

ULULA ACCOUNTS OF TREKKING 1947 – 1955

1947 FOREIGN TREK - SAVOY

D. C. V., J. J. V.

Full of enthusiasm and laden with equipment, forty of the more energetic members of the School, boys and masters, left for the Savoy Alps, to spend August trekking in the traditional MGS manner. That we all returned fit and well from this arduous holiday is a great tribute to Mr. J. Lingard, who organised and led the expedition. From 10-30 p.m. on July 28th to 5-30 a.m. on August 26th he shepherded us through Customs, across Paris and over many mountains with amazing efficiency.

Our first experiences of France, after a warm and calm crossing, were a long wait on a hot and dusty road outside Dieppe, Customs, and a swift journey to Paris in an uncomfortable and rather dirty French train—we were to cover some 400 and more miles in this fashion with little chance of sleep. A day in Paris sightseeing—we spent the night on the gymnasium floor of the Lycée Saint Louis—and we were off again. We left Paris in the dark. When the sun rose we were among the Alps.

Our first three days of camping were spent at Bozel in brilliant sunshine; in fact, after an enjoyable but very strenuous day climbing the 8,350 feet of Mont Jovet we were compelled to spend a very hot day resting; But Mont Jovet had rewarded us with views such as are rarely seen, even in the Alps. Next day (August 3rd) we went on a very delightful walk up a wooded mountain side to a spot beside a rivulet, where we had lunch. Then a party of comparatively picked stalwarts went on to climb the Dent de Villard, a very oppressive, unpleasant and stony mountain, the descent from which involved the party in not a little screeing and scrambling.

After walking from Bozel to a bivouac at Laisonnay, a wild and lonely spot, we set out on what was perhaps the most arduous of the “trek” days—over the Col du Palet. Although the total distance was only fourteen miles we had to climb to a height of 8,721 feet, carrying all our tents and pots and pans, only to drop 3,000 feet into Tignes. From Tignes we made two delightful excursions, one to Val d’Isère (where we moralised on the effects of modern tourist developments) and one to the Rochers de Belvedere, a pleasant and surprisingly easy ascent of a 9,200 foot mountain which, from almost every angle, looks unclimbable.

A nineteen mile walk along a hot and dusty road brought us to friendly and comfortable Séez. We found a campsite nearby and spent two days doing little except enjoy ourselves in Bourg St. Maurice, where a fair and carnival, the Fete of the Edelweiss, was in full swing. Here Parrott gained fame for us by winning the local cross-country race. We also climbed by devious paths on to the old Roman track, and followed greater men to the Italian frontier on the Little St. Bernard Pass. Here some of the intelligentsia indulged in archeological pursuits. Others looked at the wreck of the Hospice, smashed in 1944, and were sad.

Another road trek, a stiffish climb, brought us to Les Chapieux, where we camped on a site used by MGS treks in 1929 and in 1935. It is the only site in a very remote and desolate spot.

One of the high spots of the whole trek was the night of August 14th. While the wind howled through the broken shutters of the battered and deserted Refuge on the Col de la Croix du Bonhomme (8,500 feet) MGS Trek, 1947, hidden away in various nooks of the building, padded with all available clothing, stretched out on hard boards and fortified with song and supper, attempted to pass the night in a half conscious coma approximating to sleep.

Up early next morning, in bitter cold, we started out for Les Contamines, gradually discarding clothing as we lost height and as the sun grew hotter over Mont Blanc. At Les Contamines food was a great difficulty, although few of the hungry forty complained at the vast supper of beans, tomatoes, peas, tripe, maggoty sausage and stewed plums, which was eventually served at 9-30 p.m.

A delightful climb to the Glacier de Trélatête on the Mont Blanc Massif was hardly rewarded by an indifferent chalet where even the officers were unable to obtain refreshment. Next day a temporary halt for a cup of coffee, two-thirds of the way up Mont Joly, turned into a permanent halt (see photo), and the party returned to camp.

On August 18th we bivouacked on the Col de Voza, and an easy descent next morning brought us into the centre of the tourist “industry”—Chamonix, where we were glad to meet civilisation again, and happier, a few hours later, to leave that particular version of it. The last campsite, three miles away, gave us a wonderful view of the Mont Blanc Massif, but an elusive and very cold glacier stream in which to wash.

The two final excursions were perhaps the most exciting of all. First a climb through a pine forest up to Montenvers, then down on to the Mer de Glace across which we slithered in a biting glacier wind, before climbing the moraine, passing under a waterfall, where we were soaked, and negotiating the ill-famed but easy Mauvais Pas.

Next day we had a stiff climb up the Brévent, a lovely high traverse walk at 7,000 feet, and an exhilarating accelerated swoop on Chamonix. Our last day's excursion was washed out by rain, the only heavy rain we experienced on the whole trek.

Rain . . . and in three days, including another whole one in Paris, we were back in damp and dismal Manchester. Our feelings were mixed— sorry that a glorious month was over thankful that months of home, and even months of England, lay before us.

But thankful most of all to the officers who had looked after us and, incidentally, helped to make the fine spirit that pervaded the whole trek. We hoped that Europe would recover from our mysterious onslaught, for in the Alps we were mistaken for Displaced Persons, and even in good old London for International Cyclists.

These notes are intended to be provocative. It would be unfortunate if the origins of that unique institution School trekking, were to be so clouded by time that it would be impossible to reconstruct the tale with accuracy. To a certain extent this has already happened. Many of those who could speak with authority are dead: many others, though probably still alive, have lost touch with the School. The only authoritative source easily available for a study of trek is Ulula, and Ulula, as will be shown, is not always satisfactory.

Only by gathering together as much information as is possible from the dozens of Old Mancunians who took part in the treks up to, say, 1924, can we guarantee that it will be possible to piece together the story of those early days. It may not be possible, in view of paper difficulties, to publish a memoir at present but any letters containing information or reminiscences, and addressed to Mr. T. M. Stott at School will be preserved until a more opportune moment. The brief account that follows, compiled largely from volumes of Ulula, is intended as an aide-memoire, and an irritant. It is certainly incomplete, probably inaccurate, and it poses more questions than it answers.

That School camping owes its origin to Mr. Paton is undoubted, though it should be noticed that boys from School had been present at earlier H.O.L.C. camps at Penmaenmawr. The first Alderley Camp, in 1904, was a "Cricket Camp". Its personnel consisted largely of members of School cricket teams who had a "festival fortnight."

That same year, however, a camp went to Grasmere, and at the suggestion of Mr., later Dr., T. H. Wells, some members spent nights out of camp, sleeping out in the open, and so being enabled to undertake more ambitious excursions. In 1906 some members of the Alderley camp walked over to Mellor, and spent the night in the H.O.L.C. cottages there. The following year the enthusiastic "Doc." Wells proposed a regular "Route March" from the Grasmere camp, but it was washed out.

So Alderley had the distinction of staging, in 1908, the first route marches. In the first week of the camp some fifteen campers, led by Mr. Wells, marched through Macclesfield, Buxton and Leek. On the organisation of this march, or its duration, Ulula is silent. Tents were taken and carried, as they were in the following week on a march through the Derbyshire hills, enjoyed by forty campers, again led by Mr. Wells. Since the whole expense of these marches was £3 10s. 6d., either they were very short or else most of the food was carried from Alderley. We know that "farmers were most generous in their offers of bread etc., and land whereon to pitch the tents." The rest is silence.

The indefatigable Wells, at the Grasmere camp of the same year, run for the last time by its founder, Mr Varnish, led a Route March lasting from Saturday to Tuesday via Langstrath Beck and Honister to Buttermere; holding there an excursion to Pillar; and returning to Grasmere in one leg on the following day. This little trek was obviously a fairly tough, serious affair. Without such trips the first foreign trek could never have been organised and carried through. But Doc. Wells did not venture abroad (why ?), and since it is to the series of ambitious foreign treks that the institution owes its uniqueness, we must turn to Mr. Paton himself, and his lieutenant, Mr. H. Nicholson, who were, as always, present at Alderley the following year when Wells again led two route marches. Here enters a new element.

There existed in Germany at that time a number of youth and camping associations known by the generic term Wandervögel—Wanderbirds. On July 18th 1909 a party of these "Wanderbirds" came to the School and "were addressed in their native tongue by the High Master." It seems probable that this visit was related in some way to Dr. Neuendorff, formerly a Lektor at the School, and a great enthusiast for camping as he had seen it there at that time. It may be not irrelevant to mention, too, that in 1909-10 the School had visits, and heard lectures from, Sandon Perkins, Grenfell, Shackleton and Scott; it would be odd indeed if some few schoolboys were not filled with wanderlust after such a series of talks.

Be that as it may, on August 6th 1910 two parties, one under Mr. Paton, one under Mr. Nicholson, left for Germany. The division into two parties, effective only after the actual trekking began, was made because it was impossible to obtain food enough for thirty boys in some of the villages visited. The members of the party were boarded out for the night in Frankfurt by the parents of boys of the Musterschule there.

Throughout the holiday the parties were led by German guides. They travelled a good deal by train and boat, but mostly on foot, camping out whenever possible (though apparently deterred on one occasion by a heavy fall of rain) but sometimes buying meals in hotels and cafés.

The Ulula account, too long to be quoted here, cannot be described as a masterpiece of lucidity. Some careful reconstruction will be necessary before it will be possible to draw up the exact itinerary of both parties, though that of Party B seems clear enough. This party went by boat and train down the Rhine, then trekked through the Taunas, returning eventually to Cologne. Some photographs still exist of the party and of some of its equipment, but we should like all the information it is possible to obtain about this, the first real foreign trek. The party, incidentally, were called the Wanderbirds. The name "trek" had not yet been given to this kind of holiday.

Mr. Nicholson and Doc. Wells combined the following year to lead the Three Shires Route March (which became an annual institution) from Alderley, and in that same summer of 1911 the second foreign trek, to the Black Forest, was arranged. This time passage was made by boat from Grimsby to Rotterdam, then the party made its way through Cologne and Heidelberg to Baden-Baden. During the "route march" proper great difficulties were experienced. Food was scarce and, after a day's semi-starvation, at least two days' supplies were always carried. Forest wardens were not pleased to see fires being lit, and in some places there was difficulty with water. Nevertheless, it seems to have been a thoroughly enjoyable affair.

On the return to Frankfurt a meeting was arranged with some of the local Wandervögel, and a joint excursion held. All in all the party walked about 200 miles, camping, except in very bad weather, and covered a further 700 miles by boat and 1000 miles by rail in three and a half weeks. The total cost for a party of twenty was £110 0s. 0d.; each boy was refunded 7s. 3d. at the end of the trip, so the cost per head was £5 2s. 9d. In 1947 each boy was charged £23 for a month's trek in the French Alps.

The development of trek was diverted at this point by the founding of the School Scouts. Mr. Paton was President, and Doc. Wells the Divisional Commander.

The Scoutmaster of Troop 1, Mr. A. H. Hope, organised a foreign trek in 1912—the word trek here appears for the first time in an Ulula account—an ambitious affair from August 1st to September 15th, costing each boy 42 guineas! The route was St. Malo, Chartres, train to Versailles, Paris, train to Orleans, the Loire Valley, Rennes, St. Malo. Many nights were spent under shelter and many meals were bought, but nonetheless it was a courageous effort. Most of the party were Scouts, but one or two "civilians" went along. The Scouts, indeed, took over many of the camping activities—camping at November half-term, trekking in Belgium at Easter; in August there were two Irish treks, one in Donegal, one in the South West. The only non-Scout trekking of the year was from Grasmere to Buttermere and Patterdale. The School was now thoroughly bitten by the camping and trekking bug, and in 1913 a camp was held at Christmas, and a trek in February, 1914, at half-term!

Up till the outbreak of the war Scouting camps and treks were predominant, then the war put an end to any ambitious trekking, though many camps were held.

In 1919 our story both ends and begins. Ends because it is already over-long for the severely rationed columns of Ulula; begins because in 1919 Mr. H. Green organised a trek in North Wales, the first of that series of Lob-Green treks that continued till 1939. During all this time there were many other treks organised by members of the Staff—many very excellent treks, and no attempt is made to disparage them. But it is true to say that when an MGS boy in those years spoke of going "on trek" he meant with Messrs. Lob and Green. There is by no means sufficient information available about these treks. Ulula, bewildered by the task of having to report a dozen or more camps in one issue, in many years dismisses the whole lot in a couple of paragraphs. The 1920 trek in Brittany is excellently reported by—we presume—Mr. Louis Golding. But by 1922 we are down to "A Scotch trek was conducted by Messrs. Green, Lob, Heathcote, Smith and Radford."

Finally, it must be recorded that trek, interrupted by the second world war, began again in Scotland in 1946. Undeterred by rationing and by the lack of experienced trekkers, Mr. J. Lingard took unto himself the robes of Lob and Green, and in 1947 ventured abroad into the more profound difficulties of the French rationing system. Trek seems as near immortal as most things in this world, but man and man's memory—mortal indeed. So it comes about that we should like to have all the information you possess about trek. Slides from 1926 onwards exist at School. Earlier photographs are scarce. But we shall be grateful for any crumb of information, so that trek and its origins may be remembered in years to come.

At midnight on July 22nd a party of forty officers and boys left London Road, Manchester, under the leadership of Mr. Lingard, on the second post-war trek abroad. Once again our destination was the French Alps, further south this year, however, in the stony fastnesses of the Dauphiné. After a pleasant Channel crossing, we broke our journey to spend two days in Paris, methodically seeing the sights, or aimlessly wandering. On the first afternoon Monsieur Dubu led a party to Versailles.

July 26th saw us on the last stage of our outward journey, going by bus from Grenoble to le Bourg d'Oisans, where the real business of trekking was to begin. After the necessary labour of setting up camp and laying in provisions, most boys spent the day of arrival testing the capacities of the local ice-cream industry and equipping themselves with all the badges and insignia so necessary to the proper enjoyment of any trek.

The two excursions from Bourg d'Oisans were carried out in fine, sunny weather that led some to anticipate a repetition of the phenomenal roasting experienced in Savoy last year, and that made of the first excursion—the climbing of the Signal de Prégentil—a day as memorable and as enjoyable as it conceivably could have been. Having first been tricked by the lie of the land into climbing a useless eminence of height almost equal to that of the Signal, half the party steadfastly refused to attempt the last few hundred feet to the summit. We returned to camp with a liberal supply of blisters and confirmed in the belief that we were sadly out of condition. But the important thing is that throughout a splendid day's walking we enjoyed magnificent views that were only to be equalled once on the whole of the rest of the trek. The second excursion consisted of a high traverse walk to Auris, which some people unaccountably found boring.

The following day we were to trek to St. Christophe, and managed to get a fairly early start which should have ensured us good progress in the vital hours before lunch. As it was, well-meaning but hopelessly out-of-date information about a short cut sent us blazing our own trail through wet, matted undergrowth and over piled stone until we finally emerged on some semblance of a path after making about four miles in as many hours. Thus we found ourselves still faced after lunch with the prospect of making much of our height and by far the greater part of our distance. The day ended with a wearying trek along a metalled road that climbed steeply and, what was worse, monotonously for miles. We finally tumbled into the camp-site at St. Christophe after ten hours journeying, and most of us were surprised to find in ourselves that extra reserve of energy which always appears when there is a camp to be erected and a meal to be cooked.

The following morning many of us were amazed at the charming location of our campsite, which the rains of the previous evening had prevented us from noticing. St. Christophe really was the most beautiful and endearing of all our ports of call and offered a fascinating mixture of the tender and pretty with the hard and grand. On our first day there the climbing of the Tête de la Maye provided one of the best excursions of the trek. This was followed by an attempt the next day to reach the Lac Noir, which ended by climbing the Aiguille Rouge instead. This proved a fateful day, for it saw the first of a series of misadventures which were to alter considerably the subsequent shape of the trek from that planned.

In making the descent Mr. Robinson had the great misfortune to sprain his ankle badly and had to be assisted back to camp with much difficulty. The excursion for the following day was cancelled and a Rest Day took its place, while the problems of getting to La Grave were considered. It had been planned to reach La Grave by two days of trekking, stopping at Chambon overnight. This was obviously impossible with Mr. Robinson unable to walk.

A large lorry was therefore hired, and a party of twelve led by Mr. Robinson and with Monsieur Dubu as interpreter departed on it for La Grave on the first of the two trek days, taking with them the kit and equipment of the whole trek. The rest then set off on foot to walk the generous twenty miles to La Grave. Chambon was reached by mid-day via the Alpe de Vénose, and after a long stop for lunch we tackled the uphill road walk to La Grave. It was a hard twenty miles which started by dropping steeply, then climbed 2,000 feet, only to lose them again and have the worst of its climbing left for the last three hours or so. After seven hours walking time we arrived in La Grave, tired, but triumphant, to find tents ready erected and a meal waiting to be served.

La Grave is a delightfully picturesque little town, and the day that we had gained by our two-in-one walk was left free so that we might examine it properly. The next day—August 5th—there was an excursion to the Meije Glacier which, while being easy, was quite an experience for those to whom a glacier was something new. This was followed by a really splendid, but equally easy, excursion to the Plateau d'Emparis, a high shoulder above La Grave from where we enjoyed some really wonderful views of the Meije—the last of the great Alpine peaks to be climbed. These easily equalled the views on the Signal de Prégentil excursion. A milder form of excitement was provided here by the discovery of an unusually large patch of Edelweiss, which was more than decimated.

Saturday, August 7th, being nasty and wet, we were confined to camp. This day saw another of our misfortunes, for Mr. Robinson's tent-sergeant, Binnion, who had been seeing the local doctor for the previous two days, was removed to hospital in Briançon with an attack of bronchitis. A third member of the same tent had produced some sun blisters of an incredible size, and a fourth had a rough time with abscesses on two of his fingers. Would it be irrelevant to mention that the number on the flap of this particular tent was 13?

On the day following this Mr. Lingard went to examine the country through which lay our next trek, and Mr. Robinson set forth after a week of enforced inactivity to try out his ankle on the Meije Glacier excursion, while Mr. Murphy led the main party on an excursion to the Refuge Evariste-Chancel on the Meije and impressively near Le Rateau. There was nothing difficult about this excursion, but a rainstorm broke just as we reached the Refuge. After spending a long while over drinks and waiting for the weather to clear, we had to resign ourselves to slithering down through about 2,000 feet of cloud back to camp.

On August 9th we set off in the afternoon and had quite an easy trek up to the Chalets de l'Alpe just below the Col d'Arsine, where we bivouacked for the night. And what a night it was, with continual thunderstorms for about five hours and the rain pelting down on, and sometimes through, the tents. The elements were appeased, however, and restrained their wrath while we struck camp next morning and trekked over the Col d'Arsine—where the cloud deprived us of some fine views—and down into Le Monêtier-les-Bains.

From Le Monêtier we only managed one excursion, and that on our first day there. Leaving camp rather later than usual we climbed on to a lower shoulder of the Montagne du Vallon, and from there had a splendid view extending from the Col du Sautaret on our right down to Mount Janus and the Italian frontier beyond Briançon on our left. The following morning we got up after a bitterly cold night to find the previous day's excursion lying under snow, and the snow-ploughs out attempting to clear the main road over the Sautaret pass.

Our proposed climb had to be abandoned, and we spent a cold and squally day flitting alternately between camp and the village, where the caterers reported an unprecedented increase in the sale of honey and toast. Early on the morning of the following day—Friday, August 13th—Mr. Murphy left for home, having heard that his daughter was ill, and it at once became obvious that we must abandon our plan of bivouacking that night below the Col de l'Eychauda en route for Vallonise, as a thick layer of snow not only covered the Col itself but stretched for a considerable distance below it. Finally we gave up the idea of making Vallonise our last campsite, and that afternoon trekked quietly down the road to Briançon, where we probably established a trek precedent by camping on the local football ground.

Saturday, the day we should have spent trekking from the Col de l'Eychauda to Vallonise, was profitably spent viewing the two towns and the citadel at Briançon, while the officers went to the hospital to visit the now normal Binnion. On the Sunday we had a straightforward but extremely pleasant walk to Montgenèvre, and the Italian frontier.

It was on Monday, August 16th, that we had our last and most spectacular excursion. Leaving Briançon early we went by special bus via Vallonise to Ailefroide. From here we walked to the Refuge Cézanne and up the side of the Glacier Noir—one of the excursions originally planned for our stay at Vallonise. Then we rejoined the bus, to collect our mail at Vallonise and return to Briançon by a slightly longer route through Argentières. This was a grand day's outing, but more cause for content was to follow, for as "comble de bonheur" Monsieur Dubu received news of his success in the "Agrégation" examinations which officially established his renown as a scholar of English.

The next afternoon, Binnion having rejoined us, we left Briançon on our way home, and after a tiring but uneventful and comfortable journey, which again was broken in Paris to allow a further day of sight-seeing, we arrived back in Manchester at some depressing and unheard-of hour on the morning of August 20th.

The most notable feature of the whole trek was the smooth and capable organisation of every detail of our life and the excellent and plentiful food which we enjoyed throughout. For these we owe to Mr. Lingard a debt of gratitude and praise which it would take many words to express adequately, the officers as a whole worked hard and well to ensure the success of the venture, but from first to last he was the presiding genius who so ably guided our fortunes. We hope that in the happy memories brought back by the whole party he will find ample reward for all the work and worry which fell to his lot.

1949 FOREIGN TREK - SAVOY

This summer, a wonderful month of trekking in the Savoy Alps has been thoroughly enjoyed by forty officers and boys from MGS Led by Mr. J. Lingard, we followed the same route as was used in 1947, trekking from Bozel into the heart of the Mont Blanc Range, and camping at Bozel, Tignes, Bourg-St-Maurice, Les Chapieux, Les Contamines and Chamonix. Plenty of excellent food, perfect weather, good company and faultless organisation all contributed towards making this an outstanding and most memorable holiday.

Without doubt, the best situated of our campsites was at Les Contamines, a charming little village in a lovely valley overshadowed by snow-peaks, but probably Bourg-St-Maurice was generally appreciated the most, as the two days we spent there coincided with the town's annual celebration, the "Fete of the Edelweiss". A procession of the local beauty, a fun fair and a cycle race provided us with some amusement, and the attractions were so numerous that many of us were forced to lead a life of abstinence for the rest of trek.

As for the actual trekking itself, the business of walking from campsite to campsite carrying all our equipment with us was strenuous, but not unduly exhausting. The hardest of these treks was the journey to Tignes over the ill-famed Col du Palet, a pass of almost 9,000 feet.

Hard in a different way, and certainly the most dreary day of Trek, was the seventeen miles downhill "slog" to Bourg-St-Maurice, which produced an enormous crop of blisters, necessitating many drastic operations, ably performed by Mr. G. I. S. Bailey, our M. O. Perhaps it should be recorded that it was Mr. Bailey, too, who brought colour into Trek by wearing a kilt, thereby arousing considerable curiosity among the French population.

The choice of our most exciting trek is obvious. We spent two days making our way from a wild and desolate Les Chapieux to Les Contamines and passed a night in a deserted Refuge 8,000 feet up on the Col de la Croix du Bonhomme. A notable lack of windows and doors aided the biting wind and intense cold to penetrate through our layers of clothes, and few of us needed to be awakened on the following morning. When we saw that a blanket of snow covered the ground surrounding the Refuge we realised at once the full extent of our suffering, and our opinion of ourselves rose accordingly.

From each of our camps we made one or two excursions into the neighbouring mountains. Every one of these excursions, without exception, was interesting in itself and greatly appreciated by our party. A few, however, deserve special attention. Our first major excursion of Trek gave us the most extensive views we were to see. 5,500 feet may seem to be an excessive height to climb for any view (certainly the most we ever went up in a single day), but when we saw the magnificent panorama which awaited us at the top of Mont Jovet our efforts were hardly regretted. To the south, over seventy miles away, we could see the Meije, the country of last year's Trek, and before our eyes our first view of Mont Blanc! Even the painful sunburn, which most of us suffered as a result, could not detract from the thrill we had experienced.

From Tignes we made our highest point of Trek, the Rochers de Belvedere, a 9,200 feet mountain of terrifying proportions which, at first sight, seemed quite unclimbable without ropes. From a precarious position on the rocky summit we had a remarkable and dramatic view of Val d'Isère 4,000 feet directly below us, a village which we had visited the previous day.

The long climb up to the Col de la Seigne was rewarded by views of a totally different nature from any we had seen before or were to see again. Here the Alps take on a wilder, greyer aspect, reminiscent of last year's Dauphiné Trek. From the Italian side the Mont Blanc Massif looked very rugged and desolate, and Mont Blanc itself seemed but a stone's throw away, an unforgettable sight.

The magnificence of the perspectives from Chamonix quite beggar description, but as we gained height the views became proportionately more wonderful. It was unfortunate that thick cloud, the first of Trek, should have obscured Mont Blanc on our excursion to the Brévent along the most famous high traverse path in Europe.

A delightful excursion was the trip to the Mer de Glace, a vast mass of ice sweeping down from the Mont Blanc Massif. After a short, stiff climb up a wooded path, we found ourselves at the beginning of one of the most exciting adventures provided this year, the actual crossing of a glacier. Putting even more than our usual faith in Mr. Lingard, we slithered past bottomless crevasses (all crevasses are "bottomless"), and across almost half a mile of ice without losing a man! On the other side, the notorious Mauvais Pas awaited us, providing an interesting steep, rock descent, and we ended our excursion with a scramble down through a forest of pines.

It will be of particular interest for former trekkers to hear that, at the fourth attempt, an MGS Trek has finally conquered Mont Joly. This 8,000 feet mountain was a difficult proposition: a long, strenuous climb up grass slopes and seldom-used paths brought us to a shoulder and a Chalet, where we had lunch, but above and beyond us towered the 1,600 remaining feet of black rock, a height which seemed to increase as we watched.

We climbed it. The view from the top, was superb, but it was hardly upon this that we were congratulating ourselves. We had climbed Mont Joly! Photographs of groups and individuals, all in triumphant attitudes, were taken, to furnish proof of the deed. What we would have given for a Union Jack! The descent was no less remarkable. After a fine ridge-walk on the other side of the mountain, with drops of several thousand feet on either hand, we left the path and careered down steep grass slopes, 3,500 feet in less than an hour.

Two days in Paris. A long journey home. Manchester!

Our officers led us splendidly during that month, and we thank them; but our warmest thanks must go, to Mr. Lingard, who worked so hard and led us with amazing efficiency to give us a glorious holiday full of happy memories, for which all our gratitude and praise are inadequate.

1950 FOREIGN TREK - GERMANY

At last, after an interval of many years, it was possible to arrange a trek to Germany and, after a calm crossing to Ostend, where we spent a night, and a tedious journey during which we had to negotiate the “Iron Curtain” of bureaucratic officialdom at Herheshthal and Aachen, we eventually arrived at Bonn—the starting point of our trek.

Space is lacking in which to relate in detail all the experiences which we had, and to describe our twenty different camp-sites, during a trek in which we covered some 345 miles—206 on foot with full kit, 89 by train, 22 by river steamer, 25 by lifts and 3 by tram. From Bonn we climbed up the Venusberg, with its splendid views on to the Siebengebirge on the other side of the Rhine, passed on through Godesberg, Oberwinter, Niederbreisig, Koblenz and Kapellen Stolzenfels to St. Goar. Here from our excellent site high up in the grounds of the Youth Hostel, we had a perfect view on to St. Goarshausen and the Burg Katz opposite, and, after surviving a severe thunderstorm during the night, we spent our first rest day bathing, sightseeing, defeating the Youth Hostellers at soccer and visiting the Rheinfels.

The river steamer “Deutsches Eck” transported us from St. Goar to Rudesheim, and whilst enjoying a civilised meal on board, our cameramen had ample opportunity to make their shots at the Lorelei, the Burg Gutenfels, the Pfalz, the Mäuseturm and at the many other picturesque castles and villages which make this the finest stretch of Rhineland scenery.

From Rudesheim we followed the right bank of the river, and a gruelling 30 kilometre trek in blazing heat brought us to Mainz Kastel, where we had excellent quarters in the Gossnersche Mission, and an evening meal which put at least one member under the table.

From Mainz by the already crowded Basle express, we travelled to Heidelberg. Here we sampled life in a German Youth Hostel, visited the Castle, the City Hall, glimpsed several imposing churches, and did an excursion to Schwetzingen with its Versailles-like Castle and gardens, its fountains, its sculptured river gods, its water-spouting birds, and its impressive Badehaus and Moschee. On our return journey we even saw Colorado beetles, which, presumably, our American friends have dropped!

From Heidelberg we trekked along the Neckar valley to Eberbach in the Odenwald, on to Hetzbach and Michelstadt where the Bürgermeister gave us a special camp-site near the bathing station with free bathing facilities. Our rest day here saw great laundry activities, and in the evening we visited the local Kegelbahn (Skittle-Alley) where, after a course of instruction by the proprietor, teams were chosen and the result announced over the loud-speaker.

The next day’s trek—the only time we had to trek in rain—brought us to Höchst, and to a campsite at the baths and more free bathing. Here also a German and his wife entertained us to folk-songs, with guitar accompaniment, and the evening ended with a general sing-song.

Through Gross Umstadt and Klein Umstadt we passed on, lunched on some excellent Salami sausage, and arrived rather weary at Babenhausen. Now we were out of the Odenwald and next arrived at Offenbach, and were almost washed into the Main by a terrific thunderstorm. However, through the kind agency of Herr Becker and Herr Schuhmann, we spent the night in the warm and well-lit warehouse of the Becker Leather Works.

Our trek then took us on via Frankfurt, Idstein, Wörsdorf, Oberbrechen to Limburg, a delightful city on the Lahn, where we camped opposite the impressive Castle and Cathedral. Then followed our longest trek by Pütschbach, Wallmerod and Herschbach to Freilingen through scenery which rivalled that of the Rhineland. Here our site was, in a clearing of the pinewoods, and Freilingen will always remain a “highlight” in our memories.

On we went to Altenkirchen and then to Uckerath, where we camped on a site overlooking the Siebengebirge, negotiated this range on the following day, came down into Niederdollendorf, ferried across to Godesberg and finally arrived back in Bonn. During our rest day here we saw the Bundeshaus, visited the Poppelsdorfer Schloss, the university, the Münster and Beethoven’s birthplace, sampled more of the famous cherry tart and bought a variety of presents.

The final night, after a hearty meal, we dossed down in various parts of the station platform and picked ourselves up in time to board the 5.20 a.m. train. A speedier journey brought us back to Ostend by early afternoon, and we had a thorough clean-up for our crossing the following day. Thus the tramps arrived back in Manchester about 5.30 a.m. on Sunday, August 13th, with shoes worn down, tired limbs, plenty of dirty clothes, but with a store of happy memories.

The excellent weather, the unfailing friendliness of the German people, who, amazed to see people trekking with full kit, often asked us humorously if we were going to Korea, the continual availability of apples to refresh us, from trees apparently planted for the wayfarer's benefit, all contributed to the success and enjoyment of the trek.

Furthermore, there was no lack of food, and although boys can often eat *ad infinitum*, the remark overheard at Heidelberg of one German to another when they saw us breakfasting—*Die Engländer essen gut*—must at least, be partly true.

1950 FOREIGN TREK - TOUR DU MONT BLANC

During the summer holidays a party of MGS masters and boys, and O.M.s, under the leadership of Mr. J. Lingard, trekked right round the Mont Blanc massif, carrying their own tents and camping equipment. Plenty of exercise and wonderful Alpine scenery, together with the interest of seeing a corner of Italy and Switzerland as well as France, combined to make it a most enjoyable and memorable holiday.

The trekkers assembled at London Road Station on July 15th, to catch the night train for Euston. Soon the gloom of midnight Manchester was exchanged for the sight of an early morning London, the rolling country of Kent, and the salt spray of the Channel which most of us found invigorating. We were met at the Gare du Nord in Paris, by M. Dubu and two French boys from the Lycée de Laon, who were to accompany us on trek. After the night in a Paris school, we were carried on the next stage of our journey half across France to St. Gervais, and thence by rack railway to our first campsite at Col de Voza, where we gained our first views of the Alpine peaks and glaciers. We could also see Chamonix where in three weeks our journey would end—so near and yet so far.

Our first trek took us down to Les Contamines, a pretty little village which provided us with one of our best campsites. From there we climbed Mont Joly for the second successive year, finding none of the difficulties which had defeated previous MGS trekkers. Four days' walking took us over the Col du Bonhomme, past the refuge, which held so many happy if icy memories, for forty-niners, down to Les Chapieux, up in the rain to Les Mottets and over the Col de la Seigne. It was here that we entered Italy, and had our first magnificent view of the summits and Italian face of Mont Blanc. After a detour to the customs post, a long descent took us to Courmayeur, an interesting little medieval town.

At this point a well-deserved rest day gave us a chance to taste Italian ice cream, and to the Italians an opportunity for studying the kilt so gracefully worn by Mr. Bailey throughout the trek. One of our excursions took some of us, after a long rock scramble, up on to the snow-field of the Col du Géant (11,000 ft.) beyond the Torino hut. Satisfied with this climb of 6,800 feet, we descended part of the way by cable-car, which in itself was a fine experience.

The delights of Courmayeur, however, had to be left and after a bivouac we rose at 4 a.m. to pass into Switzerland. We were so early, in fact, that the Customs officials were not yet up, and we crossed the frontier unobserved. Hereabouts we had reached the halfway mark in our anticlockwise circuit of Mont Blanc, and had seen the great mountains and glaciers of the range in constantly changing patterns. This was a photographer's paradise, and Mr. M. P. Smith, energetic and cheerful as ever, took full advantage of it.

Our principal Swiss campsite was at Lac Champex. This, lake-side village is to be remembered for the excellent chocolate in the shops, the festivities of the Swiss National Day, and the visit of Mr. G. V. Cooke who drove up and took a film of the party—the fags had never before been seen to work so vigorously!

A long, cold, wet trek took us to Trient by way of Bovine, where an International Students' working party let us eat lunch in their living room, a converted cow-shed. At Trient the weather robbed us of a fine excursion up to the glacier. Instead we took a short afternoon "drying out" walk. Our last trek took us up to the Col de Balme, over the frontier into France again and down to our last campsite, which was found with some difficulty at Les Praz. It was here that we met another school party—from Scarborough—but they were in a fixed camp and the encounter reminded us of the fact that we have yet to hear of a school running a trek similar to ours.

Chamonix, with its fine views of Mont Blanc, and its colourful streets and shops was a fitting climax to trek. Two interesting excursions were made from here. On the first, we went up through the woods to Montanvers, on to the Mer de Glace, the great sweep of ice which comes down from the Grandes Jorasses, and across to the other side of the moraine, where, after being drenched by a waterfall, we negotiated the notorious Mauvais Pas. The second excursion took us up the Brévent by way of La Flégère, and a long traverse walk which commands wonderful views of the Aiguilles de Chamonix sticking up just like fairy story mountains. Again cable-car provided an easy but worthwhile means of descent.

Back to St. Gervais by electric train and, the circuit completed, we entrained for Paris where we spent the next day sight-seeing. A calm crossing brought us back to Folkestone with its white cliffs, and then to London, eight hours after leaving the French capital. We arrived home early in the morning of August 12th, a month after setting out, having experienced a marvellous holiday. We shall always remember it, and we thank all the officers, and especially Mr. Lingard, for making such an adventure possible.

At midnight on July 14th, a party of 46 masters and boys from MGS, under the leadership of Mr. J. Lingard, left London Road, Manchester, for another trek abroad. This year we were heading for new territory—the Austrian Tyrol—and we were also faced with an unusually long and tiresome journey. By 3 o'clock on Monday afternoon we had arrived at St. Anton and, since it was drizzling with rain, we soon had the tents pitched and were thankful to be able to enjoy the comparative comfort of a sleeping bag.

The weather the following morning was dull and cloudy, but, nevertheless, an excursion of some form was obviously necessary after the last two days spent in the train. Accordingly we set off rather late in the morning on a short walk up the Rosannatal, a thickly wooded valley, where the views were marred, however, by low cloud and rain. The second excursion from St. Anton started off as planned, but it was realised, after a steady climb to the Ulmer Hütte, that the cloud over the Bacher Spitze rendered further progress impracticable, and the descent was made to St. Christoph and thence down the road to St. Anton and into camp.

The first trek was from St. Anton to Lech in the Vorarlberg, and this was a long road march over the Arlberg and Flexen passes with a long gradual drop down into Lech, where we arrived in the heat of the afternoon. Here the party set off to climb the 8,300 ft. of the Mohnenfluh. The last part of the climb up this mountain was a steep zigzag up a rugged face with wonderful views on either side. The marvellous view we expected from the top was, however, only partly seen owing, to cloud!

We left Lech very early on Saturday morning to trek to Steeg, and after an easy climb up the Wösteralm we had a long, seemingly endless, drop through wooded slopes to Steeg; we were rewarded, however, by magnificent views up the valley. The campsite at Steeg was a delightful open piece of land by the river, and the horse flies, for which this village is notorious, were mercifully absent during our short stay.

A bivouac and a trek over the Kaiserjoch lay ahead of us and we spent Sunday morning resting, in boiling heat, in Steeg. During Sunday night we had a thunderstorm, and the following morning the rain only stopped long enough for us to take down the tents and set off over the Kaiserjoch; a long climb and an exceptionally steep descent brought us down to Pettneu where, owing to pouring rain, we abandoned any thoughts of erecting the tents that day and started to look for a barn in which to sleep. We must thank the owner of the Gasthof for allowing us to use his barn as a dormitory and kitchen, and his inn as a dining-room and lounge.

It was still raining when we left Pettneu the following morning on the train to Oetz; however, it was fine, if dull, during our long trek up the Oetzal to Längenfeld. Here we found a delightful camp-site in the trees. Unfortunately we had nothing but rain and low-lying cloud for the next two days, and the excursions to the Hauersee Hütte and the Gamskogel were unavoidably cancelled. Anyhow, the majority of the party seemed to find Längenfeld interesting enough to spend most of their time in the village, only appearing in camp at meal times. One short, steep climb was all we managed.

Friday, July 27th, was fine at last and we made a start for the easy trek up the valley to Sölden. Here we camped on a bare, stony piece of ground which was virtually an island in the river. The first excursion was an ascent of the 9,000 ft. Brunnenkogel, which was achieved in very quick time. The views from the top were magnificent, snow-capped peaks on all sides, and a superb view of the Wild Spitze, the highest peak in this part of the Tyrol.

The next day we set off on a walk up the valley to Obergurgl, there and back 18 miles, a pretty village not far from the Italian frontier. We got our first close views of a glacier on this walk. The following day, Monday, was a rest day in preparation for the three continuous trek days that were ahead of us.

Early the next morning we were on the move back down the valley to Längenfeld, where we laid in three days supply of food, and after a rest, left the village for the second and last time for Gries. For the next two days one member of trek spent his time going back to Sölden and then round to Neustift via Innsbruck, all on his own—apparently he had a craze for pressing “edelweiss,”—further comment would only cause embarrassment.

Anyhow, at 6-45 a.m. on Wednesday, 1st August, we set off to climb over the Winnebachjoch, and descend to Lisens, and what a magnificent trek this was. It lasted altogether just over eleven and a half hours and involved scrambling over rocks and through a small snow field with magnificent scenery all round. Lisens consisted of one cow shed cum house, and one monastery cum hotel.

The following morning we were again on the march very early and made a steep ascent to the 9,200 ft. Horntaler Joch, over snow slopes and a rather dangerous patch of loose rock, heavy going with full pack. From this ridge summit we were rewarded with a magnificent view back over the Winnebachjoch, the scene of the triumph of the day before, and in front over the Stubaital, our destination. A reasonably easy descent brought us to the Franz Senn Hütte and our first civilised meal for some time. The descent from the Hütte to Neustift was very long but enjoyable, and we were soon installed in a new campsite, where we were greeted by our lone and wandering naturalist.

The following day's excursion was cancelled owing to low cloud and we spent the day looking around Neustift, a village which caters principally for tourists. On Saturday, 4th August, we got up at 4-45 a.m., and an hour later about thirty-five of us boarded an open bus for the journey up the valley to Ranalt, from where we were to attempt an ascent of the Mair Spitze. How we all managed to get into the bus and how the bus completed the journey to Ranalt without losing a man is something I have never quite been able to understand—however, we all left Ranalt in pouring rain and climbed to the Nürnberger Hütte.

Here we abandoned the attempt on the Mair Spitze, and instead went over a lower but more difficult ridge, and descended in torrential rain to the Sulzenau Hütte, where we spent two profitable hours drying out. Later we walked back down the road to camp in boiling sunshine, which made it hard to believe that there had been a storm only a few hours before. The following day, low cloud again prevented any excursion, and another day was spent in Neustift.

Monday, 6th August, saw us off on our last trek, to Fulpmes, where we boarded an electric tram for the journey to Innsbruck. We camped just above the Brenner Road overlooking Innsbruck, and despite the mosquitoes this was possibly the best view we had from any campsite. The afternoon and morning of the following day were spent sight-seeing in Innsbruck; three of us might even have seen the inside of the Innsbruck police station if we had not convinced a policeman that we were not young Communists.

On Tuesday afternoon however, we left Innsbruck on the way home, passing through Oetz, Pettneu and St. Anton, three of our other campsites as we journeyed back up the Inntal. The train arrived in Paris early the following morning and we went by underground to the Lycée Louis le Grand where we were to stay for the next two days.

Here we were told that we were to sleep at the Lycée Montaigne—a girls' school—none of the usual occupants being then in residence. What luxury awaited us here; a private cubicle for each person, a soft mattress, and civilisation! The next two days in Paris were a whirl of activity and sight-seeing in this beautiful French capital. It was an extremely happy group that eventually left the Gare du Nord on Friday afternoon and very tired, but bronzed, fit and exceedingly happy, arrived in Manchester at 4-45 a.m. on Saturday morning.

The fact that such a trek can and does take place is due to the smooth and capable organisation of Mr. Lingard, and we owe him a debt of gratitude which it is not easy to express in words; he was capably helped in his task by all the officers. We hope that they will find the reward for their efforts in the happy memories of trek brought back by everybody.

Shortly after 12 o'clock on the night of Tuesday, July 15th, a party of MGS boys and masters left London Road station for the Dauphiné Alps. On Thursday morning we found ourselves in Grenoble and from here a long bus journey up a valley scarred by industry brought us to our first campsite at the pretty little town of Bourg d'Oisans. The remainder of the afternoon was spent exploring the town and the wooded slopes behind camp.

The next day we had a short walk up the valley towards Saint Christophe for the purpose of loosening our limbs after the long train journey. On Saturday, a very hot day, we climbed the Signal de Prégentil, from where we had an excellent view of the higher mountains and the valley up which we were to trek two days later. Another day was spent in walking along the track which could be seen from the campsite high above on the other side of the valley.

On Monday we started on our first trek to the hamlet of Saint Christophe. On this journey we had our first and almost last shower. From St. Christophe we had three excursions. The first was a long road-walk up to La Béarde, from where we were to climb the Tête de la Maye, which promised to be a magnificent viewpoint of the Ecrins and the Ailefroide. But our attempt had unfortunately to be abandoned when thunder and lightning echoed in the valley and the peaks disappeared in angry-looking, clouds.

On Wednesday we climbed up to the Refuge de la Selle and had our first close view of a glacier. On the last day here a small party with Mr. Williams in charge climbed up to the Alpe du Pin, while the rest spent the day resting in camp and in the Hotel des Ecrins. That evening we provided the village with the entertainment for which they had apparently been waiting for four years—a camp-fire sing-song, and were in turn delightfully entertained by a party of Belgians. The evening ended with Auld Lang Syne sung in both French and English.

On Friday we were off again, on a short but gruelling trek back through Bourg d'Arud and over the Col del Venosc to the small village of Mont de Lans. We stayed here only one night and on Saturday we crossed the magnificent Barrage de Chambon and trekked along a dry road to La Grave— I, for one, was too busy drinking water to remember the name of the village at which we stopped for lunch. The following day was spent washing clothes and bodies in the River Romanche.

Monday, the 28th of July, 1952, is famous for being the only wet day on trek. Low clouds completely obscured the mountains all day and no excursion was possible. The postponed trip to the Plateau d'Emparis was held next day under a perfectly clear sky. Here many of us saw for the first time the famous Edelweiss actually growing. Our other trip from La Grave was a short one up to the nose of the Meije glacier, where we saw the magnificent spectacle of an ice-avalanche.

The last day of July was spent bivouacking to the Chalet de l'Alpe, where we pitched camp at an altitude of about 6,000 feet after a hard climb. The early morning of the first of August was spent shivering and waiting for our share of Pom and sardines and before the sun had shown himself we had packed and set off for the Col d'Arsine on our way to Le Monétier. We arrived here early in the afternoon and the rest of the day was spent by most people in the village, but by one certain Falstaffian signing his initials over 150 times on a seemingly endless roll of paper.

Our next excursion was to the Montagne du Vallon. From here we saw the Col d'Arsine over which we had trekked the previous day, the peaks of Italy away to our left and the Col de l'Eychauda. This we climbed the next day and saw the valley along which we were to, ride from Briançon, and Mont Pelvoux itself, just visible through a cloud.

On August 4th, we trekked for the last time to Briançon, where we camped on a sports field at the side of a girls' school, beneath the old town with its citadel and Statue de France towering high above us. It was decided to have the coach-trip to Ailefroide next day and accordingly everyone, except two officers, who very kindly offered to stay behind so that the "fags" could go also, went to this little alpine village (or at least most of the way) in a bus which had to stop occasionally to have water thrown over its engine.

From here we walked up to the Refuge Cézanne, where we had lunch, after which some of us walked further to get a good view of the Ecrins, while others partook of the less strenuous sport of Bridge. The next day a vote was taken, and it was decided (with only the fags voting against the suggestion) that it should be a rest-day, a day famous for a valiant attempt by our "autograph-signer" to show how our primitive ancestors carried water in the main street of Briançon, much to the amusement of the French onlookers.

On Thursday we went on our last excursion, to the Italian frontier—a long walk up a road, then a steep wooded hillside to the Col de Montgenèvre, where we had lunch, and on to Clavières where we crossed the frontier after much joking with the French officials and much arguing with the Italian officials. We stayed in Italy for about half-an-hour, buying souvenirs and sending postcards, and then returned to Briançon where we spent our last night under canvas.

Our last day in Briançon was spent buying presents and spending our last few francs on food and lemonade. At 7-30 that evening we departed from Dauphiné on our long journey, first south and then north to Paris.

On Saturday morning we arrived at Paris where we spent two gay days (although the state of our clothes and pockets prevented us from going too gay) touring the streets and monuments, staying at night and eating at the Lycée Saint-Louis.

On Tuesday morning, exactly a month after setting out, forty-six weary, ragged, dirty but happy bodies arrived at Manchester at some unearthly hour, (one person could not open his eyes wide enough to see the clock so that the actual time cannot be recorded).

I would like to take this opportunity of expressing, on behalf of the trekkers, our thanks to the officers and in particular to Mr. Lingard, without whose work this happy and successful trek would not have been possible.

On reference to the O. E. D. it will be found that a holiday is defined as a day of cessation from work. Trek is called a holiday. A glance at this year's itinerary would appear to give the lie to that, for you would see a succession of treks, and climbs of three or four thousand feet; if a prospective trekker you might notice thankfully a "Rest Day." All hope is dispelled, however, when at the foot of the sheet, you see a cryptic note: "Rest Day = Washing Day". No, for our definition of a holiday, if it must be applied to Trek, we must look at the word itself, for does it not indicate a day of refreshment of the spirit? That is Trek.

For the novice Trek is a most exciting event. The very act of leaving Manchester at midnight on Speech Day, heading for "Paris and the Alps," with all the visions those names conjure up, is exciting. Our destination was Grenoble which as far as the train could carry us. From there a coach made to hold thirty or so carried all forty-seven of us, with a large rucksack each plus camp equipment, up a fascinatingly winding road to La Grave—already we were higher than the peak of Ben Nevis. It was an excellent starting place. Towering above all was La Meije, a magnificent snow-clad mountain which holds a place of honour among the Alpine Peaks both for beauty and difficulty of ascent.

The route of this year's Trek, in the French Alps, was from La Meije to Mont Blanc (Les Contamines) via the Col de l'Infirnet, St. Jean de Maurienne, the Col de l'Iseran, Lac de Tignes, Col du Palet, Bourg St. Maurice and the Col du Bonhomme.

The first Trek—possibly also the most strenuous of all—took us over the Col de l'Infirnet. The preceding night was wet and showed us how much the tents leaked, forcing everybody to sleep under capes. We set off in the morning at the usual unearthly hour (between six and seven), meaning that everybody had been up at half-past five and the fags considerably earlier.

From the top of the pass there was a magnificent view of the Dauphiné Alps and of La Meije, partially hidden by cloud, but with the peak and the lower slopes visible. When our descent from the 9,100 ft. col was accomplished we had still to make our way along the valley to the first village. The path which once was there had been removed by avalanches, so that we were forced to cross an icy cold and fast-flowing stream three times, twice wading and once over a strange relic of the winter—a snow bridge.

Our reception in the village was refreshing, to say the least of it. A party of two dozen or so schoolgirls gazed in awe struck wonder upon "Les Ecosais," Mr. Bailey and Mr. Young, both in kilts and the latter with an up-and-coming beard. On the following morning occurred the first "unbunging." It being the custom in these villages to have a fountain where all the village does its washing, we take advantage of this to wash ourselves therein. Someone having removed the plug, or "bung," of the pool at the base of the fountain (generally a mere trickle) could not again find the hole wherein to replace it, with the consequence that the water, not unnaturally, ran out, leaving the village housewives, who appeared at that moment, with nowhere to do any washing.

After St. Jean de Maurienne, a fine old Cathedral city no bigger than Altrincham, we had one of the least pleasant treks, fifteen miles of hot and dusty road climbing steadily under a blazing sun. We arrived at our destination that evening a weary, footsore and blistered company. The site for the camp was unfortunately not completely sheltered from the wind which blows down perpetually from the Mont Cenis pass and most of the tents had to be taken down for repair.

By a comparatively gentle, but very pleasant trek during which we saw some picturesque Alpine costumes actually being worked in, we reached Bonneval-sur-Arc at the foot of the famous Col de l'Iseran. This village has twenty-six feet of snow in the winter and is built accordingly. The houses have doors at varying levels and have the living rooms below ground level. The animals and humans share the same room, for warmth.

Since we were here camping behind a hotel it was even more noticeable than usual that many trekkers, officers included, or rather particularly, come for other kinds of refreshment than that of the spirit! Incidentally, the "bung" was here again removed.

The Col de l'Iseran was mastered without difficulty, this being the highest point reached on Trek this year, 9,202 ft. At Val d'Isère, the other side of the pass, we received an interesting visitor, in the person of a hairy, lousy old peasant dressed in rags who had read "Manchester" on the tents and, knowing where it was, discoursed at length on the history of Europe from 1800, international relations, and England. It turned out that he was the owner of some land nearby—not the impression given by his appearance.

The trek over the Col du Palet provided some wild and magnificent vistas, and brought us to Peisey-Nancroix, a village not before visited by Trek. The campsite, although procured in a hurry, was fine and possessed a remarkably clear stream which was not too cold for comfort, an unusual state of affairs as they all come from glaciers.

It was at Bourg St. Maurice that the “bung” was most successfully removed; we flooded the streets and made the cows drink soapy water. An excursion from here took us up to the Col du Petit St. Bernard and a few yards into Italy. A fair having been started at Bourg, many disported themselves on Dodgems until the francs gave out.

The hamlet of Les Chapieux, where we spent two days, was practically abandoned—a fate which is stealing over many of the Alpine villages. From this stony place we climbed, up to the Col du Bonhomme.

This Col, in the language of Sellar and Yeatman, was “a very memorable thing.” It was so cold that people said they had never been as cold in their lives before, and they meant it. It was misty, and raining, so that we could not see more than thirty yards in any direction. We froze while Mr. Lingard, worried now, cast around for some trace of the ruined refuge which was to be our shelter for the night. Prospects looked bleak, like everything else.

Mr. Lingard returned, having found a clue, and we dripped a further ten yards into the mist and lo! there was the refuge, not forty yards from where we had been passively and disconsolately waiting. Mr. Roberts and his fags did an amazing job to provide us with hot sausages, Pom, and cocoa. Never had food been so welcome. Some, alas, ate too much sausage fat with disastrous results to which the noises in the night bore witness. In the morning we had our first close-up view of Mont Blanc, but as we stood and stared the clouds rose and removed it from our sight.

From Les Contamines a small party again climbed Mount Joly; a large proportion of the camp, sad to say, were suffering miserably from too much condensed milk and fruit.

A Sybaritic excursion was made by coach to Chamonix, the paradise of the wealthy tourist. Cable railways fan out like a spider’s web from the town to all the surrounding mountains. Over all slumbers Mont Blanc, thousands of feet above, outwardly peaceful, but dangerously magnificent.

Having struck camp for what we thought was the last time, and trekked to St. Gervais Le Fayet, whence trains depart for Paris, it dawned on us that there was a strike! No trains. All closed. “Possibly a train may leave tomorrow at noon.” We pitched camp in a siding, fastened the guys to the rails, drank coffee, slept, and woke to sounds of activity in the station.

Mr. Lingard, by dint of much perseverance, obtained some compartments for us. It was thanks to him that we reached home at all, and spent two enjoyable days in Paris on the way. Thank you, Mr. Lingard and the other officers who made this trek the success it was.

1953 FOREIGN TREK - IRELAND - SCOUTS TROUP IV

During the first three weeks of the summer holidays a party of senior Scouts and old Scouts trekked in County Mayo. At the first campsite, near the Holy Mountain of Croaghpatrick, the Atlantic gales which swept the campsite gave rise to some anxious nights. Eventually there was a respite in the weather, and taking full advantage of this, a party made a successful ascent of Croaghpatrick.

Continuing the trek we moved to Mulranny from where many expeditions were made and in the course of which we had the thrill of visiting some of Grace O'Malley's pirate castles.

The final campsite was at Keel under the shadow of Slievemore on Achill Island. The weather, scenery and beaches combined to make this a perfect campsite. Major expeditions from here scaled the Minaun Cliffs, Slievemore and as far as Achill Head.

Once again we express our appreciation to Dr. Wm. Brockbank for his fine organisation of this trek.

The date of the Annual Reunion has been fixed provisionally for Friday, 18th December, at 7, p.m. in the School Lecture Theatre. This year, besides colour slides, we can show a colour movie film of the Snowdon Camp.

A party which arrived at St. Gervais-Le-Fayet one Friday morning in mid-July was much stared at, even by the regular inhabitants, who are accustomed to many queer tourists. Rather pallid legs, and in many cases rather bony ones, half concealed by garments which were probably meant to be shorts, though some were obviously skirts of a type not often seen, whose owners, like snails, were carrying enormous rucksacks and dixies still begrimed with soot from previous usage, made up an uncommon sight.

It was another MGS Trek, this time aiming to repeat the Trek of 1950, the circuit of the Mt. Blanc massif. The party drank cups of coffee and nibbled any remaining lumps of sugar, photographed itself, and packed itself into one carriage of a little Mountain Railway.

This carried the adventurers up 3,000 feet to the Col de Voza, at 5429 feet, which was quite expected to be under arctic conditions, as snow had been reported down to 5,000 feet in the French Alps. The snow, however, had vanished three days earlier, so the party pitched its brand new turquoise tents and surveyed the surrounding countryside.

The view was breathtaking. All the west side of the massif was visible, with peaks towering up to nine or ten thousand feet above the puny little camp, some wearing little veils of cloud, but all too proud to be modest. As the sun sank the snow peaks glowed pink before turning a ghastly white as the sun left even them. Also as the sun sank the sweaters came out, of many colours and queer shapes. It was cold that night.

The next day's trek was short and easy, but good training for what was to come. It ended in Les Contamines, which used to be quite unspoiled, though now is becoming less so. Soon camping is to be forbidden within the Commune, a policy supported by the hotel keepers, who fail to see the folly of it; the loss of money which may result to the village as a whole. Perhaps more serious, but not likely to influence the hotel keepers, is the loss which may occur to their country of people with the camping spirit. Trek camped on the ice rink. Fortunately there was no ice. It was rather like Ilkley Moor—Trek ate the local food and the horseflies ate Trek. But under that sun few could be without hats.

The day after arrival there was an excursion, that is a walk without kit, to the Glacier de Trélatête, which impressed more by reason of the enormous narrow gorge it had carved for itself than by its ice, which, though visible, was inaccessible and covered in rubble as usual.

The next day the party climbed Mt. Joly, the third successful ascent by a Trek, from the summit of which good views were obtained, though most of Mt. Blanc was hidden in cloud. The descent, over steep grassy slopes, was not entirely accomplished standing!

During the stay at Les Contamines it was very hot indeed. Rubber groundsheets were said to melt if left in the sun.

The day after the ascent of Mt. Joly, at about 2 o'clock in the afternoon, the Trek "bivouacked" to Nant Borrant. A bivouac is usually shorter than a trek, but the chief difference is that it starts eight or nine hours later, after a large meal. Nant Borrant consists of three cow sheds and a woodpile. A very pleasant campsite in a lovely upper valley.

An early start brought them to the top of the ill-famed Col du Bonhomme, which last year's trekkers will remember for ever. This year it was sunny and almost genial. A party of French schoolboys should be thanked for carrying some of the kit up the last leg to the top. It is a very steep drop down to Les Chapieux and from far above we could see a battalion of Chasseurs Alpains on manoeuvres. They looked like ants.

After a bivouac to Les Mottets, the Col de la Seigne was climbed after an early start which had entailed the fags rising at 3-30 a.m. The view from the top was superb, Mt. Blanc appearing a mere stone's throw away. The trek down was hot and dusty, interrupted by lunch and the Italian customs, who insisted bureaucratically on stamping all passports without inquiring whether or no they bore any relation to their owners.

It was after a tired party had half pitched their shading tents in the hot Italian sun, that Mr. Robinson announced gently that there was a notice in front of the camp saying "No Camping" in four languages. Mr. Lingard went off to see the Mayor of Courmayeur and after a time came back to announce that they could stay two nights out of the scheduled four. Later Mr. Lingard went again to the Mayor. An agreement something like this was reached: "Yes, you may stay, provided that it is clearly understood that I have given you no permission whatsoever to stay." They stayed, moving their tents from directly behind the notice, as Authority wished, to make the disobedience less visibly flagrant.

The best excursion of the Trek was made from here, to the Refugio Torino and the Col du Géant, at 11,090 feet. It being after rest day, half the party had tummy trouble. They ascended the last 5,000 feet by cable railway and were sick while waiting for it, while in it and while out of it! The view, however, was compensation enough. Conditions being practically perfect, the Alps for a distance of up to seventy miles were visible all round. A most enjoyable day! The next day there was an excursion to Lac Chécruit.

By a bivouac and two treks, the first over the Grand Col Ferret into Switzerland, Lac Champex was reached. Here they slept on Dunlopillo grass and dazzled the Swiss with a display of athletic prowess in the races of the fête on National Day. Mr. Bailey, with swishing kilt, won the veterans in fine style. Hilton and Newton, first and second in their event, were carried down the main street in triumph. To show no ill feeling Mr. Stalker's conqueror in the 100 m was treated similarly.

By a short but steep trek, during which there was a marvellous view of the upper Rhone valley and the Bernese Oberland, Trient was reached, nestling in its steep-sided valley. Except for the fact that nearly every tent was pitched on one or two ants nests, this was a very pleasant campsite.

After another early start the last trek was made, over the Col de Balme into Chamonix. The magnificent view of the whole massif from the Col was the same as that from the Col de Voza, only from the other end. The circuit was nearly complete.

It was a dusty crew, half asleep and very, very hot, which arrived at the regulation camping ground in Chamonix to find it apparently full. Mr. Lingard and Mr. Williams went hunting and found a campsite which most single-tent campers would not have considered big enough, but Trek crammed eleven tents into it! A few had to be tied together, there being no room for guys. After the first night many people were observed picking large quantities of heather and stuffing it under their groundsheets. One person, at least, woke up on the path outside his tent. And when it rained it was fun. But that was only on the last night and anything is bearable on the last night.

From this delectable spot two excellent excursions were made. The first was to the Mer de Glace, a tourist coated glacier, which the party crossed, stopping occasionally to find out how slippery it was near the numerous bottomless holes and cracks.

The second was the high level traverse walk from the Flégère Hut to Planpraz, three miles or so, all at 7,000 feet, and giving the most lovely changing views of the Mont Blanc range. The final ascent of the Brévent was called off because we arrived so late at Planpraz, but only a very few stalwarts objected.

Then there was a free day in Chamonix, where many indulged in steak and omelettes and such like foods, to make up for the abstinence which they imagined they had been practising for three and a half weeks.

Congratulations are here due to Messrs. Young, Roberts and Williams on making a successful ascent of Mt. Blanc while the rest of the party gorged itself, or slept.

The journey home, unlike last year's experience in the strike, was uneventful. A day and a half were spent sightseeing in Paris as usual. Enormous quantities of fish and chips were consumed in London at midnight, also as usual.

Thank you once again Mr. Lingard, and the other officers, for making this holiday so enjoyable.

Trek always starts in a flurry of excitement: the feverish last-minute arrangements, the rush to the station and then the journey across Europe to the chosen peaks. This year trek overwhelmed the Austrian Tyrol. Early on July 14th all the fifty-three trekkers started on the first stage of the assault. The journey was long, but never tedious, and we rushed through London, through Folkestone and across the Channel. At Calais we boarded the Arlberg Express which took us the length of France, past the limpid lakes of Switzerland to St. Anton in Austria, which was to be the bridgehead of our attack.

Freshened by a night's rest to restore us after the rigours of our travels, we set out from St. Anton on an easy walk up the Rosannatal, a pleasant valley with heavily wooded sides falling steeply to the turbulent stream below. Our next excursion was more vigorous, a hard climb up the valley and over the snow to the Ulmer Hütte. After an exhilarating scramble down over the snow slopes and the heather-clad hillside we came down to St. Christoph and walked down the main road to St. Anton.

The following day, Monday, we had an easy bivouac up the winding main road to St. Christoph, a small village of a couple of hotels and a tourist shop. Tuesday dawned in drizzle, which increased to a heavy rain as the day grew older. We walked along the road that led to Lech, a road carved in sweeping curves from the bare hillside, and as we walked we sang with vigour and abandon. Our songs quickened our pace and dispersed the rain, and we marched down to Lech at ten in the morning after four hours' brisk trekking. We found a pleasant site outside the town, pitched camp and relaxed under a hot sun.

From Lech we set off on a fine excursion to the summit of the Mohnenfluh, a great rock of 9,000 feet towering above the foothills. We climbed over banks of snow and ice, up a rugged zigzag path up the final face and found ourselves on the summit with Austria spread beneath our feet. It was a magnificent view, and even the low clouds could not subdue the grandeur of the mountains.

Our next move was a bivouac up to the Wösteralm: we climbed the ridge with dark thunder-clouds hanging over us, and as we reached the top of the col, the mist enveloped us, and it was only with difficulty that we found the track, which was covered by recent snows. We dropped down the steep hillside in search of a suitable site. We picked one, pitched tents and ate a hurried meal under lowering clouds. The Pom was hardly cold on our plates before the rain fell in solid sheets of water that drummed on the taut canvas: soon several tents were flooded out, and other tents on drier sites were rescuing those evacuated from their drowned kit. Morning found us damp but not dispirited, and a pleasant trek took us down the valley to Steeg, where we camped on a level site beside the river.

After a night's rest we set off on a bivouac to the Kaisertal a delightful walk up a green valley in fine weather—a fact remarkable in itself, for this year's trek was the wettest continental trek on record. Next morning we set off early and after a long climb we reached the top of the Kaiserjoch, where Mr. Williams, with his customary efficiency, laid on hot coffee for us all at the climbing hut before the sharp descent to the small village of Pettneu. Indeed, Mr. Williams, who was leading his first trek, should be complimented on his smooth organisation: on every occasion he most capably and efficiently made all possible arrangements, and with Mr. Raistrick and Mr. Cooke as interpreters he overcame all the difficulties that arose at our various campsites. He is a worthy successor to Mr. Lingard: there can be no higher praise than that.

At Pettneu the first half of trek came to an end. We were up early on the Monday morning and caught the 6-45 train up the valley to Oetz station, where we ate brötchen and drank coffee before beginning the long and tiring tramp along the road to Langenfeld. By the time we had walked the eighteen miles to our campsite among the trees outside the village, there was not a man among us who was not footsore and weary. That night at his evening surgery Mr. Stalker had many patients—all of whose blisters he pierced with a steady hand and obvious delight.

After two excursions from Längenfeld—one to the turquoise waters of the Hauersee, the other to summit of the Gamskogel in a persistent drizzle we had a short trek up the valley to Sölden. It was a pleasant walk along a road that twisted up the steep mountain side, made eventful only by the reckless speed at which the local bus drivers roared round the bend at the wheels of their great coaches, to the complete disregard of our lives as we pressed ourselves against the rocks at the side of the road.

After a rest day at Sölden, which we spent washing clothes and visiting the local inns, we went on two excursions, the first to Obergurgl, a small village set in the high mountains near the Italian border, the second to the top of the 9,000 ft. Brunnenkogel.

The next day we set out on what was to prove a great climax to this year's trek: three days continuous trekking over the Winnebachjoch and the Horntaler Joch. We trekked down from Sölden back to Langenfeld where we stocked up with provisions for the two days we were to spend isolated from civilisation. Then loaded up with individual rations of bread, butter, jam and sardines we set off up the winding track to the little village of Gries which was to be our starting point.

Early next morning we struck camp and followed the local mountain guide up the valley. We slowly wound our way up the hillside and up to the Winnebachsee Hütte where the proprietor had prepared hot soup for us: then we began the hard climb up the rugged mountain to the final ridge. We trekked over the glacial moraine and the hard snow, where the experience of our guide proved invaluable, to the top of the col. There we rested until the clouds grew black and the stiff breeze bit into us with its cold drizzle. We crossed a steep snow slope with the help of the guide's rope, and set off down the long descent to Lisens in the bottom of the valley.

That night the rain fell steadily and remorselessly, and we left the village in the cold greyness of the morning drizzle. We climbed up from the valley floor, and after trekking along the hillside we were faced with a hard scramble up the precipitous slope that lay below the top of the col. With great difficulty we reached the top, slipping and staggering on the rocks that lay, dangerously insecure, on top of loose shale. We were all relieved when we stood safely in the eddying mist on top of that knife-edge ridge. We did not delay, but pressed on down the other side, and pausing only for a bowl of delicious hot soup at the Franz Senn Hütte, we at last reached the small town of Neustift. These two treks were two wonderful days of hard walking and exhilarating climbing: they were superb.

Our sojourn at Neustift this year was noted for two things. The first was Paul Whittle's daring experiment in the galley: his cuisine was at all times progressive and usually generally acceptable, but at Neustift he produced his tour de force, a genuine suet pudding—with five pounds of suet— which was enthusiastically received.

It was from Neustift, too, that we made our finest excursion, the ascent of the Mair Spitze. It started in a remarkable fashion, with forty-five of us crowding into the open body of the local bus—a twelve seater—and with people clinging to the back and hanging over the edge we rushed at prodigious speeds up the twisting tracks that led up the valley. We leant into the bends as the yachtsman leans into the tacking of his ship, and watched for potholes on the road ahead as the sailor keeps his weather eye open for catspaws that betray the sudden squall.

We left the bus, and in beautiful weather reached the summit of the Mair Spitze: before us lay the magnificent panorama of the snow-covered mountains of the Italian border. It was a clean crisp day, and the hills lay bright and newly washed in the sunshine: it was a memorable sight.

From Neustift we had two pleasant short treks along the valley to Mieders and then down the Brenner road to a fine campsite outside Innsbruck which lay mistily below us.

Next day Mr. Roberts held his last bank, and we set off to spend our savings in the beautiful city of Innsbruck. We spent it in various ways: we spent it on a la carte meals; on presents for friends and family; on food for the journey home; and in the case of John Mills, who was the proud wearer of the official trek beard, in being shaved in the little shop of Mathias Martin, Friseur.

Soon it was time for Mr. Bailey to hold the last galley fag: soon we set off on our last trek, down to the train. It had been a memorable experience. We had gained a new leader, we had walked in a fine country. If we had more than our share of bad weather—well it was 'character-building', even though Mr. Cooke summed up all our feelings when he said that character was no longer on premium.
