile reports to the Committee of the Club on the climbing abilities and styles, (or lack thereof in a few cases!), of all the participants. Many of them make interesting reading. They were hand-written in Jerry's incomparable style. They are reproduced here, but because scans are 'greedy' with memory, apart from his introductory Commentary and one scanned sample, to give you a taste, they are transcribed here in print, and in the original order they appeared in the notebook. The assessment for Peter Leigh's father, Harold is among them. Happily, in the circumstances, Jerry was able to make positive remarks about Harold.

Report
to the Committee of the
C. H. A. Mountaineering Club
on the
Eskdale "Meet"
August 16th to September 12th 1930

Commentary.

The following notes are based entirely upon my personal experience of each climber and the reports handed to me by those guides in my employ during the period of the "meet."

The Committee of the club must not assume that because a climber has been given high marks that she or he can now be accounted an expert or that low marks necessarily mean that a particular person is a complete failure. The club possesses some excellent material but a good deal of tuition is still needed before the "high marks" climbers are ready to lead and explore unfamiliar courses.

Miss M. Files.

She is the best lady leader I have ever trained. Her performances were the best of any member of the "meet." She possesses a very pretty grace of movement which is inborn and her operations are tempered with the utmost discretion. I cannot speak too highly of her lead of the Needle and the Needle Ridge Direct. The negotiation of the upper slab on the latter climb was one of the best things I have ever seen a lady accomplish in nailed boots. Her rope management is excellent and she has the "all round" ability which will someday lead her to the severe courses. She should

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Mr. Starkey.

He is now a first class leader of "moderates" "difficults" and "Very Difficults." As a nailed boot climber he is a sound and steady operator. He deserves the highest commendation for his lead of the New West Climb. His general conduct during climbing operations has proved that he has considerable ability as a tutor. He requires more experience in plimsol climbing which will come, as it should do, following upon expert boot work. His rope management is as sound as the rocks he climbs and I can pay him no higher compliment in recording that I doubt if any "Second" would ever come to grief under his leadership. Since my first experience of his climbing he has improved beyond recognition and the result is the reward of intelligent work and dogged persistence. His greatest triumphs have been accomplished under bad weather conditions.

Mr. Dickinson.

Modesty is reflected in every operation of this climber. He is an all round good man. I would like him as my own "second" on really "top class" courses. He possesses the slow grace of movement and the steady hand which characterises the expert cragsman. His rope work is of the soundest order. In time, he will graduate into a leader of severes.

Mr. Leigh.

A debonair adventurer who has very great ability. Brim full of confidence; a dashing leader who has proved his sense of responsibility. "Sound" and "Steady" are not adjectives which can easily be applied to him, yet he possesses the quality which inspires confidence in those who follow his lead. Just as I would like Mr. Dickinson as my "second" so I would like Mr. Leigh as my "leader" on climbs which possessed the "touch and go" problems. He is the type of leader who will take a risk and get away with it where another climber would pronounce it "impossible" and come "down". He has a pretty style and his rope management is excellent. God keep him from harm for he has a storehouse of all sound ability which might someday force a passage up "Botterill's Slab" or "Central Buttress". His leadership is unique if only for its

unspoken commands. When he is ready at his belay he says so with an air:- "I've climbed the damned thing easily enough, now do it like me and be quick about it". And I like his alertness when the poor "second" is inspired to follow the unspoken instructions.

Miss O'Brien

A girl of whose leadership I can speak from personal experience. She possesses very marked ability. Her rope work is unquestionably good. Her lead of Arrowhead Direct was one of many creditable achievements. On "moderates" and "difficults" she is fit to lead the best of men. And she should stick to nailed boots for both these categories. She is fit for "very difficults" in plimsols but with an experienced "second." I have not the slightest doubt that she is fit for severes with an expert behind her but I hope she will wait awhile and "tick off" a good many lower class leads before she goes into higher company. She is delightfully eager for "big things" and a little too impatient to be "up and at them." I would set her at least fifty lower class "leads" upon which she could "sniff" because of their ease and I would like to be there at the end and say "Now Kathleen, I would like you to take me up Gimmer via "D" and down again via "Oliversons." For then should I see the glorious fruits of those fifty "obnoxious" leads. God keep her happy and contented until the "Great Day" comes.

Mrs. Munn.

"Mrs. Munn is Miss Files" but with the temporary disadvantage of possessing an "inferiority complex." Their styles of climbing, sure footwork; slow hand work; still slower body movement but all with a grace that is delightful to watch. All the professionals were terribly disappointed in this lady. Like myself they expected a third rate performance only to experience that she possessed real ability. Mustchin was the first to have his suppositions shattered; then Barlow and Files; and later Eccles until I became tired of saying "No!" to the interrogation "Have you seen Mrs. Munn Climb?", in a tone that implied that Mrs. Munn was the only climber worth watching. Towards the end of the "meet" I found myself saying "Yes!" to the interrogation with a little of the wonderment already implied. I saw her climb the Needle. I watched her fight the top slab of Needle Ridge Direct in nailed boots and saw her emerge triumphant without any "scratching" and "scraping." And her style was identical with the slow measured grace of Miss Files. She has "it" being something indescribable which many a capable cragsman would give his soul to possess. Someday I'll range a hundred men of the clumsy ilk in the Dress Circle and I'll send Miss Files and Mrs. Munn up NeedleRidge Direct in order that I can give the "big boys" an object lesson on "How to climb." When Mrs. Munn is persuaded out of that complex she will lead and lead well.

Mr. B. B. Martin.

When he is told what to do, he blinks like a great owl but carries out his operations with the intelligence of a "first class" brain. He is a good leader. He will be a great leader in time. He looked really offended when commands were issued, yet he carried them out with a care to

detail, which was more than praiseworthy. Every professional commended his steadiness in climbing and his reliability when handling the rope. His attitude towards the one example of foolhardiness on the first day of the "meet" convinced me that he possessed many of the qualities of sound leadership.

Mr. J. A. Jones.

I applied drastic methods to this climber in putting before him the problem of leading the wet Needle in nailed boots. I was impressed with his ability upon the only previous occasion I had climbed with him and only a week remained to me to make a leader of him. A beginner has to be made of good stuff to face a wet Napes Needle and must possess more than ordinary ability to climb it without any show of nerves. My opinion of Mr. Jones was more than justified. This was the first completed ascent of the "meet." I am not sure that it does not rank as the best individual performance. This was followed by leads of Needle Ridge Direct and Middle Fell Buttress, both under my own observation. His faltering on the Direct climb earned him a good mark for he exhibited a sense of discretion which is essential to every safe "leader." Experience is the only thing he requires to make him a first class climber. His style is graceful and his rope management good.

H. N. Kay.

A good, sound climber. The very essence of big, solid capability. His best leads were accomplished in plimsols and he should cultivate a little more love for wet rock and boots. There is no finer training. The Gimmer Wall penetrated his nerve a little but I feel sure experience will wipe away that awe when looking down into sheer space. He was quite good on Scaffell, Pillar and Pavey Ark but better - ever so much better - on Gable. Strange how so many of us feel "At Home" on Gable. He is a good learner. I liked the way he climbed the Needle. I like much better the way he repeated the mantleshelf series of movements in order to be sure that he was doing it properly. His rope management is beyond reproach.

Miss Marston.

She is a slow climber. All sound climbers are slow climbers. She is probably the most experienced lady climber in the C.H.A. Club but still she retains the same speed. It is her greatest asset. She will stick and stick at a problem, and woe betide the leader who hauls the rope, but she will come up eventually under her own power. The severes of Gimmer and Pillar were familiar to her before the Club was born. I know her climbing well yet I always doubted that she would ever feel the urge to lead. Needle Ridge must now hand the palm to her and if grim determination counts for anything she will lead many "moderates" and "difficults" in days to come. Soundness and safety are the very watch words by which she climbs. She will never be a star leader but she will be climbing, I vouch, when the climbing days of some of the "stars" are over. I'll live to see her lead the Needle and when she does she will lead it as it should be led - slowly and well.

Mr. Ritchie.

Unassuming in the extreme - sure - sound - safe. The excellence of his rope management has been fully demonstrated whilst heavier men than he dangled in mid-air. I think he enjoys the rope work as much as the climbing for he smiles angelically when he feels a dead weight on a sixty foot line. He will be slow in graduating as a first-class leader but with graduation will come ability that will be irreproachable. His two leads of the Arrowhead and Needle Ridge were models of good, sound climbing.

Mr. Bentley.

A good, sound climber. Excellent in plimsols but not yet thoroughly comfortable in nailed boots. Another week would have seen very marked improvement in his leadership but he requires experience before he is fit for unfamiliar climbs. His style is good but his rope management needs more care to detail.

Mr. Brookes.

I like the style of this climber. He proved himself a steady and capable leader. His rope management was sound in detail. With more experience he will be a first class leader. He was particularly good in nailed boots.

Mr. Larder.

He made an admirable "second." I kept him from the lead because of the suggestion of faltering in his climbing. He must gain a little more confidence and the joys of sound leadership are within his grasp. Every professional praised his rope management. His quiet enthusiasm will carry him far but he will be wise to graduate slowly.

Mr. Haworth.

A little nervous and jerky but practice will make him confident. His two leads showed him to be a climber of excellent promise. Rope management needs a little more care to detail.

Mrs. Cooper.

One of the pluckiest climbers at the "meet" whose grit and determination is aided by considerable ability. She climbed the Needle in hob nails almost without aid from the rope. Her style is pleasing to watch and, with practice, she will find the ability to lead.

Miss Rodger.

A very steady climber who will improve slowly. The urge to lead will come when she discards an "inferiority complex." Her style lacks grace but she is generally sound and sure. She treats instructions with the utmost respect and follows directions with intelligence. Her rope management is excellent and she is a climber of considerable endurance - facts which make her an admirable "second."

Miss Green.

She climbs with a considerable grace of movement and should lead in time when she overcomes a slight nervousness. She needs to school herself to do every climbing movement and detail of rope handling slowly and deliberately without so much consideration of those above and below her. Her ascent of the North Climb, in spite of her slip at The Strid was a very creditable achievement.

Mr. Pepworth.

I have known him climb much better prior to the activities of this "meet." He will climb well when he gets rid of a feeling of nervousness which was probably due to physical condition and placed him at a serious disadvantage. I commend him for sticking at the climbing activities which finally bore good fruit in his lead of the Arrowhead. He requires to give a little more care to rope management.

Mrs. Storey.

She climbs exceedingly well and her keenness is demonstrated by the care and attention which she gives to instructions. She found absolutely no difficulty with the Needle and climbed it gracefully and well. I like her obvious desire to manage the rope with the greatest possible protection for her leader. Her boot work was equally good on the Arrowhead Ridge and experience is all that she requires to make a good climber.

Mr. Storey.

A very good "second." His qualifying climbs include some of our hardest courses and his prevalent nervousness disappears immediately he gets to grips with the intricacies of the crags. He has already made the Arrowhead a climb of the classics by his coolness under difficulties. His rope management is good. He will be slow to lead but when the urge comes he will lead well.

Mr. Simson.

Climbs a little too fast but experience will teach him the wisdom of slow movement. He is an apt and intelligent operator and his rope management is good. He climbs quite well in nailed boots - a sure sign that he has ability. He was not with the "meet" long enough to give him the opportunity to lead.

Miss Hicks.

She has good nerves and her ascent of Oliverson's was a very praiseworthy performance. She carries out instructions intelligently and her rope management is good. I felt really sorry for her on her first climbs but came to the final conclusion that she can look really troubled and miserable when she is enjoying herself. As hard as the rocks frowned upon her the harder she frowned back at them and I take personal commendation for making her smile the whole way up Gimmer Crag. Her style is, as yet, just a little awkward.

Mr. Munn.

The highest praise to this climber for the way in which he tries to conquer his inherent nervousness. He will climb well when he gains confidence and I deliberately baited him to lead the Needle in order to help him throw off this disadvantage by convincing him that he could do difficult things. The fact that he led as far as the shoulder shows that he possesses ability. He must have been very nervous and it was all the more creditable a performance.

Mr. Slater.

A clumsy climber who tries hard but fails to follow instructions carefully enough. He will make a good "second" in time but I did not see or hear of anything which justified me putting him into the lead. His great fault is inability to follow a "course" even when others have gone before him and he has a flair, (example: Gimmer), for severe and dangerous variations.

Mr. H. W. Jones.

His injury proved a great disadvantage during this "meet." I am convinced that I have yet to see his "best." He is a real worker and a good man who tries hard. His keenness to outshine his younger brother will hold him back. He should learn to climb for the sake of climbing. By this means will he approach his minor's standard.

Miss Henderson.

Pluck - yes - but too keen to do things perfectly. She is far too considerate for her leaders; too much afraid of the disgrace of doing things badly and must try to conquer her sense of inferiority. I know no woman who loves the mountains more than this climber and we are all very anxious to help her to climb - but she must learn to place absolute confidence in those above her. Give her time!

Miss Norris.

Two climbs are insufficient to judge her in detail but she negotiated the chockstone in Great Gully without any difficulty and made a clean ascent of the Napes Needle. She requires experience to make her a good "second."

Miss Pearson.

Great Gully and Eagle's Nest West were her only climbs and I received good reports from both her leaders."

Miss Musgrave.

A plucky climber who suffers from the disadvantage of small stature. Her enthusiasm is tremendous. She will learn, in time, to cultivate the technique of balance to counteract her disadvantage. She was not physically well enough to make clean ascents of Pavey Ark and the Napes. Sometime ago she climbed with me on the Needle and Needle Ridge Direct and climbed well.

Mr. Hall.

Too apt to rush at problems without first thinking them out intelligently. He should climb more slowly allowing his head to dictate the movements of his hands and feet. He has been taught the safeguards of the rope - under no provocation must he disregard those safeguards. When he has mastered these faults he will make an admirable "second."

Mr. Cooper.

His climbing was of the type which made me feel that he always wanted to get it over. The suggestion was always there that he desired to be "off" the rope and act as a spectator rather than a performer. He followed reluctantly.

Mr. Smith.

A clumsy climber. Argued much too long with every problem. Did not follow instructions very intelligently. Considered many right and wrong methods of solving every problem and nearly always acted upon the wrong method. He needs a very great deal of experience before he will make a good "second."

Mr. Culshaw.

Unteachable! But one qualifying word in view of the fact that he met with an accident on his way to the "meet." He must discard the rushing, fighting and floundering methods and face the climbs with quiet politeness and intelligent survey. I found that he enjoyed climbing with Mustchin in spite of the severity of that Guide's admonitions.

Mr. Balcombe.

A bad climber.

List of Commendation.

Miss Files for the leads of Napes Needle and Needle Ridge Direct.

Miss O'Brien for the lead of Arrowhead Direct.

Mrs. Munn for the unfaltering ascent of Oliverson' climb.

Mr. Starkey for the lead of the New West climb in boots.

Mr. Martin for "all round" leading ability.

Mr. F.A. Jones for the lead of Napes Needle in boots.

Mr. Dickinson for all round leading ability.

Mr. Leigh for the lead of Oliverson's climb.

Mr. Kay for all round leading ability.

General Comments

The previous details of this report deal entirely with climbing matters and I feel that it would be incomplete without mentioning a few other details.

When the Club requested me to undertake the work of guiding the “meet” and tutoring its members in the art of rock-climbing I promised to do so with one professional climber attached to every 4 rope party. May I call attention to the fact that this arrangement was slow and cumbersome and it became necessary to augment the staff of leaders. I think this policy proved beneficial to the Club especially with regard to “bringing out” the qualities of prospective “leaders.”

Some complaints were handed to me indirectly with regard to the motor charges. May I point out that the charges we made to include free transport for the guides. I could not undertake the financial responsibility of paying for the professionals in view of the small fee charged for the week's guiding service.

In view of my own regrettable inability to take charge of each expedition I was obliged to relegate, (*delegate ???*), responsibility to others. Previous to the “meet” it was obvious that J.R. Files would be unfit to take over my responsibilities. With two important men unfit I had to call for voluntary service from Miss O'Brien, Mr. Starkey and Mr. Leigh and I wish to record how admirably they fulfilled their responsibilities. Mr. Eccles and Mr. Files changed places and it is impossible for me to express my gratitude to Mr. Eccles for the manner in which he worked and climbed during the period of the “meet.”

R.J. Mustchin stands out supreme as the dominating climber of the “meet.” He has the highest number of climbs and the highest number of “leads” to his credit. His loyalty to me and his sense of responsibility are things which make me very proud of him.

With regard to the organisation in connection with the “meet” may I say how splendidly Mrs. Topliss worked to accommodate us and how much I was helped, personally, by the attention which Mrs. Blake gave to my injuries.

Speaking purely from the professional point-of-view I have brought away very pleasant recollections of the first “meet” of the Club and a delightful satisfaction in possessing so many friends and colleagues without whose assistance it would have been impossible to carry the “meet” to so successful a conclusion.

I call Mr. Starkey's attention to our guarantee to the General Secretary of the C.H.A. That we would conduct this “meet” without accident.

472 climbs have been accomplished. 172 ropes have been led.

And we are all alive to tell the story and, I hope, happy in the realisation of work well done.
