

*red rope's extra extra read all about it online only lockdown special
concurs with the following statement:*

**TORY VOTERS
AT THE NEXT ELECTION,
STAY HOME,
PROTECT THE NHS,
SAVE LIVES!**



Welcome

Welcome to this bulletin with a difference. It won't go to print, so the club won't have to pay for printing and posting. It is also in 2 sections, one of which is in ground breaking monochrome - very retro! This consists of a selection of articles from the early RR bulletins when the club was just taking shape. I would say the club is less political now but on the plus side the huts are considerably more comfortable!

I am hopeful that the September 25 -27 AGM in Hathersage will go ahead but it's obviously difficult to say at this stage. We've booked the same excellent accommodation as last year, so go to MEMBERS on the RR website homepage >BULLETIN MAG > RR 37 Autumn 2019 pdf to see it.

The BMC have sent a reminder today (21 April) that driving to walks or climbs is still considered 'unnecessary travel' even though there were rumours over the weekend about that ruling having been relaxed.

Whilst in many ways this is a worrying time, those who haven't suffered directly from the virus can probably agree that the weather, plant-life, bird song and air quality have been remarkable.

David Symonds, RR National Secretary

PS This list has been created by Labour supporters keen to extend political education. Have a delve!

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/u/1/d/1PsmseCoLdW5V1VSe9pq9DDuBhVQ10LObOb3I_zUUYU/htmlview

National Trips update

As everyone will know all of our upcoming trips have been postponed, some by a year. We are hoping that the October trip to Seathwaite in the Lake District will go ahead as planned. It is a large hut sleeping 20+, so as we are planning for 16 there will be plenty of living and sleeping space enabling physical distancing.

For February 2021 we have booked a lodge with small bedrooms at Badaguish Outdoor Centre, Aviemore, for our next winter week in Scotland in the Cairngorms. Winter mountaineering, forest trails and ski slopes are all close by. Public transport friendly with trains to Aviemore. Standard charge plus 20% to cover extra costs of accommodation. See the MIS for more details.

We will think further about our use of huts and whether we limit bookings for 2021 to those with similar facilities. It is lucky that the two trips above, which were booked before restrictions came into place, have arrangements that should reassure our members. The extract from John Aldous's fab Scottish trip report on page 3, with more detail on p 4, should convince you that you don't need to be Sherpa Tensing to enjoy this stuff! I'm looking forward to our next adventure. **Becky Bates**, National Trips Person

Bird Song

The most welcome event of early spring for me is the return of bird song. Throughout winter: save for the robin, who will sing anytime even at night; birds have remained largely silent.

Birds sing to defend territories and to attract a mate. Once birds have a mate, they tend not to sing so much. Birdsong can seem like a confusing background noise. However, through careful listening and above all observation, it is possible to identify the songs of separate species.

The Blackbird: easy to identify, always sings from a prominent position; a series of sharp and slurred notes with some phrases sung repeatedly, at a slow pace with short pauses.

The Great Tit: its usual song is a simple and intensely repetitive, 'tea-cher', 'tea-cher', 'tea-cher'.

The Wren: a very loud burst of short and long piercing notes with a distinctive 'drum roll' near the end. One of Britain's smallest birds has one of the loudest songs.

The Chiffchaff: A bird that flies south for the winter, returning here to breed, it may be heard from March to August. The name is the clue but the song is far from sibilant. There is an almost metallic ring to it.

The Robin: fiercely territorial the robin will sing throughout the year. A loud, high pitched and piercing series of 'liquid' descending notes, slightly melancholy. My three year old grandson heard a robin sing once and said, "what's that dripping noise?"

The Dunnock: a series of short, slurred, piercing notes; the sound has been likened to an uncoiled, squeaking wheel. Sometimes confused with the wren but it lacks the volume and the 'drum roll' of the wren.

The Song Thrush: easy to identify; high pitched and loud, each note or phrase is repeated in quick succession - 'he sings each song twice over, lest you should think he never could recapture the first fine careless rapture!' - Robert Browning.

The Nuthatch: usually only heard in the vicinity of large trees, the song is distinctive and easily identified: a rapid and repetitive, 'weet, weet', 'weet, weet', 'weet, or 'wit, wit wit wit wit'.

The Goldfinch: the song is not loud but long, a series of light fluttering notes, some shrill, others full and rounded, easily distinguished from other birds, often seen in groups.

The Greenfinch: a mixture of rapid twittering trills but the most distinctive sound is a long buzzing or 'wheezing' note; unlike any other bird except the starling which sometimes mimics the 'wheeze'.

Pete Betts, looking a trifle damp on page 5!

Check out the Guardian's bird song app, 'Name that Tune'.

Pete

*See next page for Pete's article about the trip.
The excellent full report by John Aldous is the
first item on the RR homepage.*

I've no experience of snowy mountain walking and have been wary of it. I borrowed boots and an ice axe (thanks to Glyn and Jake), went to the training on Stob Ban and climbed Beinn Bhan. Brilliant! Just to experience white everywhere. And have fun too. I'd like to thank Lupine for the training but also particularly the Red Ropers who helped me find my winter feet.



I'm a snowy mountain virgin. I've never used crampons or an ice axe and have been wary of trying. So I was a bit anxious about the winter skills training course on Stob Ban, South of Ben Nevis, on our Ivy Cottage trip to Spean Bridge. Andy and Dave from Lupine Adventure met us the night before and spelled out the importance of avalanche awareness and assessment.

With borrowed boots and ice axe (thanks Glyn and Jake) I set off with John, Becky, Sarah and Glyn.

I learned how to 'self belay' using an ice axe which involved driving the shaft into the ground to prevent a slip. I had fun doing ice axe arrests. I tried out different stepping patterns to ascend and descend, and how to tackle steep slopes on all fours.

The result? I want to come back and do some more next year! I gained confidence and a bit of knowledge and skill. I'd like to thank Lupine for the training, but I would also especially like to thank fellow Red Ropers who helped me on the mountain days and made me feel welcome.

Ivy cottage is a great place to stay with plenty of bedrooms and a beautiful isolated location. The weather? As they say, if you don't like the Scottish weather, just wait 15 minutes! Plenty of deep snow, sunshine and the occasional intercontinental storm.

People went on Glen walks : Glen Nevis, Glen Finnan, Glen Gloy, Loch Lochy and elsewhere. Those who wanted to scale the heights went up Stob a' Choire Mheadhoin, Mam na Gualainn, Beinn Bhan, Stob Ban and other peaks.

Some went on probably the most beautiful train journey you could take from Fort William to Mallaig, crossing Harry Potter's own bridge at Glenfinnan!

Food was of the usual highest standard. But a special mention should be made of Simon Skerrit's 'Swiss Roll Surprise'. Not only was it delicious but Simon made it after breaking bones in his hand from a fall. Self sacrifice in the cause!

Thanks to Sarah for organising one of the best trips I've been on and Brian for being treasurer.

Pete Watson



Over the years, people have asked me what is the purpose of the Green Party ...

for some, it was seen as a 'one trick pony'; defender of the natural environment but without the social and economic policies to confirm it as a genuine political force. A change of emphasis by the party over the past decade or so, in the media at least, has hopefully dispelled that myth and opened people's eyes to the wider manifesto, developed over the near half century that the party has been in existence.

One such policy that has been grabbing headlines on a more regular basis recently has been universal basic (or citizen's) income. The aim of the policy is for the state to pay an income to every person in the country; the payment would be made unconditionally. Unlike the present benefits system, it would enable individuals to receive an income as a right and without the complexities involved in means testing. A true safety net for citizens. The Labour Party has, in recent times made manifesto commitments to explore such a scheme; welcome news but not the wholehearted commitment the Green Party have maintained. On a journey perhaps?

This is just one of the Green Party's detailed policy pledges; there are many more which set out how we can live in harmony with the planet, in a fair and just society. Check them out on our policy website: <https://policy.greenparty.org.uk/>

Lawrence Brown, Liverpool Green Party Councillor & Red Roper - L. is on the right, having a great time with Pete, Dot and Pat!



A week in the Fatra Mountains of Slovakia Humphrey Southall

The Carpathians are a longer mountain range than the Alps, snaking for over 900 miles through the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Ukraine and Romania. The highest and best known area is the High Tatra, on the border between Slovakia and Poland, with peaks over 2,600m, but most parts are lower and often heavily wooded.

In September 2019 I joined my Polish academic colleague, Marek Słoń, and a small group from the Studenckie Koło Przewodników Beskidzkich (SKPB: Students' Association of Guides of the Beskid Mountains) on a tour of the Fatra mountains of Slovakia. The name is seriously confusing, as they are only just to the south west of the Tatra.

The party came together as we took a series of three trains from Warsaw to Žilina, the fourth largest city of Slovakia, then two buses to end up in the mountain village of Rajecká Lesná. The previous year more or less the same group had spent a week backpacking in the Făgăraș mountains of Romania, the second highest part of the Carpathians, a very remote area where there were few alternatives to wild camping, but accommodation in the Fatra was more diverse: we alternated between staying in valley settlements, in accommodation found online, and up on the ridge, and our first night was in a village inn.

Our first four days were spent essentially walking north-east along the main ridge of the Mala Fatra, or Lesser Fatra and most days our summits tended to be higher than Ben Nevis (1344m.), walking was mostly on quite gentle ridges, often covered in beech woods. The paths are mostly clear but not always well-maintained, so much time is spent on detours around fallen trees.

Our first night on the ridge was marked on the map as “Grand Hotel Partyzán”, but this meant a very basic shelter, the ground floor belonging to a family who had arrived on motorbikes but the loft was free to hikers. Our next night was down in a small town, Strečno, with a spectacular castle, at the end of a gorge where the Váh river breaks through the Mala Fatra. (See photo) Prices for a fairly standard staffed mountain hut were 14 Euros per night for a bed, or 11 for a mattress in the attic, plus a choice of cooked meals.

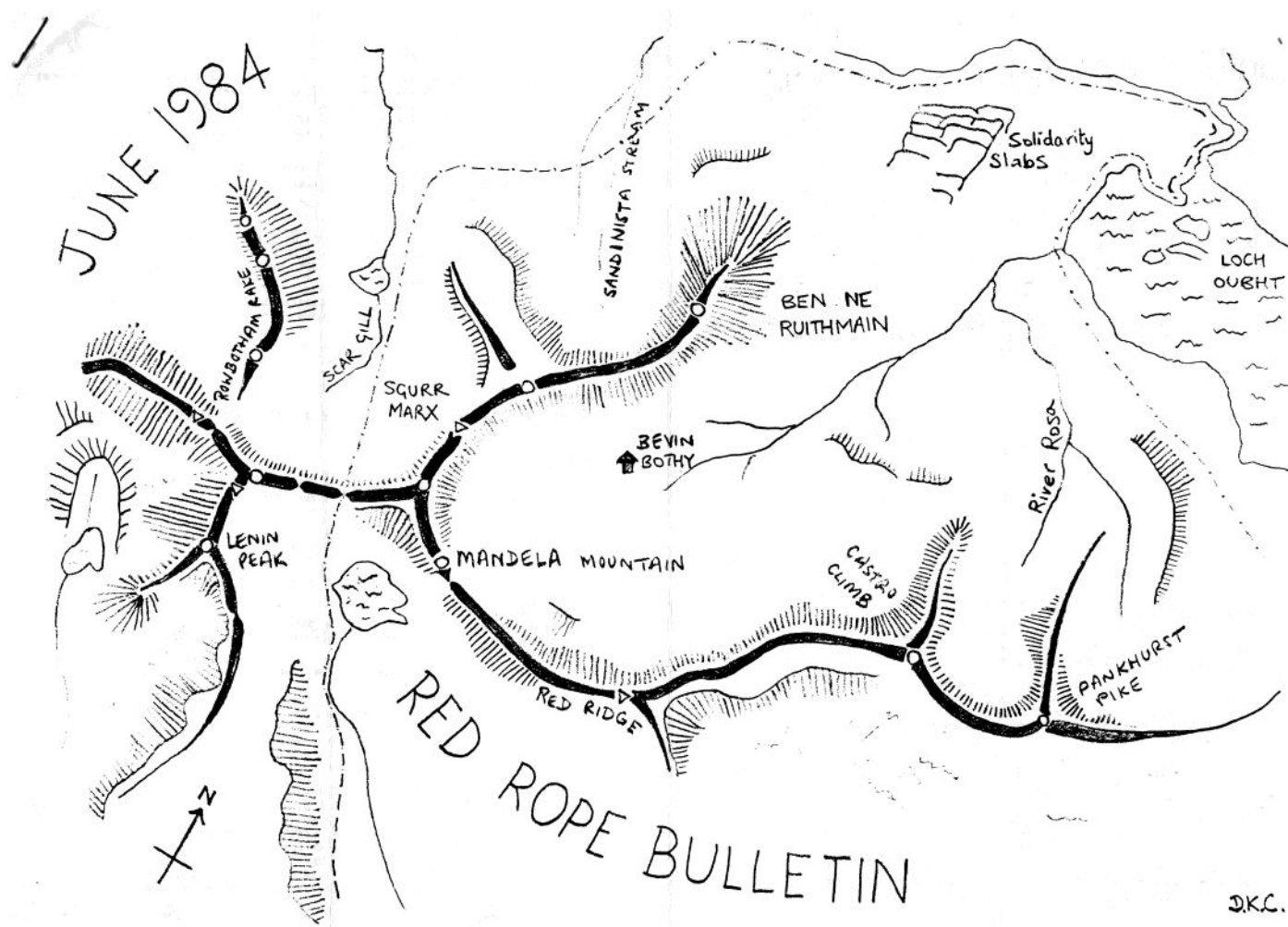
The next morning we went up Chleb (1646m.), directly behind the hut, but there was dense fog, so we started a new trek south-west along the main ridge of the Greater Fatra. We stocked up with supplies at Tesco (!), then stayed in an apartment at the local ski complex.

A telepherique spared us the first 500m. of ascent, but we still had to go up another 300m. in blazing sun to reach the main ridge, rewarded by a fine view of the sea of cloud blanketing the Váh valley then walked on to probably the most basic staffed mountain hut I have ever stayed in, at Limba – using the latrine in the night meant stepping over the guardian sleeping on the kitchen floor. Our final full day began with a steep ascent of Rokytno (1567m.), then a succession of mostly grassy ridges leading to Ostredok (1596m.)

You don't go to the Carpathians for dramatic mountain scenery like the Alps. Instead, you go for relatively empty hills and for a goodly amount of fairly low cost accommodation right up in the hills, something which barely exists in Britain.



The early Red Rope bulletins, 1979-84: from Pankhurst Pike to Scar Gill!



4 SEPTEMBER 1981 EAST END NEWS 17



Our social climbers

BELIEVE it or not Bethnal Green is the headquarters of a national walking climbing club.

Red Rope is open to any socialist of any age who would like to go out walking, climbing, skiing or potholing with people of a similar outlook.

The Club started nearly two years ago when John Gillman and Andy Bateman of Hackney decided to develop their common interest into an organisation. The current national treasurer and organiser Colin Knowles now lead Red Rope from Pritchards Road E2.

Today the club has 125 members who participate in climbs and walks all over the country. Recent excursions have been organised to Derbyshire, the Lake District and Wales. These

By LEN BROWN

specifically for new members who wanted to learn the art of compass and map reading or climbing.

While the club places an emphasis on safety, economy is an important consideration. Activities are run at the minimum cost with special reductions for unwaged members, and an annual membership of £2.

As well as affiliation with other groups such as Red Ski, a winter sports organisation, and Red Spoke, the socialist cycling club, Red Rope's political role is very much to the fore in their activities. Opposition to nuclear power, and to the sexist advertising content of the Climber and

cent projects of the club. In October Red Rope's members will be doing a sponsored walk to raise money for the Right to Work Campaign.

The question of access to land is another important issue that Red Rope aim to tackle.

Next year is the 50th anniversary of the 1st Mass Trespass which took place on Kilder Scout against the

private ownership of land. Red Rope plan to commemorate the event at a time when the establishment, particularly the army, is making inroads into public land.

Red Rope provides an excellent opportunity for East Enders to head for the hills for dose of fresh air. If you are interested why not contact Colin Knowles on 739 6668.



Monochrome memories...

april 2020

Introduction

A couple of years ago Brian Muir emailed me to ask if I would be interested in having a set of the first Red Rope bulletins. I said I would and he duly sent me an A4 envelope, which was about 4 cm deep (!) full of bulletins plus an impressive 32 page RR handbook, edited by Alison Kirton and Colin Knowles, the great majority of which is still relevant. It includes a 9 page piece on geology by Mike Wedderburn, with one part headed 'The Earth's History' which is neatly summed up in 2 sides. Hilary Mantel eat your heart out!

I have to confess that my expectation was that they would be rough and ready and I didn't pay much attention to them. However, after I had the idea to do this feature I actually spent some time reading them and found them surprisingly interesting! The 'lockdown' seemed a good point to reflect on the origins of the club and it quickly became apparent that Colin, Andy Bateman and Julian Batsleer, amongst many others, had been extremely committed and hard working in developing a socialist outdoors club which members could make their own.

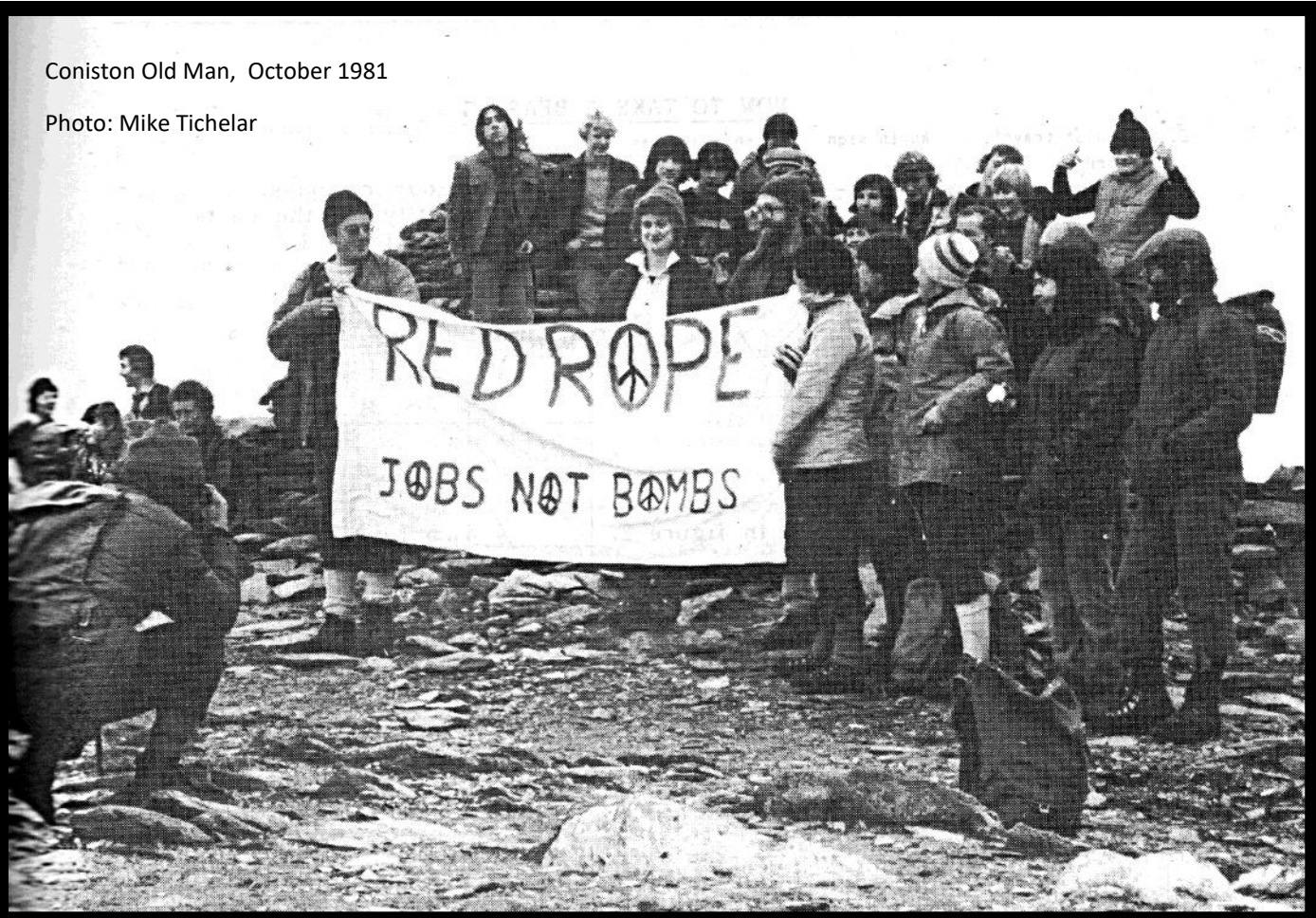
Particularly admirable features included activism regarding access, an anti-sexism policy and experienced members being keen to train others, all of which are indicative of a sharing, socialist approach. On a lighter note there was also an obvious determination to have a good time, although the frequent reports of community mini-buses breaking down, ghastly weather and even worse hang-overs make it hard to believe that this was always achieved!

Many of the bulletins were printed 'landscape' with a small font. If you find it difficult to read them one obvious approach would be to enlarge the appearance of the type. I hope the articles will be as interesting for new members as the old hands - they include some extracts from the London Bulletin and are not chronological. **David Symonds**

The Red Rope archive is in the Working Class Movement Library in Salford which is where the collection Brian sent will be kept.

Coniston Old Man, October 1981

Photo: Mike Tichelar



Women's Training Weekend-Hopton Cottage (April 29th-May 22nd)

This was the first womens's training weekend organised by Red rope members; the emphasis was to be on climbing.

On Saturday we went on a river walk to increase women's confidence in crossing water. We had great fun negotiating our way along a tunnel without getting our feet wet! The weather was wonderful and what had been planned as half-day exercise turned into a full day. We created much amusement amongst passers-by when Gill Osborne and Ann-Clare Fourcin set up a rope bridge - and we all found many different ways of crossing it! By the end of the day our confidence in 'boulder hopping' had greatly increased with only a few wet feet along the way. In the evening some women went out climbing, top-roping on local outcrops.

On Saturday the weather was less friendly. Most of us spent the day walking part of the High Peak trail in cold winds and drizzle. However, the walking was easy and allowed for many intense conversations about women in outdoor pursuits in general, and Red Rope in particular. One woman walked in and around Malham Cove and a few brave souls went climbing - not the best weather to initiate novices to climbing, especially on limestone.

The weather improved a little on Monday, some women left early and the women from Liverpool impressed us all with their knowledge of rope work, including making harnesses using a few strategically placed knots, and abseiling from the ceiling. A few of us went top-roping on Harborough Rocks at the back of the cottage. We had the rocks to ourselves until the sun came out in mid-afternoon. Despite the drizzle and the cold both novices and those with more experience enjoyed themselves and felt they had achieved something.

Although the weather was against us and altered the emphasis of the weekend, everyone who wanted to climb did so and all seemed to enjoy it. I think we all felt we learnt a lot over the weekend, not least that everyone can be confident in one thing, but no-one is confident in everything. The atmosphere of the week-end was great, and the co-operation and support amongst the women there was wonderful. During some of our discussions, of which there were many, we decided to set up a women's net work for rock-climbing, walking and caving, and any other skills women have to offer to others. If any women are interested in becoming involved, they should contact Ann-Clare Fourcin, 13, Bracken House, Devons Road, London E3, or Karen McCarthy, 36, Granville Square, London WC1. There are many women involved, but I'm afraid these are the only two addresses I have at the time of writing.

Karen McCarthy

RED ROPE BULLETIN

After the new rate for the unemployed

the applications flood in!

1 UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFIT ATTENDANCE CARD

SURNAME: **BOWES-LYON** INITIALS: **E. HRH** NI NUMBER: **0001** CODOT: **END-Q**

NOMINATED POST OFFICE: **BUCKINGHAM PALACE RD. SW1**

IMPORTANT NOTICE ABOUT CLAIMING BENEFIT

You should make your claims for unemployment benefit at the times shown in the box on each occasion.

On the day specified you risk losing benefit and all the days between your last claim and the day specified go to the day you can (but not on Saturday the next specified day of attendance.

When you start work, begin training or again become unemployed you should claim unemployment.

SIGNING

BOX	TIME
9	9.00

YOU SHOULD ATTEND

ON... **11TH AUG.**

THEN NEXT ON... **18TH AUG.**

AND THEN EVERY SECOND WEEK ON... **MON. DAY**



UB 40X

2 DECLARATION OF UNEMPLOYMENT/CLAIM FOR OUTSTANDING BENEFIT

If there are days between the last day on which you attended at the Benefit Office and the date on which you started work (or claimed another benefit) complete the declaration below.

NOTE: This form should not be signed until the last day for which you wish to claim unemployment benefit/supplementary allowance.

"I HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND the leaflet 'Responsibilities of Claimants' (UBL18).
I DECLARE that on the following dates **4TH AUGUST 1980**
to 4TH AUGUST 1980
I was unemployed and did no work: I was able and willing to do any suitable work but was unable to get any: the circumstances of my dependants were as last stated". (If there was a change cross out this last item), and I CLAIM BENEFIT for those dates included above for which I have not already claimed in advance.

Signature **Queen Mum** date **4/8/81**

Payment may have been made in advance for all or some of the dates you have entered above.

Payment of any outstanding benefit will be made by post to your home address on return of this card with part 3 completed.

thanks to The Leveller

For some of us, a weekend in Snowdonia is a weekend off from the industrial struggle, but 100 years ago this part of North Wales was the scene of major industrial struggles.

Slate had been mined in the area since about 1600, but it was not until the beginning of the 19th century that larger scale enterprises moved in, often by acquiring common land in dubious ways.

As early as 1825 workers had struck for better pay at the Penhryn quarries, but most of the early attempts at organisation were unsuccessful. The owners were strong, and religion and the remoteness of the area made it difficult to organise.

By 1874 the industry was booming. The Dinorwic quarries at Llanberis, and the Penhryn quarries were the biggest in the world, employing up to 6,000 men each, and opening up huge faces up the mountainside. There were also large quarries at Blaunau Festiniog and in the Nantlle valley, as well as smaller ones throughout the region. Villages like Bethesda, Deniolen, Rhostryfan and many more grew up around slate.

Profits were booming, but the condition of the workers was not improving. Wages were low and conditions poor. As most of the work was done outdoors they were often forced to get very wet, and incidences of the dreaded silicosis (an evil lung disease) increased as mechanisation raised the dust levels, especially in the cutting sheds. One owner attributed the high rate of T.B. amongst his men to the high level of drinking of stewed tea and the infrequency with which, he alleged, they changed their underwear! Conditions were so bad that one of the first actions of embryo unions was to assist their members to emigrate.

In 1874 the North Wales Quarrymen's Union was founded. After a five week strike they won recognition at Dinorwic, and the Penhryn men followed suit, also successfully. For the next 30 years slate, and especially the Penhryn quarry, was to see major struggles. As the industry went through expansion and contraction, gains were painfully won, and quickly lost. They fought over pay rates, re-recognition of the union, against victimisation and favouritism (one strike demand at Dinorwic in the 80s was the ending of the £1 per month bonus to those active in the Tory party. A feature of the disputes was the determination the men showed. In September 1896 the Penhryn men struck for more pay. They stayed out solidly until August 87 when most of their demands were met. In 1900 the Penhryn workers were locked out as part of a dispute, over wages, union recognition, piecework, victimisation and holidays. For a year no one went back. Even after a years hardship only 400 scabs could be found. The strike/lockout was to last 3 years. Men, and sometimes their families left the area to work in coal mines, or found work in rival slate quarries at pitiful wages. Some travelled round Wales singing to try to earn money. English soldiers were called into Bethesda to protect the scabs. In 1903 they were forced to give in.

By the time the union had recovered, the industry was in decline. Conditions improved for those with jobs, and some militancy continued, but by the 1950s few had jobs in slate. There is little major industry in the area now and probably the biggest industry is tourism, including walking and climbing. I've been unable to trace much political action, other than Welsh Nationalism, which is strong in the old ^{quarrying} mining areas.

Dear comrades and friends,

Although we are only on the second edition of the London newsletter, already I have received two contributions, so I haven't got to make the whole thing up myself.

LONDON NEWSLETTER

JAN. 83

Dear Comrades and Friends,

It's own-up time down here in Poplar and I have to confess that last month's newsletter contained more than its share of inaccuracies. I console myself with the knowledge that truth is a bourgeois concept.

LONDON NEWSLETTER

AUG/SEPT 83

Dear Comrades and Friends,

This could well be my last effort as newsletter producer as elections for the new London Committee draw near. I, of course will be retiring to my Sussex farm to devote my declining years to the pursuit of hedonism. Details of the next London members meeting, which will include the election of the new committee appear at the end of this newsletter.

As this is my last effort, you will be pleased to see that I have enclosed the three items in this letter in tasteful box-style graphics, the better that they may catch your eye.



Most of the London Newsletter items above were written by Bob Cook who was obviously a humorous chap. I love the line, 'I console myself with the knowledge that truth is a bourgeois concept.' The photo is from a July 1992 bulletin and reminded me of the pleasure of having children on trips. DS

REPORT OF THE FR WOMENS TRIP TO LLANBERIS - 7/9 October '83

Well, it had to happen - my first really wet Red Rope trip. Soaked to the skin before we had even left London, the rain seemed never to stop. Yet the beauty of the Llanberis pass, its Autumn grasses, bracken & trees against grey slate & bracken was more than adequate compensation.

Saturday began with the familiar & not at all well loved morning scene of "who goes where with whom to do what". Pre-trip meetings may well go some way to assuaging such difficulties, but on trips such as this with people from many regions arriving on Friday night, jaded & tired, organisation is more problematic. All participants on weekends should give more consideration to what they want to do before they come on a trip, arriving with a range of ideas/personal possibilities eg. be prepared for bad weather or to do a less demanding walk if there are a number of less experienced people. Forthcoming training weekends may also help. Anyway, groups finally set off for local climbs, (local cafes), & the N face of Tryfan.

For the 8 women who slipped & scrambled over Tryfan, the day was an exhilarating & challenging experience. High winds, driving rain & poor visibility were a test of both map reading skills & stamina. Walking together in a spirit of co-operation, questioning the traditional approach to mountain leadership were ideals put to the test in such adverse conditions; discussions on these issues, continued on into the evening. As one of the hardest scrambles in Wales, ascent of the north face of Tryfan is highly recommended for anyone not yet ready for climbing, but who enjoys the flow of adrenalin of a hard scramble.

For the women who came to climb, there was some disappointment, recompensed to a degree through visits to the local climbing wall & a blowy trek to the Devils Kitchen.

Restored by an excellent supper & the warmth & comfort of our weekend abode, small groups of women set off on shorter 'sunday strolls' in torrential rains & mist. As the weather cleared, wonderful views of the coastal plane & Anglesey were revealed, alongside blue-grey scars of massive open cast slate mines in the hillsides. This is certainly an area for more RR trips.

Sue Adams

London



Tagged onto the club's title is the phrase "Socialist Mountaineering and Rambling club". It isn't just socialist because of the inclinations of the membership. Right from the start, the question "What shall we do?" was followed immediately by "How shall we do it?". Whilst a trip to the mountains is not an explicitly political act on its own, as far as is possible in this gritty capitalist world, Red Rope trips are organised on a socialist basis.

The keynote of every trip should be co-operation. Everyone has a part to play, even if this is their first trip. Planning menus, shopping, cooking, washing up and cleaning the hut need to be shared out collectively, whilst drivers and a trip treasurer are essential. Experienced climbers use their skills to assist novices in this exciting activity, while every group of walkers should share their navigation, route-finding and weather-reading skills so the group can have a safe and enjoyable ramble.

The aim of the operation is to create a supportive atmosphere where the rawest novice can freely benefit from the skills of the more experienced members. Women, because of their oppressed position in society, need every encouragement to advance their skills and improve their confidence, and for this reason we run women-only trips so women can learn from each other without being inhibited by the presence of men. Training is high on the agenda in any case - so far we have run four successful weekends devoted entirely to training.

Because of the vast disparity of incomes amongst the working class, we have spent a long time trying to operate a socialist incomes policy inside the club. As a result, membership fees are on a sliding scale, as are trip fees. This gives unemployed and low-waged alike a chance to go away for the weekend without facing destitution the following week.

The club is remarkable for its thoroughly unsectarian atmosphere - perhaps its the result of the 'Downturn'. It is impossible to quantify the political make-up of the club, but SWP members who were the driving force behind the club's formation may constitute $\frac{1}{4}$ of the membership, equalled, probably, by the number of individual members of the Labour Party.

Thus political discussions at the AGM or National Committee are conducted in an open way. The club's external politics could be summed up as follows - Solidarity with workers in struggle - anywhere. At the 1981 AGM we collected money for the striking engineers at Garners, Manchester, and at the same time supported unemployed struggles by organising a sponsored walk around the Snowdon Horseshoe, with nearly sixty people taking part. We have adopted a Polish political prisoner - Janus Onyskiewicz - an internationally known mountaineer and the former press spokesman of Solidarity - and we send him cards from our trips and a food parcel. In 1981 we gave money to the ANL, and in our own way we have tried to support the CND - our banner saying "Jobs Not Bombs" was paraded on top of Coniston Old Man in Oct 1981 as 100,000 marched in

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London. We organised a coach trip to Greenham Common, and many members attended the Dec 1982 womans day at Greenham Common. However, we aren't just content to support existing campaigns. Access to the countryside will remain a live political issue until the land is under workers control, but by fighting for access now we can help keep the political kettle on the boil. We helped organise, and massively supported, the Kinder Scout Trespass Memorial in April '82. We raised several hundred pounds for the campaign by organising a social, and a sponsored walk over the Welsh 3000's (call that a walk?). But we've not been content to leave the Access issue at that - a Sheffield based campaign, SCAM, have organised several trespasses which we have supported as best we can. We joined the Ramblers Association in their 'Alternative opening of the Wold's Way', and also the commemorative walk held in Bolton to celebrate a mass trespass held in 1896. To build the campaign further, we are planning to hold an 'Access Activists Conference' in 1983, which we hope will gain the support of SCAM and activists in the Ramblers Association. As part of our policy of putting our politics forward in public, we are affiliated to both the BMC and the Ramblers Association, and we can intervene in or initiate discussions in both organisations. However, there is still much to be done. Whilst elitism and sexism have come under strong attack inside the club, our anti-racism seems nominal if the number of black or Asian members are anything to go by. The National Committee recently asked for everyone to think how to change this situation. Our involvement in 'Outdoor Politics' needn't be limited to access disputes; Nuclear Power stations and their pump storage schemes are usually situated in out of the way places, and the government's decision to delay making a decision about the burial of nuclear fuel only delays our need to oppose any such scheme. The threat to the countryside isn't limited to selfish landowners - large mining companies (ie. RTZ in the Peak District) threaten large areas of upland, whilst the intensification of capitalist farming into Agribusiness is wrecking the rich ecology of the countryside. As the club grows and consolidates, perhaps interested people will turn into activists. However, we must be alert to the workers movement, for any upturn in struggle against the government needs all the support it can get.



The person to the left is Jill Lawrence who Jim Perrin, the journalist, author and former RR member wrote the following about in the Guardian of 5 April, 1983, 'Rock climbing is generally a young person's game but at 32 Jill is the best woman in the country and still improving. I was out on Stanage Edge with her a few weeks ago. In the course of a day's climbing she didn't make a false move. The delicacy and poise, the easy swing of movement with which she overcame climbs that, for a previous generation, had been the hardest of their time was a continual delight. Climbers like Joe Brown and Chris Bonnington, even in their prime, could never have approached its studied perfection. When asked about her style she simply says, 'I'm not so strong as the men, so I have to be more careful in the way I use my body to get up climbs.' There can be few better to emulate.

A BARE DI'S VIEW OF THE PYRENEES...

...(or "Staggers in Catatonia")

A fair crowd of Red Ropers took themselves to the Pyrenees this summer. Carefully identifying the trip as 'unofficial' (i.e. we all paid the same) Ted Ashby masterfully recruited and coordinated nine intrepid walkers from around the country.

A pre-trip meeting primed us for the confusion of including two Chris Smiths, but some of us met for the first time in Gerona, afflicted as we were by jet-lag or hangover. By train and bus, enjoying a local carnival on the way, we reached the small, but well-stocked mountain town of Benasque. There we divided amoeba-like into two parties, thankfully not exclusive or irreversible. The 'slow' party were not so much slow as existential, responding to the mood of the moment (i.e. stopping when they felt like it) and conversing on love and life, which earned them the description of "troupe of wandering philosophers". The 'fast' party, alternatively referred to as "headbangers" were reputed never to talk at all!

After four day treks of magnificent scenery and solitude, fast and slow re-met to recount the joys of mountains and weather (varied, with 'exciting' thunderstorms but sunny mornings) and to frequent the local disco; we predict a new fashion of shorts and day-sacks for groovers on the dance floors of Catalonia. An early start followed the riotous night, but in good spirits we all headed Eastwards together, slogging, breathless in the rarefied air, up to the Moulrier's Ridge (and some to the peak, which felt more like the top of the world than anywhere I have been). We descended rather chaotically by a combination of ropework, scrambling, portage and sharing of ice-axes. That evening found us camped at a chilly altitude, rather incongruously singing Auld Lang Syne in Catalan, with a friendly group of indigenous walkers.

A large and prolonged lunch at the Refuge ^{"Hospital de Val" 4200m} led to another split (foolhardy vs. "we know when to stop"). For the next two days the parties repeatedly overtook each other, reaching the next base within a couple of hours of each other. A flat and picturesque campsite was located; said to be a mere eight minutes away from the refuge but discovered to be a v. diff. descent when attempted in the pitch dark when pissed. Moreover, those less danger-seeking than Ted and myself (who ascended, slept on and completed the reknowned Besiberi Ridge in less than ideal conditions) found the campsite also less than ideal. Flooded out and invaded by cows, they broke camp (the cows having helped in this process) and descended to a warmer, dryer location. Despite changes in the rendezvous place, we miraculously all met up in time to wave Val off on her premature journey back to work (and she almost didn't make it!).

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After a day's sightseeing, bird and insect spotting, we pressed on. Around this time we were starting to lose members who struck off in search of independence (but rejoined us in Barcelona, wiser if not poorer). Those who remained enjoyed a "last-outing" and an evening of mutual massage and socialist songs around a mesmerising log fire. The pleasantly derelict building in which we stayed was less pleasantly afflicted by wild beasties and bangs in the night.

Yet we survived, even if, as I found myself, increasingly weary. Not ashamed to hitch a lift into Espot, I became less than good company as I vomited into plastic bags half the agonisingly winding bus journey on to Barcelona.

Thankfully, that city of extraordinary Gaudi architecture, superb museums and somewhat insalubrious nightlife brought me back on form; those with stamina and the desire were to be seen out "looking for a good time" in the early hours of the morning - and some not in vain. The novel line in chat was thus experienced; "What sex are you by the way?" (he asked me in the W.C.)

As will any group who spend three weeks together, we were developing ability to laugh repeatedly over those in-jokes and catchphrases which confuse and appear totally un-funny to the outsider - therefore I shall mention only the "Direct Route" (Di leading - off the path) and "bijoux scenettes" (something Mike seemed to know a lot about). More relevantly and constructively, we worked on a plan to improve the Red Rope booking form; expanding it to include the choice; "Do you prefer a)walking, b)climbing, c)eating and drinking, d)going to discos?" and the chance to state one's sexual preferences and availability.

We were sorry that Val missed this final phase of jocularly. The remaining eight of us parted good friends (some better friends than others) after a final day in and around Gerona, including a rapid and bizarre visit to the Salvador Dali museum in Figaros on the very day that the same artist set fire to himself and his bed (stoned again?). We accept no responsibilityafter all, this was an unofficial trip.

Di Chisholm



Val in a
Thirsty moment.
DKC.

The post-lockdown Red Rope jamboree? This is called 'Carnival' and it's by David Symonds, with a little help from the great underwater photographer David Doubliet... I'm sure I saw that bloke in the bottom left at the last AGM...



The post-lockdown Red Rope Jamboree? This is called 'Carnival', and it's by David Symonds, with a little help from the great underwater photographer David Doubliet... I'm sure I saw that bloke in the bottom left at the last AGM...