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## DERBYSHIRE PENNINE CLUB NOTES.

NOVEMBER, 1908.

ON September 26th, a Meet of the Club was held at Brassington, the head-quarters being Curzon Lodge Farm. Archer, Clark, Smith, Smithard, Sprules, and Winder attended, and some interesting excavations were made under Smithard's directions shewing cross-sections through one of the Roman Roads in the neighbourhood. Later some climbing was indulged in by various members of the party on the Brassington and Harborough Rocks, Sprules leading all the time.

A Meeting should have been held at Matlock, on October 9th, to explore the Great Masson Cavern, but owing to the sad death of F. A. Sprules, the Meet had to be postponed.

Sprules joined the Derbyshire Pennine Club soon after its formation, and in his death, through an accident on the North Face of the Pillar Rock, the Club loses one of its most valued members. He was an enthusiastic rock-climber, and having wide technical experience, was able to render much assistance when "tackling" was required in cavern exploration.

On November 7th, the Second Annual Meeting of the Club was held at Matlock, J. W. Puttrell, the retiring President, being in the chair. The following Officers were elected for the ensuing year:—President, W. Smithard (Derby); Vice-President, Hy. Bishop (Sheffield); Secretary, F. A. Winder (Sheffield); Treasurer, J. W. Puttrell (Sheffield); Committee, R. M. Archer, H. Burrell, G. F. R. Freeman, P. Pearson, and W. M. Sissons.

There was a good attendance at the Dinner which followed, the new President being chairman. The Guests of the Club were—Mr. Geo. Bourne of the Rucksack Club, and Mr. Guy

S. Mitchell, representing the Yorkshire Speleological Association. The Toast of "The King" was proposed by Mr. Smithard, and "The Derbyshire Pennine Club," by Mr. Isaac Rains, Mr. R. M. Archer responding. "Kindred Clubs" was proposed by Mr. Hy. Bishop, the responses being by Mr. Geo. Bourne and Mr. Guy S. Mitchell. The health of the President was proposed by his predecessor. Music was contributed by Messrs. Hy. Bishop and W. Elliott Amies. A hilarious time was spent.

A good many of the members stayed overnight, and on the following morning some went climbing on the "Black Rocks" at Cromford, and the others walked from Minning Low to Buxton, *via* the Roman Road.

The advance guard, consisting of Puttrell, Smithard, and Wollen, after the dinner, weakly took advantage of an opportunity to ride to Brassington Moor, but the night air in the Via Gellia was so chilling that by the time they got to Marks Dale the three were very glad to get out of the trap and walk briskly over the hill to their sleeping quarters. Next day they were joined by Amies, Sissons, Smith and Winder.

It was an ideal day for a tramp on the limestone uplands. The air was keen, the sunshine brilliant, and the sky cloudless. In fact the conditions were altogether so exceptional that one could scarcely hope to get them in November more than once in a lifetime.

"What sign of them that fought and died

"At stroke of sword and sword?

"The barrow and the camp remain,

"The sunshine and the sward."

For once, at any rate, the poet was approximately applicable, and the rhymes could not have been much truer had they been written on the spot for this particular occasion.

On Brassington Moor—now enclosed and grass-grown—it is said they have nine months winter and three months cold weather during the year. Minning Low is a dome of limestone at the north-western edge of Brassington Moor. On this hill is a big barrow, with some cists formed of huge lime-

stone slabs. Near to the barrow is the Roman Road, a very modest track but 12 feet wide, and covered with close short verdure.

On Minning Low, on a clear sunny day, "life is sweet, brother," one can see heights in plenty, including Aleck Low, Blake Low, Gallow Low, Sliper Low, Water Low, Haven Hill, Harborough Hill, Nimble Jack, Madges Boose (what does that mean?) Longstone Edge, Stanton Moor, and Longstone Edge. A goodly prospect, i'faith. One can say with Whitman

"I inhale great draughts of space.

"The east and west are mine,

"The north and the south are mine."

From Minning Low the Roman Road went north-westerly to Buxton. It could not be kept straight and level all the way, for it had to cross several shallow valleys, waterless now, and probably so then. The first depression is at Pike Hall, a cluster of four or five grey farmsteads and a chapel. Thence the track goes over Smerrill Moor and descends again at the head of Ling Dale. The next portion of the route is over Middleton Common. Much of it is now bordered by narrow strips of woodland. A by-road, called Green Lane, connecting Hartington and Youlgrave, bisects it. About a mile further, the Roman Road passes close by Arbor Low, a famous stone circle and earthwork under the protection of the State.

The next place of note is Benty Grange, a farm of commonplace appearance, where, in the year 1848, that doughty antiquary, Thomas Bateman, made a great discovery of Anglo-Saxon remains.

At the back of Benty Grange there is a small hill to climb, and on the other side of it are a couple of small farm houses. A little over a mile beyond these the Roman Road strikes the modern high road, at a very acute angle. Here is a delightful old inn, quaintly named the "Bull i' th' Thorn." It stands back from the road, and adjoining the latter is a patch of green sward, whereon is a thorn tree from which hangs the sign of the bull's head. There a halt was made for tea, and

when the Derbyshire Pennine Clubmen shouldered their rucksacks again, "the moon had raised her lamp above."

To follow the Roman Road from Minning Low to the "Bull i' th' Thorn" one has to clamber over many stone walls, and the Pennine men pride themselves on doing this without damaging either themselves or the walls, most of which are in unstable equilibrium. But it is no time for wall-scaling on the Derbyshire uplands after sunset, so the remaining six miles were done on the white hard road. The ridge contours silhouetted against the clear sky, and the softened details of the stern landscape, were very beautiful, and even by moonlight the ancient track in the fields could be distinguished quite close to Buxton.

Scrambling as practised on mountain limestone has very few devotees. For one thing, the material is very liable to breakage, whilst a cliff of really magnificent appearance may not furnish a single climb. Be that as it may, there is perhaps no material so well adapted for instilling care into a climber, that is, if he happens to stick on during the first few lessons.

There are certain routes to the summit of High Tor, at Matlock, which may be figuratively termed highways; these are leafy and soft to the tread, and are much frequented of the general public. There are other routes, of the existence of which the G.P. is blissfully, and happily, unaware, and which it is here purposed to describe in some detail.

Let us walk along the road from Matlock Bridge to the Bath of that ilk. High Tor is on the left across the Derwent; and the great cleft which, about half-way between Bridge and Bath, sunders the cliff from base to crown, is known as High Tor Gully. It has been climbed on only two occasions, five years ago, by J. W. Puttrell's party, and in November of this year by D. Gaspard, A. R. Thomson, and Henry Bishop (Leader).

Continuing our walk, we may distinguish, practically at Matlock Bath, two cracks or chimneys, partially shrouded by trees. The first is about 90 feet in height, including the part leading up to the chimney; but a 40-foot crack, starting immediately above it, should also be taken. The second chimney, 80-90 feet, starts on the same level as its neighbour, from which it is separated by only a few feet. Neither these, nor yet the gully, is "an easy day for a lady."

The climbs are best approached by passing through the High Tor grounds turnstile at the Matlock Bath end, thence, after a slight rise, contouring round the base of the cliff. After the preliminary reconnaissance from the road, it should not be very difficult to locate the two chimneys. The first one reached starts in a sort of cavern, out of which back-and-knee work takes one into the open after 40 feet. The chimney then slants back, and is climbed along the edge until, 15 feet below the finish, it is necessary to come completely out and to go up perpendicularly on rather inadequate rock holds with some tufts of grass. This is the only desperate part of the climb.

The next chimney will be recognised by its inverted V-shaped section almost at foot. Below this part is a mere scramble; then, with left arm jammed in crack, one wriggles up into the entrails of the rock. The next portion needs 40 feet of free rope. Go straight up chimney and climb out on to terrace, going over small stone wall just at top. From terrace, on right, starts the before-mentioned 40-foot crack. The most difficult part of this climb is from chimney exit up to terrace (last 15 feet). These chimneys were climbed by Bishop and Winder on their way to the Annual Dinner.

High Tor Gully is approached in the same fashion. A great hole, the continuation of the cleft, will be seen

below it. Reach first stopping-place, 12 feet up, by traversing in from left. Thence climb out and up, over next obstacle, and back into gully, being then 25 feet up, whence continue without waiting until able to brace across gully, which is here not steep. Continue up gully (loose and earthy, with some lately "dumped" thorn branches which caused considerable pain to the second party) until an open space is reached. Now aim for a traverse leading to arête of outer retaining-wall of gully, up which climb (sensational view) to finish. Time taken by last party, 2 hours.

