

## ULULA ACCOUNTS OF FOREIGN TREKS 1956 - 1973

In 1956 Ian Bailey started a series of annual Scottish Treks.

### 1956 FOREIGN TREK - DOLOMITES

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The start of a long journey is always exciting and the ensuing travelling tends to be boring in comparison, as eagerness for the destination will not urge the train to greater speed.

The forty hour journey to Dobbiaco, just to the north of the Italian Dolomites, fortunately had much to interest the party of fifty three trekkers, who were to tramp in country unvisited by MGS. for over twenty years. A meal in London; a train that leaked enormous quantities of rainwater in a thunderstorm, on the way to Dover; a night ferry to Ostend and then a train whose destination was the magic city of Venice.

Even living in cramped compartments for a day is bearable when the names on the stations are Bruges, Ghent, Cologne, Stuttgart, Munich, and Innsbruck. We left the train at Fortezza, a small junction for the Val Pusteria, from both sides at once. Mutual consternation was relieved when the train left and the party reunited. Everyone was checked present. After three hours of very early morning had been passed in sleeping, walking, eating or reading we boarded the local diesel train which took us up the Val Pusteria to Dobbiaco, where we arrived at about half past eight.

The campsite was three kilometres away along the main road. Bright Italian sunshine soon woke up fifty three pairs of bleary eyes; stiff limbs and heavy loads were soon forgotten as we once more breathed fresh air. Torrential rain that afternoon made Mr. Williams comment about his being followed by bad weather. He was soon proved incorrect. The next morning, cloud and mist cleared and hot sunshine poured from a cloudless sky.

The objective of the first excursion was the summit of the Sarlkofl, whose lower rocky faces were visible from the camp. It proved a tough 'breaking in' walk, due to the unaccustomed heat. An excellent view of the Austrian Alps was seen across the Val Pusteria, a wide fertile valley which separates the Austrian from the Italian mountains. Looking south, the Dolomites through which we would soon be trekking made a jagged, almost lunar, landscape.

The Dolomites have comparatively few lakes for a mountainous region. Seeing on the map that the next campsite was almost on the shore of Lago di Landro many hopes were raised for a cooling bath. On arrival these hopes were sharply lowered by the discovery that the lake had almost dried up and a knee-deep puddle was all that remained.

We camped by a station on the narrow-gauge electric railway from Cortina. The site was dominated by the lop-sided teeth of Monte Cristallo. To one side of the valley was M. Piano up whose apparently sheer face we set out to climb the next day.

A good path which deteriorated rapidly was the remains of a mule track used in the 1914-18 war. In places, especially on the stone-chutes common in the region, the track had completely disappeared and great care was needed when crossing them. At one particularly difficult place Mr. Roberts came to the rescue, providing a vital foot or handhold as required. Delay caused by this was spent by some of the party on a ledge nearly two thousand feet above the valley floor; they were cheered considerably during this time by the ever cheerful Mr. Crowther who provided unending witty comments on rock climbing. The top was gained by a tunnel cut in rock, being a remnant of wartime activity. At various times shells, foxholes and trenches were seen.

On arriving at Lake Misurina the next evening, to bivouac behind the police station (as we thought), the Carabinieri took one look at the assembly and said 'No!' Persuasive Italian from Mr. Roberts about 'tired little boys' had no effect and we had to trek back to the head of the lake to an alternative site. That night there was severe frost and extra clothing was welcome.

The top of the Tre Croci pass was reached early the next morning and because of the already great heat, Mr. Williams decided to walk straight down to Cortina instead of visiting the Faloria refuge for lunch, which would have meant another twelve hundred feet of climbing. The town of Cortina is very modern and seems to have mushroomed on account of the recent winter Olympic games. Most of the buildings are built in a pleasant modern alpine style.

After lunch in Cortina a five kilometre walk was necessary to bring us to the official campsite. The shade temperature was over 80°F and made this hard work. A deep pool in the river below camp was soon found and provided a quick and convenient way of cooling down.

The weather became unsettled next day and because of a threatening thunderstorm the bivouac up the Val Cenera was foreshortened and camp pitched in a sloping meadow. The storm did not materialise and a dry fag ensued. The following trek took us over the Forcella di Giau to Selva di Cadore and on to Caprile. Lunch at Selva was supplemented by large quantities of fresh peaches. The record number eaten by one person was said to be seventeen!

At Caprile several people were struck with stomach disorders, mainly on account of a surfeit of sun and fresh fruit. The next morning Mr. Crowther's medical fag was a busy one. A short excursion, for those who were fit, was organised and proved a rewarding one. M. Fernazza was climbed and two rare lilies were found and photographed by Mr. Young during the day. From the summit excellent views of M. Pelmo and M. Civetta were seen; they are both magnificent peaks.

Monday the thirtieth of July was rest day. On trek rest day usually means wash-day, but this day was spent by some convalescing and by the others, in or on the nearby lake of Alleghe. Messrs. Crowther, Healey, and Young had a private excursion up M. Civetta.

Trekking to Penia was a tiring slog along a white, dusty, limestone road, but life-saving orangeade was bought by Mr. Williams at the top of the Fedaiia pass. Other features of this trek were walking through the Sottoguda gorge where the road is built over a roaring torrent and the views of the snow summit of the Marmolada, the highest peak in the Dolomites.

The next day we trekked from Penia to Mazzin which took two hours, the last thirty minutes of this being down the famous Dolomite road from Bolzano to Cortina. At Mazzin we were visited by Mr. and Mrs. John and Mr. and Mrs. Lingard, who were touring by car. Mr. John and Mr. Lingard joined the party for what proved the best excursion of trek; up the Val Vajolet to a refuge underneath the Vajolet towers and the Rosengartenspitze (so called because of its colouring at sunset) thence to the Passo Principe, over the Passo Antemoia to the lake and hut of the same name. Several people, including Mr. Young and Mr. Healey, bathed in the lake at over eight thousand feet.

From Mazzin there was a short, extremely steep bivouac to above the town of Campitello. The site was one to please a purist: absolute isolation in the heart of the mountains.

A short trek over the Col Rodella the next morning brought us to Plan di Gralba about half way up the Sella pass. On the way the party invaded the Sella pass refuge where delicious hot soup was provided from trek finds.

Two fine excursions from Plan di Gralba were unfortunately marred by a temporary break in the weather. The first was through the Langköfel group of peaks. This excursion is mentioned in books about the area as providing excellent views. The path goes over a narrow col, at about eight thousand five hundred feet, between two ten thousand foot mountains, to the Vicenza refuge. Here, because two climbers, lost in the tremendous rock face above the hut, were being listened for, we had lunch indoors. It rained for the first time during an excursion, on the way back to camp.

The second excursion, the day after, was into the Sella group of mountains. These form a plateau over nine thousand feet high. We climbed initially to the Pisciadu hut for lunch, reaching it after an exciting rock climb, assisted by wire ropes and stanchions, for the last few hundred feet. After a discussion it was decided to walk over the plateau to the other side of the Sella pass and return to camp over the latter. This took a further five hours, during which time the Boè refuge was visited, which at nine thousand four hundred feet was the highest point on trek.

On the following day, Tuesday, we bivouacked on the Alp of Siusi. This is a unique expanse of pasture over seven thousand feet high. It is surrounded by a magnificent panorama of mountains and has a characteristic flora. We trekked across the Alp the next morning to Bagni di Razzes near Siusi. The weather had now become so hot that nothing seemed to be so pleasant as cold water, and once spud fag was completed a party set out for the local swimming bath. Used to peace and quiet the superintendent asked the exuberant trekkers to 'go less quickly, please!'

The next excursion was to climb the Schlern which towered majestically and precipitously above our heads, in camp. The summit was reached after three hours climbing. On a slope near the top a large expanse of the much sought after Edelweiss was seen and photographed. The view from the summit is noted for its extent, but the heat haze cut the limit considerably. The snowcapped Austrian peaks were plainly visible to the north and east. To the southwest the Brenta Dolomites could just be seen. Looking back over the Alp of Siusi the Sella and Langköfel groups could be seen with the Marmolada behind.

One of the charms of the Dolomites is that they stand for the most part in groups of peaks or singly. These are easily walked round and thus the mountains in all their aspects can be appreciated readily. Another charm is that they are not too high to be appreciated from low levels as the higher mountains in Switzerland and France tend to be. We were able from one vantage point to see the route of a fortnight's trekking and similar views are obtainable from most of the higher points of the mountains.

The trek to Santa Cypriano near Tiers was made unpleasant by heat, but the campsite provided a wonderful view of the Vajolet towers and the Rosengartenspitze which we had seen more than a week before from the other side.

To avoid the heat we set off early next morning for Bolzano which was reached in time for lunch. A thunderstorm broke at this time and we were surprised to see mortar shells being fired into the clouds by the army as the storm came up the valley. What the reason was for this we did not know. Possibly the explosions caused the storm to disperse.

It was at Bolzano that we had the first wet campsite. Fortunately the sun returned and the weather soon settled down to be fine again.

As a climax to a magnificent trek Mr. Williams announced that the rumours passing round were true as it was possible for trek to visit Venice for a day. We set off at a quarter to four in the morning for the station, carrying our breakfasts to eat in the train. As a result of this early start, eight hours of sight-seeing, feeding, riding in gondolas and souvenir hunting were possible in the city of canals. Many Italian meals were eaten and many feats of route-finding performed among the maze of canals and narrow streets. Twenty two hours later we arrived back in camp where Mr. Healey and the Pritchard brothers had been valiantly defending the site against hordes of predatory motorists.

Mr. Healey held his last bank next morning and everyone departed to the town to spend their remaining lire on food and souvenirs. After the last 'bomb' meal, speeches were made, photographs taken and Mr. Roberts should have held the last galley fag. Since, however, he and Mr. Williams were engaged in hunting a passport mislaid in the Venice train, the packing up was done by deputies. And so the last trek, into the town, very heavily loaded, took place at night with an improvised tail light of a torch. At one o'clock in the morning we boarded the train from Venice that we had left the night before, and except for the journey home, Trek 1956 had finished.

Good weather makes any holiday enjoyable, but besides good weather, this trek was remarkable for the wonderful Dolomite scenery and excellent campsites. It was sad to say farewell to such veteran trekkers as Paul Whittle and Steve Richardson: they and the other junior officers had carried out their manifold duties with all their usual verve and enthusiasm. Mr. Williams summed it up as one of the best and most beautiful treks he had been on, and to him especially, and to the other senior officers the rest of trek give their grateful thanks.

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Trek this year started, as it always has done, under the grimy portal of London Road Station—scenery far removed from that to come. The hour was ungodly—7-15 a.m., but contrary to expectation everyone arrived complete and the journey began. This was short by comparison with last year—a mere twenty eight hours—but was just as uneventful. It took us to London, to Calais, to Basle and finally through Switzerland to Martigny, a small town in the Rhone Valley where we arrived at 11 a.m. The final stage of the journey to Lourtier, our starting point, was by bus.

This run of about thirty miles was notable for two things. The bus had a sliding roof which obligingly opened to let the sun in and closed to keep the rain out. The driver had less respect for life and limb than we did: he proceeded to hurl the bus at hairpin bends and ignore the fact that vehicles drive on the right hand side of the road and not all over it. However, the climb up to Lourtier was completed without mishap, and, after leaving the bus, we walked a short distance through the village to camp on a piece of common land. The tents seemed to be at impossible angles, so precipitous was the ground, but no one disappeared in the night so all was well.

Although the weather was dull with intermittent rain, after an afternoon of rest on the Friday we set off the following morning to climb Mont Brulé, a peak to the South-west of Lourtier in an attempt to see Mont Blanc from a reasonable distance. The rain cleared to give us clear skies and hot sun for most of the day but lack of time prevented us from reaching the summit.

The rain came again during the night and it was still raining the following morning when we trekked for two hours up the valley to Fionnay, a sprawling untidy village where life was dominated by the Grande Dixance. This is a gigantic scheme of dam building and tunnel boring, intended to harness the glacier waters for hydroelectric purposes. We were to see much more of this as trek progressed and even on the last trek into Zermatt we saw the river waters being diverted through the mountain side.

The tents were pitched in the rain on the hillside a little way out of the village. It was here at Fionnay that, surely, trek history was made. The rain continued all night and Mr. Womersley's Herculean battle with the elements for three hours the following morning resulted in breakfast which was served to trek in bed!

The proposed excursion to a hut in the Grand Combin range had to be abandoned and instead trek had to be content with a damp amble up the valley during which the first of the great dams was seen in process of construction at Mauvoisin.

The following day the weather cleared and in the afternoon we struck camp and set off on a steep climb up the Val de Severeu with the intention of bivouacking near a mountain hut called Le Dâ. After the recent bad weather the snow line was several thousand feet lower down the mountain side than normal for that time of year and so it was in snow that we camped at Le Dâ. This was a 'bivvy' site to end all 'bivvy' sites—utterly desolate and miles from anywhere. Only six tents were pitched and into two of these all the kit was stacked. The occupants of four tents slept in the hut and in a low building nearby, christened 'The Pigsty.' The remainder of trek crammed itself into the other four tents.

During the night it froze hard so that the following morning the Pom left in the plates from the evening meal had to be chipped rather than washed away. The fags arose at three thirty, breakfast was served at five o'clock and it was then that we all witnessed the most beautiful of Alpine sunrises. The sun rose behind us and tipped peaks of the Combin range across the valley from us with a rich orange, whilst all the rest lay in deep shadow. The effect was heightened by the fact that this was the first time that the high mountains had been seen at all.

During the day that followed we climbed up to the Col de Severeu in brilliant sunshine and towards the end of the ascent the leaders worked extremely hard kicking steps, so deep was the snow. Progress was necessarily slow but when the top was reached the hard work was rewarded by our first view of Mont Blanc, the dome-shaped top of which appeared over the nearest ridge. The descent from the Col was equally steep but of course much more rapid and it was a very weary party that pitched camp near Pralong in the shadow of the great dam dominating the Val des Dix.

The seven hours spent walking over snow fields in the sun began to have their effects. Sunburn raised blisters on knees and faces: sore eyes called for shade and sunglasses. Hence the following morning Mr. Williams decided that trek was not fit for an excursion and those worst afflicted set off with Mr. Womersley, our medical officer, to a hospital set up for the labourers working on the dam. Everyone was given an injection and the party came away armed with creams and lotions and eye ointments which were applied to the sufferers back at camp.

First, a vermilion coloured antiseptic was applied, then a thick white cream and finally, a dark blue eye ointment. The overall effect was a face covered with raspberries and cream, and the laughter which this produced did much to raise fallen morale to a more normal level. We were all extremely grateful for the kindness and generosity shown us by the Swiss doctor and nurses and recovery was satisfactorily rapid.

The weather the next day was overcast and in the early afternoon we set off back the way we had come two days before. We bivouacked at a delightful spot at the head of the Val des Dix two or three kilometres beyond the end of the dam. The site was a flat piece of ground beside the river and on all sides mountains, the names of which were to become very familiar, towered above us.

Another six o'clock start was made the following morning and we climbed up to the Col de Riedmatten, where we stopped for a welcome rest and a look at the panorama stretching before us. From here was obtained one of the first views of the Matterhorn, which appeared as a tiny point above the clouds in the distance. From the Col we descended a short distance, had lunch in the hot sunshine, and then strolled gently down into Arolla where we were to stay for two nights.

The tents were pitched on a rather angular site in a wood by the river. The lats and tophat were dug, shopping bag, wood bag and medical bag were carried out and after these normal routine tasks everyone was free to wander into the tiny village or spend the afternoon in the tent reading or writing or playing cards.

The head of the Val d'Arolla is dominated by a superb mountain, Mont Collon, and the excursion from Arolla led us right beneath it. We climbed over a glacier to the Col de Bertol which we reached in thick mist and over which an icy wind blew. There was great amusement on the way down when Mr. Roberts was asked by a member of a small climbing party whether they should rope up or not.

With the holiday nearly half over walking was becoming less tiring and the following day we set off on a very pleasant easy trek down the valley to Evolène, where we camped on a strip of grassland lent to us as a great favour by the grocer. We were given strict instructions not to walk across the strips adjoining ours since this would flatten the grass on which the villagers depend to feed their animals during the winter.

A pleasant excursion the next day took us to the Bricola Alp from which we had a fine view of the Dent Blanche, one of the highest peaks in the Valais Alps.

And so to Wednesday: July 31st and Rest Day. This was spent by many in washing dirty clothes and grimy bodies and by others wandering in and around Evolène, taking photographs, eating and sunbathing in the fierce heat.

The following afternoon after a bomb meal and a siesta we climbed out of the Val d'Herens up to the Alp Cotter where we bivouacked. Despite the fact that we had walked in the late afternoon the heat was terrific and the climb was very hard work. However our labours were rewarded by an idyllic site and a glorious sunset, with genuine Alpine glow.

The trek the next morning followed the familiar pattern up to a Col, this time the Col de Torrent, where we had more fine views, then down a short way for lunch and finally the descent to the campsite, Grimentz. This was a charming village with a narrow cobbled main street and window boxes full of flowers in every house. In the middle of the campsite on a slope above the river was a large boulder on which Mr. Healey demonstrated his climbing prowess.

After only one night at Grimentz we trekked across and down the valley and then up again to St. Luc, a village perched on the mountainside. The campsite was two kilometres out of the village and was made somewhat unpleasant by the presence of thousands of huge horse flies which seemed to prefer the shade of the tents to the shade of the trees.

It was from St. Luc that we made what proved to be the finest excursion, when we climbed the Bella Tola, a rather insignificant looking mountain on the map, but from which was obtained superb views of the Alps. One could see Mont Blanc far away to the west and the Austrian Alps to the east; one could see the Bernese Alps with the Jungfrau among them to the north and our own Valais mountains, the Weisshorn, the Dent Blanche and Matterhorn among them to the south. It was a memorable day.

From St. Luc we moved on to Gruben over the Meiden Pass from which we had a fine close up view of the Weisshorn. The tiny village where we pitched camp proved to be somewhat primitive with only a post office, a hotel and a few tumbledown chalets and, since there was no village shop, all the food arrived by post.

It was during the afternoon of our arrival at Gruben that Mr. Healey and his cine-camera were much in evidence. He prowled around the site 'shooting' unsuspecting victims lying in all sorts of ungraceful attitudes. The excursion from Gruben was to the Turtman hut at the head of the valley where we had soup followed by the normal trek lunch of cheese, tomatoes, bread and jam. The weather had broken after nearly three weeks of continuous sunshine and we returned from the excursion in the rain.

Dark clouds to the east looked ominous as we set off the following afternoon on a steep climb up into a rocky combe where we bivouacked and sure enough the rain came as we settled in for the night. Fortunately for the fags the rain stopped in the early morning and breakfast was served on time. This lull was brief, however, and as we trekked up to the Augstbord Pass the rain started again and continued almost till we arrived at St. Niklaus, our destination that day.

By this time the thoughts of all lay towards Zermatt and the end of trek so that the excursion to the Grathorn, pleasant though it was, seemed merely to fill in the time until we should arrive there. We arose early next morning and set off along the road on the final trek into Zermatt at the head of the valley. Associated almost indissolubly with Zermatt is the Matterhorn and each time we rounded a bend in the road we looked eagerly for the first glimpse. At last we topped a rise and saw Zermatt through the trees and simultaneously the twisted, cone-sloped top of the Matterhorn came into view. It was a truly magnificent sight for this gigantic mountain dominates the scene. About a kilometre before Zermatt itself we pitched the tents for the last time in a pleasant site in the trees by the river.

That night after a gloriously hot day the clouds came down shuttering off all the mountains around us from view. Two potentially fine excursions from Zermatt, one to the Gornergrat, the views from which are famous on a fine day, and the other to a peak called the Mettelhorn, were spoilt by low cloud and rain. Mr. Williams and Mr. Roberts set off with a view to climbing the Matterhorn but they were forced to return because of bad weather on the mountain.

And so we came to the last day. Mr. Snook held his last bank and the village proved to be a pleasant place to spend one's last francs. Presents were bought, large and exotic meals were eaten and everything was done that is usually done at the end of a trek.

We were to leave Zermatt on the Tuesday afternoon and so in the morning tents were taken down and folded for the last time, the last bomb meal was eaten, Mr. Roberts held his last galley fag. Photographs were taken and speeches were made and in this quiet way trek 1957 came to an end, apart from the short walk into the village and the journey home.

All that remains is to say thank you to Mr. Williams, the other officers and all those who helped to make this year's trek the fine success that it was.

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Trek relies to a great extent upon the weather. There is, of course, a certain pleasure to be had from climbing mountains obscured by the mist, and going abroad is in itself worth while: even the worst weather cannot make Trek a real failure, but good weather undoubtedly makes a good Trek better.

This year the weather could not make its mind up what course of action to take. We were lashed by ferocious thunderstorms and cowered damply in our tents while the English newspapers carried headlines about Austrian floods and anxious parents wrote anxious letters. We were also burned a variety of colours—from truly Bahamian brown to ridiculous G.P.O. red—by a magnificent sun in a cloudless sky. The good weather, however, coincided with the best views, so the overall result was a lot better than might at first be thought.

Our journey to Austria, which started on the morning of Thursday, July 17th, and did not finish until Friday afternoon, was long and wearying. We made an afternoon crossing from Dover to Ostend and spent a night on the train, arriving in Munich late on Friday morning. Outside Munich station we, and our kit, were piled on to two large buses, composed mainly of windows, which raced off down an autobahn at about 70 m.p.h.

At Kirchberg we camped in a large compound behind the school and quite close to the church after which the village is named. The church had bells, which rang when one least expected it—usually in the very early morning. From the site we looked straight up the valley we were to follow with the Grosse Rettenstein, a jagged tombstone-like mountain, at its head.

Saturday was hot and the traditional 'breaking-in' walk proved quite an endurance test for us—fresh from sunless Manchester. We climbed the Gampenkogel, a mountain of a mere 6,400 ft., found (and destroyed) a relic of Nazi Germany, and returned to camp sore and hot. Our sunburn, however, did not prevent us from attending a rather bewildering sort of fiesta in the village in the evening. The band played and confetti was thrown, but no one seemed to know what it was all about. The following day, as we were about to leave the site, the aftermath of the previous night's celebrations took place just outside. There was a religious procession and an open air service which the whole of the village, magnificent in local costume and resplendent with banners, attended. This effectively blocked our exit for about an hour much to the delight of the photographers.

Our first trek was a short one and we just managed to pitch camp at Aschau, a collection of large barns, before we were attacked by a thunderstorm, which, amongst other damage, washed away the road just up the valley. The next day was sultry and cloudy but the Grosse Rettenstein promised to be the sort of mountain which is worth climbing for its own sake. Unhappily, this fine excursion was marred by an accident: Stephen Lipson was hit on the leg by a falling stone.

Trek surprised itself by its quick transformation into a mountain rescue team which carried the injured man down safely and remarkably quickly. Though the cut was not as serious as it might have been, Lipson was driven away to hospital and we did not see him again for nearly three weeks. This was the first accident that has happened on Trek in recent years and it was quite clearly no fault of ours—though it did emphasise the need for care on mountains.

Next day's bivouac, up the Obere Grund was wet—very wet—and the tents, which had to be packed in the rain, leaked. Moreover it was still raining next morning when we set off at an unearthly hour and trekked over the Stangen Joch. The only things we saw through the mist were rocky shoulders of the Rettenstein, lightly powdered with fresh snow.

We dropped down to Hollersbach through a wooded rocky gorge as the weather cleared and, with our tents pitched in the back garden of a farm, we were able to dry out in the hot sun. Hollersbach was a very attractive little village with a tiny narrow-gauge railway, but the weather, which had looked promising, did not hold. As a result, Thursday's excursion up the Breitzkogel had to be abandoned because of mist—though some got further than others!

On Friday afternoon we once more disappeared into the wilds. We bivouacked up the Hollersbachtal in hot sunshine and camped above the trees on an island in the middle of the stream. The valley was magnificent, huge and steep-sided, and the weather, if not promising, was not threatening. The next day's trek was the best in the entire holiday. We started early, at 5-30 a.m., and climbed out of the Hollersbachtal, into a kind of amphitheatre surrounded by high craggy mountains; then out of this bowl, past the Neue Further Hütte, where we drank lemonade, and into a long high level valley, narrow, with rough boulder-strewn sides, and a lake at the bottom.

The ridge on our left stirred the rock climbers amongst us and the snowfields on the opposite side rising to the peaks of the Kratzenberg group inspired the photographers. On the col, at 9,100 ft., we ate lunch and gazed at the enormity of the Gross Venediger, and, to our left, the Glockner group. The sky cleared and the Venediger appeared with its glaciers, ridges and ice-falls all sparkling under a blue sky. The descent to Matreier Tauernhaus followed red marks but no path, and we were all tired when we finally camped scattered over a large campsite at varying levels. In the evening we had a swift but violent storm—a common occurrence it appeared, since the same thing happened on the next two days.

There were two excursions from Matreier Tauernhaus and neither had very good weather. The first, to the Neue Prager Hütte, below the Venediger, showed us at close hand some of the grandeur we had seen on the previous day, although glaciers always seem to disappoint when one gets close to them. The second, to the Tauernkogel, which would have been our highest point, never reached its objective, owing to vile weather conditions and treacherous snow.

The next day's trek, down to Matrei, seemed to have every prospect of being a boring road walk. However, when we had got about half way, Mr. Williams led a wondering trek off the road over a bridge and along a dizzy cliff path above a beautiful gorge. We arrived at Matrei in the heat, and apart from a few confused thunderstorms, that is how it remained while we were there. It is a little town, as yet uninvaded by tourists to any extent. There was a swimming pool, a hard campsite, and glorious weather.

Our excursion was up the Reiterboden, a rather dull mountain which reminded one of the Lake District rather than of Austria. It did promise great views of the western end of the Venediger group but the mist came down and our only view was a momentary glimpse of the valley bottom. On the way back some of us visited a very impressive Romanesque church with huge stone balconies. The next day was Rest Day, which this year meant fun and games around the swimming pool, a large, deep, muddy hole filled with grey water.

The trek to Kals was slow and leisurely. We stopped on the top of the Kals-Matreier Törl to photograph the Gross Glockner which towered upwards to the north. We also had magnificent views both of the Venediger group through which we had come and the Schober group which lay ahead. Once more the weather was good at the right time.

Kals was small and fairly modern and we remember it for three things: the bomb blew up, that is, our pressure cooker blew its gasket and sprayed us with stew; we met Woking Grammar School Trek under the leadership of Messrs. M. P. Smith (1932) and R. W. Cooke (1948); we also experienced the worst storms. Our excursion to the Stüdl Hütte, a dilapidated old building, high up on the Glockner, was exciting, if not strictly pleasant. The scenery was harsh and craggy, and the thunderstorms began on our way back to camp. With odd breaks, it then rained all afternoon and night, with astounding violence, so that the stream ran brown with debris. After a bright morning, the next day was as wet and the bivvy planned was abandoned—to the relief of all!

The next day we started early to attempt our lengthened trek. We began with the thermometer just above freezing point but finished in glorious sunshine. We crossed over the bleak saddle of the Bergertörl and descended through delightful valleys past tall, cliff-sided mountains to the wide valley which contained Heiligenblut. From our campsite, Heiligenblut looked delightful, perched above us on the hillside, a compact village with a tall ornate church. It proved, however, to be expensive and something of a 'tourist trap' at the end of the Glockner Road.

From Heiligenblut we had our last excursion. We went by coach up the Glockner Road to the Franz Josefs Hohe—a collection of large hotels, at 7,900 ft. in full view of the Gross Glockner—and from there we walked up a glacier to the Oberwalder Hütte, which, at 9,900 ft. was our highest point. We were right in the Glockner group—and the weather was again perfect. The north-east face of the Glockner, a long steep-sided ridge, with glaciers and icefalls, rising to the 12,600 ft. peak of the Gross Glockner, could not have been seen to greater advantage. We had a pleasant walk back, down a mule track through the thickly-wooded valley.

From Heiligenblut we began the most strenuous part of the Trek: three consecutive days of walking in the mountains, living on the rations we carried. The first bivvy, up the Gradental, was wettish. We camped in a clearing in the forest also inhabited by a herd of cows. Hence there were many interesting skirmishes, but no disasters. The trek to the Lienzer Hütte on the next day was also wet and misty. Nevertheless, the poor weather conditions did not detract much from the excitement of climbing these rocky mountains. A slow, difficult descent brought us to a wet campsite. However, the rain stopped long enough and the wind blew hard enough for the tents to dry, so we slept comfortably.

The next morning was cold and windy, but, as we reached the top of the rocky col and its little lake, the sky cleared, revealing an extensive vista in front stretching to the Dolomites, and behind for the first time, the mountains through which we had come, with the Hochschöber above us. We dropped down about 6,000 ft. to St. Johann im Walde, a hamlet of about six houses, and camped between the road and the river. At the bottom of the valley stood the Lienzer Dolomites, which nearly everyone photographed. That afternoon we were rejoined by Stephen Lipson complete with crutches, very cheerful and well on the way to complete recovery.

The excursion was short, owing to the heat and our tiredness. We climbed halfway up Rudnig, and found much mica and many whin berries.

There was rain the morning we left for Lienz but our day and a half in the town were fine and hot. We spent and we ate, wandered around the pleasant little town and finally on Tuesday morning packed up for the last time and left by train.

Our thanks must go to Mr. Williams for making trek a success. It is an unoriginal thing to say but it is the highest possible praise. A thousand things could have gone wrong, but they didn't. Our thanks, too, to Mr. Roberts, who, as usual, acted as second-in-command and joint map-reader: to Mr. Snook, who as medical officer and bank officer administered both pills and money: to Mr. Kahn who exposed the film, brought up the rear, and grew a really sinister beard, and to all four for giving fifty of us such a memorable holiday.

## **AN OUTSIDER'S VIEW**

Herr Schon met Trek on the Kals-Matei Torl, and intrigued by what he saw and heard, sent the following article and the photograph we publish. Curious but monolingual Trekkers, and others, are advised to approach a member of Modern Sixth for help.

Schuler von Manchester in den Bergen Oesterreichs

Wir trafen sie 2.207 Meter hoch in der Schutzhutte am Kals-Matrei Torl in OstTirol. Die sonst so stille Hutte glich einem Heerlager. Die schweren holzernen Banke und Tische boten kaum Platz für die vielen hochgewachsenen jungen Leute, die durstig ihr Citron-natur tranken. Später spielten sie Karten. Wir kamen mit ihnen ins Gespräch. Ihr Deutsch war einwandfrei. Wir erfuhren, dass sie aus Manchester kommen und die ganze Klasse von Kitzbuhel nach Heiligenblut wandert. Ueber eisbedeckte Gipfel, durch grüne Taler und lichte Larchen und Tannenwälder. Ein herrliches Erlebnis.

Draussen vor der Hutte liegen die grossen Mannschaftszelte zu langen grünen Wurstn zusammengerollt. Dazwischen riesige Kochtopfe. Jemand zählt die schwerbepackten Rucksäcke. Ein Dicker mit gelbem Polo-Hemd und Brille blickt nach Westen über die Gletscherfelder des 3.674 Meter hohen Gross Venedigers, der zum Greifen nahe vor uns liegt. Ein Schuler kommt mit einer Wasserkanne auf dem Rücken den Weg herauf; denn einem solchen Massenbesuch sind die Wasservorräte auf der Hutte nicht gewachsen.

An meinem Tisch studieren zwei Schuler eifrig die Landkarte. Die meisten Jungen haben genaue Karten. Sie kennen jeden Meter ihres Weges wie erfahrene Pfadfinder. Am Nachbartisch entsteht in einem Skizzenbuch ein naturgetreues Bild des Gross Glockners, er ist 3.797 Meter hoch und der grösste Berg Oesterreichs. Jede Gletscherspalte, jeden Felsengrat halt der Zeichenstift fest. Am Kreuz vor mir sitzt der Führer der Klasse und blickt mit einem scharfen Fernglas ebenfalls hinüber. Dort hinter der "Adlersruhe", der höchsten Hutte am Gross Glockner, führt der Weg hinunter nach Heiligenblut, dem Ziel ihrer grossen Fahrt.

Wir sind auf die Kalser Hohe hinaufgestiegen. Drei, vier Jungen kommen uns entgegen, braunverbrannt von der Hohensonne. Eine frische Brise wohnt ihre buntkarierten Hemden um die Schultern. Der rote Backenbart steht manchen von ihnen ausgezeichnet. Die Bergbauern mit ihren ledernen Gesichtern fragen nicht danach. Und Felsen und Gletscher suchen keine Milchgesichter. Wie erfahrene Hochalpinisten sehen diese Jungen aus. Sind sie es nicht auch? Zwei lange Pfeife aus einer Trillerpfeife tonen durch die mittägliche Stille. Die Jungen nehmen ihre Rucksäcke, Zelte und Kochtopfe auf. Neuen Zielen, neuen Gipfeln entgegen!

Wenn diese Zeilen in Manchester eintreffen, werden sie sich sicher schon auf dem Rückweg nach Old England befinden. Die Eltern und ihr Direktor aber sollten stolz sein auf solche Jungen.

HEINZ SCHON

[2021 NOTE. For readers, like me, who have little German, the following translation is via Google Translate, with the odd minor edit. Allan Witton]

### **Manchester schoolboys in the mountains of Austria**

We met them 2,207 meters high in the mountain hut at Kals-Matrei Torl in the East Tyrol. The otherwise quiet hut looked like an army camp. The heavy wooden benches and tables offered hardly any space for the many tall young people who were thirsty drinking their natural citron. Later they played cards.

We started talking to them. Your German was perfect. We learned that they are from Manchester and that the whole group is going from Kitzbuhel to Heiligenblut. Over ice-covered peaks, through green valleys and light larches and fir forests. A wonderful experience.

Outside in front of the hut, the large team tents are rolled up into long green sausages in between huge cooking pots. Someone pays for the heavily packed backpacks. A fat man with a yellow polo shirt and glasses looks to the west over the glacier fields of the 3,674 meter high Gross Venediger, which lies within reach in front of us.

A student comes up the path with a water jug on his back; for the water supplies at the hut are not up to such a mass visit. At my table, two students are busily studying the map. Most boys have precise maps. They know every meter of their way like experienced scouts. A lifelike picture of the Gross Glockner is created in a sketchbook at the next table, it is 3,797 meters high and the highest mountain in Austria. Every crevasse, every rock ridge is recorded by the pen.

The leader of the class is sitting on the cross in front of me and is also looking over with sharp binoculars. There behind the "Adlersruhe", the tallest hut on the Gross Glockner, the path leads down to Heiligenblut, the destination of your long journey.

We went up to the Kalser Hohe. Three or four boys come towards us, suntanned by the high sun. A fresh breeze wears her brightly checked shirts around her shoulders. The red whiskers look great on some of them. The mountain farmers with their leather faces do not ask for it. And rocks and glaciers are not looking for milk faces. These boys look like experienced high alpinists. Isn't it you too?

Two long bursts from a whistle sound through the midday silence. The boys pick up their rucksacks, tents, and cooking pots. New goals, new peaks! By the time these lines reach Manchester, they will surely be on their way back to Old England.

The parents and their director should be proud of such boys.

HEINZ SCHON

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For those who are not accustomed to the strange lives of trekkers, this extract from a paper on the subject may (or may not) prove helpful.

“Trekking are rare, migratory mammals of the species *Homo Sapiens* to be found in summer wandering in the mountains of one of the central European countries. They are gregarious animals, and live in hordes, each horde containing about fifty members. Restless creatures, trekkers are always on the move, and, like the snail, they carry their house on their backs. Their diet appears to be an unvarying mixture of stew and semolina. Research is being undertaken to find out if this mixture has any particularly high nutritional value .....

Be this as it may, Trek 1959 got off to the accustomed 7-45 start on the day after Speech Day, and had an uneventful journey to Paris. The metro took us across the city, and at the Gare de Lyon we mounted a sleek French express, finding ourselves in a carriage fitted with couchettes. These were soon put up, but dismantled rapidly when a ticket inspector informed us tersely that our price for comfort would be 1700 francs. Fortunately for trek, continental trains have very comfortable luggage racks!

At 9-30 the next morning we were drinking coffee, having our first taste of continental bread, and stretching our legs at St. Gervais before the final stage of our journey up the little rack railway to the Col de Voza. The views as we wound up the mountainside were enthralling, and the Mont Blanc Massif, glistening white against a clear blue sky, seemed hardly any distance away.

We had pitched camp by mid-day, and the uninitiated were being introduced to lemon tea and horseflies. An early night had been planned, but was deemed impracticable when we discovered that the hotel on the Col was indulging in July 14th celebrations that night. Trek spirit was running high when we were given permission to stay up till midnight, but had sunk considerably when at 3 a.m. we were being kept awake by ‘pop’ music, which was still blaring forth from a mobile broadcasting coach within thirty yards of the camp. The celebrations of the night included a mediocre firework display, and a torchlight climb by two lines of unwitting trekkers to the top of the local hill and back. Why we did this remains a mystery, although some say that we were sent to drive the witches away.

Rock ‘n’ Roll music, jangling out through the air on a green Col in the heart of the mountains, must have been a strange introduction to the Alps for some, but trek soon became much more normal with the first ‘breaking in’ excursion up the Tête Rousse. The next day brought an easy trek down valley to Les Contamines, where we found a pleasant campsite but more horseflies. The perfect weather held for our two excursions from Les Contamines: the one up Mont Joly, and the other to the Tré la Tête glacier. Unfortunately the heat brought with it a haze which obscured the farther peaks, so the best views might have been even better.

From Les Contamines we bivouacked up to Nant Borrant. That afternoon we walked in the rain, but luckily it stopped just as we were pitching camp. This, the first outbreak of rain we had seen on trek, came just in time to stop us being converted to the viewpoint of the foreigner, who is convinced that rain is the “spécialité du pays” as far as England is concerned.

The following day we trekked up to the Col du Bonhomme, and then dropped steeply down to Les Chapieux - a dismal village, whose appearance was not enhanced by the gathering thunderclouds. The desolation observed by the last treks to pass this way was still apparent. Now, however, a hydroelectric project is being undertaken in this and the next valley, so there is much blasting, and the derelict buildings have been patched up a little to house temporary mining workers. On our excursion from Les Chapieux we headed for the new dam, and had a good view of it from where we stopped for lunch. No further progress was made because of a threatening sky. On returning to camp Mr. Bowles attempted to convert the village trough into a plunge bath, much to the amusement of his onlookers.

Our bivouac took us up to Les Mottets, where we found a romantic campsite underneath the impressive, snow-clad Aiguille des Glaciers. From there, over the Col de la Seigne, where the photographers were in their element with some magnificent views, and into Italy. The customs post was reached and ignored, and an officious frontier guard chased trek several hundred feet down the mountainside, brandishing his revolver, before it was brought to a halt. All passports were duly stamped, and trek continued on its way down to the official campsite at Purtud. In preparation for our four-day stay a mammoth latrine and ‘tophat’ were dug.

The next day was rest day, and we have to thank Mr. Roberts and his excellent Italian for organising a bus to take us to and from Courmayeur, which was an hour's walk away from the campsite. The journeys were not without thrills, for the excitable Italian driver would take both hands off the wheel on a precipitous road to applaud trek's efforts at singing.

After buying one shop out of colour films, and another out of karabiners we returned back to Purtud, where we were greeted by a thunderstorm which ravaged over the campsite till nine o'clock the following morning. We learned that a very irritated German camper had come into the galley during the afternoon while the fags were cooking our evening meal. Gesticulating violently to the effect that he could not sleep because of the shrill shrieking of the bomb, he had to be restrained from taking out the whistle while she was boiling in four.

Trek's most ambitious excursion - a 7,000 ft. climb up to the Col du Géant - had been planned for the day after rest day, but the continuous rain thwarted our plans. However, the storm cleared, and we were not deprived of our daily walk. We climbed Mont Chétif, a little mountain standing by itself above Courmayeur, and got some very good views of the south side of the Mont Blanc range.

At 3-30 the next morning it was not raining, so the fags got up and endeavoured to prepare a wholesome meal, which would send trek happily on its way at 6-30 to begin its long climb up to the Col. At ten we were eating our lunch outside a desolate hut halfway up the mountainside shivering in a cold wind under a sunless sky. Pressing on straight after lunch, we were soon scrambling up a rock and scree ridge, cut off from our neighbours by a wet, white void of mist. After what seemed an eternity of climbing we arrived at the Rifugio Torino. Never was a plate of soup more welcome! Most went on for the extra quarter of an hour to the col, but there were no views: only a huge expanse of snow, dissolving in every direction into a swirling mist.

On the last day of July trek, a little the worse for something, prepared to depart from Italy and bivouacked up the Italian Val Ferret. Trek sickness was beginning to affect some; but Mr. Womersley, our medical officer was fully prepared. He handed out tablets, and with the confident air possessed by witch doctors and magicians described what their after effects would be (with surprising accuracy, I must admit with awe).

It was cold that night, and we could hardly be persuaded to come out for our pom and sardines before retiring to bed. In the morning we plodded slowly up to the Grand Col Ferret, and into the cold and mist once more. And so over the Col, into Switzerland, and back to sunshine and fine weather. We camped at la Fouly where we unfortunately lost Jeffrey Darlington for the rest of trek with acute appendicitis. After a correct diagnosis and a prompt operation he languished in a luxurious new hospital at Martigny till passed as fit to rejoin us for the journey home. Our excursion took us to the Dufour hut, where we found mists again obscuring what had promised to be a very fine view. The excursion will probably be remembered more for the wild strawberries we found on the way down.

A pleasant trek took us to Lac Champex, a beautiful little lake perched high in the mountains, now exploited as a resort for wealthy tourists, and another excursion, this time to the Orny glacier, which it is rumoured that some inspected at very close quarters.

From Lac Champex we walked through a swarm of hostile hornets and up a poor, steep zig-zag path through a jungle of trees and bushes in the course of our bivouac to Bovine. This was a worthy last bivvy site, perched high on the hillside, above the tree-line and looking across the valley to an impressive chain of jagged, grey peaks.

Spirits were high the next morning. The weather was perfect; we had had an extra hour in bed; and the demands of the powerful 'Pom-Haters' union' were satisfied - we had soup for breakfast! In our short trek to Trient we got some marvellous views of the Grand Combin and the mountains above Martigny. Lunch at the campsite was over by 11-30, and the rest of the day was given over to sunbathing or attempting to get another passport stamp at the nearby frontier post. Mr. Snook got out his little black box, and juggled with his conversion factors for the last time. He had been paying us in three currencies - French, Italian and Swiss, and was now converting back to French again with great capability and apparent ease. Perhaps Latin is a good discipline for the mind after all.

We trekked up to the Col de Balme, where we were confronted suddenly with a view of breathtaking splendour. Mont Blanc stood before us, a sparkling white shape embossed on a sheet of clear, blue sky. Impressive in a more rugged way were the Aiguille Verte, the Dru, and the Tour Ronde, standing out in the chain of mountains on our left which led round to Mont Blanc.

Our journey to Chamonix was broken at Montroc, and we completed our trek down the valley the following day. We were very fortunate to obtain a campsite within five minutes walk of the town, which, though cramped, was free from the hordes of car campers which over-run the official campsites around Chamonix.

We visited the Mer de Glace, walking up the glacier itself to Montenvers when we found that part of the higher path trek had used in 1954 had in the meantime been washed away. Here, and the day after on the Brévent, we found thousands of tourists. While they pay money for rack railways and téléfériques to see the views, trek also paid its price for some excellent views of Mont Blanc and the Aiguilles from Brévent, getting soaked through to the skin in a heavy thunderstorm while coming down the mountain.

All too soon the final free day in Chamonix had arrived. While trekkers scouted round looking for presents to spend their last francs on, Mr. Bowles scouted round for trekkers to spend his last few feet of film on. Many frittered away their money on a luxury meal in town. The next day people hung around camp, having spent all their money, were photographed, and listened to speeches, until it was time for Mr. Robert's last galley fag, and time to be on our way back home.

A sleepless night was spent on the train, for trek was rudely deprived of its privilege of sleeping on the racks by a persistent ticket inspector, and the seats became rather overcrowded. But the journey continued, and a day later the 'Mancunian' deposited fifty weary travellers back where they had started a month earlier.

They had been all the way round Mont Blanc and brought back suntanned bodies, and many happy memories. For the one, we have to thank some very good weather. For the other, our thanks must above all go to Mr. Williams, who, with the help of the other senior officers, ran trek so smoothly and successfully that one is often apt to take for granted all the effort he must have put into its organisation.

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Trek left Manchester Central at 7.30 a.m. on July 14th, at the start of a train and boat journey which took about twenty-five hours. Nobody slept much overnight, and we disembarked tired and cramped at Martigny, in Switzerland. Here, after a delicious but woefully inadequate breakfast (I cannot imagine how the French manage to live on coffee and rolls until midday!), we boarded two coaches to take us over the Grand St. Bernard Pass into Italy and to Bionaz. The drivers took the tortuous bends, and the narrow, sometimes pot-holed surface, all in their stride, and drove at alarming speed. Despite this attraction, and the glorious twisting climb over the pass, most of trek slept, albeit fitfully. It was raining when we reached Bionaz, a scruffy little village with one shop, yet with a fine church; but the weather cleared, tents were soon pitched, a fire lit, and a routine begun.

In the preparation of the galley when we arrived at a new campsite, Mr. Kahn always acted with great vigour, moving stones about, and persuading life into a sulky fire. The fire, too, had to be almost continually fanned, and in this operation John Tolley was peculiarly competent, being able to go on when others had exhausted themselves in creating vast quantities of smoke.

The next day we trekked to Prarayé, where our supplies reached us on mule back. The weather was now fine, and remained so for the excursion the next day. This was short, to the base of a glacier, which was too dangerous to climb, but we were able to see the differences in vegetation and scenery caused by an increase in height; and there was a bridge of a few logs carelessly strung together, across a stream, which we crawled over one by one. Nobody fell in—to the disappointment of the photographers!

The intention next was to bivvy and trek over the Col di Valcournera to Breuil in the next valley. We completed the bivvy, which was short, but a reconnaissance party of the three senior officers returned to say that the route ahead was impassable, at any rate with kit. Thus Mr. Williams undertook a dark and hazardous lone journey at four o'clock the next morning, back to Bionaz to telephone for a coach from Aosta. The rest of us followed later, through mist, to load a most luxurious coach which took us round by the valley to Breuil.

Our camp-site at Breuil was very flat, and marshy in places. On one side ran a river and when it rained that night, the water welled up beneath two tents, and their occupants fled hastily to inflict themselves on others. Breuil itself was a new town, which seemed to be built solely for tourists—a most unattractive place. The excursion the next day was to the Theodul Pass, we did not quite reach the top owing to mist.

So far, trek was only getting under way, events seemed to happen apart from each other, and time to pass slowly. Now, however, the tempo increased, and not only would it be wearisome to describe everything as it happened in strict chronological order, but also it would give quite the wrong impression. A summary of the route is given at the end of the report.

Fièry was the next camp, in a wood with a clear river nearby. The inhabitants of the village were among the most friendly people we met. There was also a group of young people, a little older than ourselves, on holiday in a hostel, with whom we sang songs, played volleyball, and in a last jovial night, exchanged tokens of goodwill. At Fièry, Mr. Dobson's medical-fag attained perhaps its greatest size, as hot feet, unused to tramping down steep hill-sides, gave rise to blisters and sores. Mr. Dobson's cure for all such ailments was a bright red antiseptic, which had magical properties of seeping out of its bottle, and spreading itself over much of the medical officer and his kit.

The bivvy out of Gressoney was pleasant, except for the heat as we climbed uphill on the first leg. When we trekked over the Col d'Olen the next morning, we had a fine view of Monte Rosa on our left. Our arrival in Alagna—the biggest town so far—caused quite a stir among the population. People leant out of windows marvelling at the strange sight as we tramped wearily into the square, and sat shamelessly in a long line on a hotel wall.

Our camp was about half a mile out of the town, open to the road, and near to an Italian army base. Whenever it was not raining soldiers and people from the town would stand on the road and stare fascinated at everything we did. Bugles from the army base woke us at five o'clock in the morning, and officers seemed to rush about in jeeps all day and night. Here, we had our rest-day.

At Alagna, there was a significant change in the weather, and thereafter we were bedevilled with low-lying cloud and rain. The next bivvy was damp and warm, with all the tents pitched in a small space. On the trek the next morning, we climbed above the mist, until it caught up with us. At the top of the Turlo Pass, by climbing a little higher, we had a view of a great rolling sea of cloud, through which a few mountain peaks jutted in places. The path down the other side was covered with deep snow near the top, and I can say from personal experience that it was easy to cover this part of the journey involuntarily at a much greater speed than desirable.

Macugnaga, the last place in Italy we visited, was a group of separate villages, strung out in a line about two to three miles long in the valley. It was here we made fleeting contact with a small Tonbridge trek led by Mr. (and Mrs.!) Healey.

The bivvy to the Monte Moro Pass was memorable. It rained hard all night, and tents were pitched at all sorts of angles on the sloping hillside, on undulating, prickly scrub. Keith Clark's tent, did a wonderful job in preparing a hot supper and breakfast. The next morning, glad to be away, we had our passports stamped at the Italian Customs post, and trekked through snow, over the pass, and into Switzerland.

The campsite at Mattmark was utterly desolate. The valley here was broad and flat, and the river, which was of a grey colour and opaque, meandered through it in a series of interconnecting channels, thus making flat islands of grey stones and sand. Only a few had any form of vegetation. The mountain sides were almost treeless, and shrouded in mist.

The next trek was short along the valley, mainly by road. The weather improved, and it was fine and warm as we trekked into Saas Fee. What a contrast this was! This was a bright clean town, which did not even allow motor vehicles onto its streets. There were many shops, all well kept but also expensive. The camp-site was almost ideal; there was some doubt as to whether we should have been there at all, but nobody seemed to mind. At any rate, we were not allowed to forage for wood with the gay abandon we had been used to in Italy, and all fuel had to be purchased.

The excursion to the Mischabel Hut was the highest and best. The latter half of the climb was a business of using hands and feet to spiral up the snow covered mountain-side. We prepared and ate our lunch on the very doorstep of the Rifugio, so to speak, no-one venturing inside, except perhaps to buy a postcard or two. Although mist completely enshrouded us, it cleared momentarily for us to see four great peaks, before we were enveloped again. Fortunately, and surprisingly, much of the snow had melted, and the descent was easier than expected.

From Saas Fee a remarkable and newly-made high-level traverse path took us round the shoulder of the mountain spur some three or four thousand feet above the valley bottom. We were fortunate to find an ideal bivvy-site but discovered too late that the galley had been pitched within a foot of a wasp's nest! Next morning the path became even more enterprising. We set off under grey skies and drizzle but, as we turned the shoulder on to the Hannig Alp, the tremendous white mass of the Weisshorn shone under a clear blue sky and we trekked down to St. Niklaus in perfect conditions. St. Niklaus was a big village, with a railway-station, and a church whose spire sported a brass-sheeted dome. We camped in a field from which the hay had been newly cut, in full view of many houses and the railway-line.

At Zermatt Mr. Williams found a pleasant campsite, away from the official site, although this meant a walk of about half a mile into the town itself. The town is dominated by the Matterhorn, which we had seen at Breuil. Almost every postcard, or painting, ornament or trinket showed this mountain somewhere. It had a tradition, in many ways, however. As at Saas Fee, motor cars were not allowed on the streets, and each big hotel had its own horse drawn carriages for its patrons; but it seems, judging by the number of cars on the camp-site, that many people found it cheaper to break the law, than pay the train fare from St. Niklaus.

The excursion to the Gornergrat gave us many fine views and revealed the whole range of peaks round which we had trekked.

After a day and a half to buy presents, make speeches and do the other things which are done at the end of trek, we left Zermatt in the afternoon to arrive home about thirty hours later, to gorge and sleep and tell ourselves what fine chaps we had been.

For a happy and successful trek, over a route largely unknown, we must particularly thank the three senior officers, without whose example and devotion we could have got nowhere—to Mr. Williams who led and organised the whole, to Mr. Kahn who supervised the galley, and to Mr. Dobson, who tended our ills, and looked after our money.

A summary of the route is: From Bionaz, trek to Prarayé; then bus to Breuil; trek over Col Nord des Cimes Blanches to Fièry; trek over Colle di Betta Forca to Gressoney la Trinité; bivvy to Gabiet Alp, and trek over Colle d'Olen to Alagna; bivvy to Alp Faller, and trek over Colle del Turlo to Macugnaga; bivvy to Galkerne Alp, and trek over Monte Moro Pass to Mattmark; trek to Saas Fee; bivvy above Eisten and trek to St. Niklaus; trek to Zermatt.

At noon on 18th July, after 36 hours of travelling across Europe, the members of Trek 1961 climbed out of the train at Bolzano and blinked at the brightness of the Italian sun. Having lunched in a cool, shady restaurant we were taken out of Bolzano in two parties in a small bus along a broken, dusty road to our first campsite at San Cipriano. There cannot be a better place to start a trek; the tents were pitched in a huge grassy meadow, for which the sharp salmon pink towers of the west wall of the Catinaccio group formed a superb background. Below us, on a slope which ran down to a white, foaming stream, there was a fine pine wood, dark and cool, in which tiny, pink wild strawberries grew, and, up above, the sun shone in a bright blue sky.

After the travelling we were tired, so many of us slept through the first night's thunderstorm, awaking in the morning to find the weather still glorious but the tents and camp-site sodden. After a late breakfast we made a shortish breaking-in excursion up the valley to the Rifugio Bergamo in the Catinaccio. By the time we reached the hut the weather had become damp and misty and we were glad to pack ourselves into the warm, yellow-brown oiled wood interior of the hut and fortify ourselves for the return journey with the rough red wine.

The next day's excursion to the Rifugio Bolzano in the Sciliar group was more ambitious and more rewarding. It was further, and there were some steep and stony paths to climb before we reached the rifugio, but the fine weather, the bright colours of the abundant alpine flowers and the gentle tinkling of the cow bells in the still air, made the climb pleasant and enjoyable. From the hut it was a short climb to the flat-topped Monte Pez, in appearance most unexciting, but from which we obtained the most magnificent panoramic view of the whole trek. Most of the Dolomite groups which we were later to visit were visible, standing up pink and ragged-toothed, while further away were stacked the higher Alps of Austria, blue-green and with snow-covered tops.

A thoroughly hot day followed, and the short bivvy-trek in the afternoon sun, although coming after a lazily spent morning, proved a really hard sweaty walk, especially as it was the first occasion on which we carried trek loads. We were very thankful to reach our destination, a small, cramped site by the Nigra hut, and then eat the customary Pom and vinegared tuna fish and retire early to bed. But before it was out the night provided its alarms - in the form of a thunderstorm - and excursions - as people moved out of flooded tents and thrust themselves on the charity of the more fortunate.

Still, the next morning it was fine when we rose early and climbed to the limit of the grassed hillside to follow the stony path along by the rock face of the Catinaccio as far as the Rifugio Roda di Vael, whence we made the descent into Vigo di Fassa. As we came down through the woods, so too the rain came down, and with increasing velocity. Upon reaching Vigo we were glad to move out of the rain into a barn and here we smoked and sang to keep up spirits, while Mr. Cooke and Mr. Kahn tramped out into the wet to find a place of shelter for the night. They were successful, and that night we slept in a half-built annex to a local hotel. Despite the hardness of the cement floor, all covered in sharp little brick chippings, nearly everyone slept soundly, especially those with foresight to procure sacks and spread them beneath their groundsheets.

From Vigo we moved along the Dolomite road to Campitello, where we used the municipal camping-site as a base for three excursions. For the first, we returned to the Catinaccio group, this time to view from close quarters its eastern aspect. It was another very hot day and the sun's rays were thrown back by the light coloured rock of the magnificent spires which rose above us. At last we reached the top of the Passo Principe where we lunched before moving on to the Antermoia pass and then down into the barren, stony, snow-patched Val d'Antermoia, past the little snow-fed lake and on, over the Passo di Dona, to camp once more.

A nondescript little excursion up towards the Pordoi pass took place on the following day, and the chief event of the day proved to be a football match between Trek and a team of Italian youths, which had been delicately negotiated during the previous two days. The match was a close one, but the tighter defence of the Italians earned them a 2-1 victory.

The third excursion took place on another baking hot day as we struggled up to the top of the Ombretta pass. Probably the weather was never hotter than it was that lunch-time when we sat slowly eating in a shadeless rocky bowl with the sun beating down hard upon us. Our reward at the top of the pass was a fine view of Civetta framed by the Cime Ombretta and the great southern face of the Marmolada.

Our next destination was Selva in the Val Gardena. An early start saw us climbing up past the little shrines on the hillside above Campitello by half-past six. The early rising was well worth while as it was not until we had finished climbing that we received the full force of the blazing sun. During the rest of the morning we sweated our way down into the Val Gardena, passing a detachment of tough-looking alpini troops leading pack mules laden with business-like weapons. Their manoeuvres may have been routine, but the encounter was one of many reminders of the political troubles in the area which we were visiting.

From Selva we made three excursions, by far the most interesting being the second, which took us to the top of the Sella plateau. It should have been the first excursion, but low cloud at the top of the Gardena pass forced us to tackle instead an impromptu shorter walk into the nearby Geisler group, where Ig Walton took, and happily survived, a severe tumble.

However, our next attempt at the Sella was more fruitful and eventually, after hauling ourselves up the iron wire rope stanchioned into the rock, and treading carefully over snow patches, we gained the top of the plateau and a typically extensive view. The third and last excursion from Selva was a mere amble down the Val Gardena and up gentle slopes to Monte Panna, where we lunched before making our way back through Santa Christina, whose cafes provided a good opportunity for lazing in the sun and trying the many varieties of Italian ices.

For the third time we trod the upward path through the woods and the hillside meadows where the men were scything hay, to the top of the Gardena Pass, when we trekked on the next day to San Cassiano. From the top of the pass we dropped into the next valley, marched along its metalled road and swung off onto the dusty, glaring white road that took us into San Cassiano. There the camp-site was memorable for several reasons: chiefly the rocky face of La Varella stamped out sharply from the blue sky by the bright light, and the situation of the site, for it was separated from the galley by a short but steep slope and a stream crossed by a bridge. Moreover, breakfast or supper were on several occasions interrupted as one or two old men clad in characteristic blue aprons drove cattle through the crowd of trekkers assembled by the galley and across the bridge to where they were pastured.

The first day here was a welcome Rest Day, spent lazily by most, but more energetically by those who made their way into the little town of Brunico. A short excursion took us on the following day to the top of the Valparola pass in the morning, and the day ended with a cool and refreshing cloudburst.

A morning bivvy (contradiction in terms?) then took us over the Tadege pass and past the little Lago di Fanès to a woodland site near a most spectacular gorge whose depth remained a matter for argument amongst our physicists despite, or because of, various practical attempts to measure it. A hot but easy trek then brought us to the field by the little station at Landro at exactly the same moment as our car-borne groceries.

Very spectacular, but very tiring, was the following excursion up to the Locatelli Hut. As we dragged our way upwards in the heat of the sun we had superb views of the magnificent Tre Cime di Lavaredo, three great ragged fangs of pink Dolomite rock anchored in a thick collar of scree stones, which rose before us, whilst behind was the tilting summit of Monte Cristallo. At the hut - where minerals cost as much as 4/- each! - it was decided not to make a full circuit of the Tre Cime. For some this was a disappointment, but for others a blessed relief from pulling a weary body through the energy-sapping heat.

A short, pleasant bivvy to a site - shared, albeit peacefully, with some young bulls - below the Locatelli Hut and an easy trek in the cool of early morning took us to Bad Moos, from where we had two excursions entirely different in character. On the first, we climbed the green slopes of Monte Elmo to reach the Austrian frontier ridge before returning, each at his leisure.

The second provided the climax of the trek and was the longest and most taxing of all. In the brilliant sunlight of the morning we climbed up to the Rifugio Zsigmondy-Comici and on along a stony path, slashed occasionally with snow and with the Croda dei Toni, a massive wedge of rock, rising above us. After lunch on a green mossy patch bright with profuse blue gentians, we took on the difficult business of the Strada degli Alpini. This was a narrow ledge walk, requiring great concentration, but very spectacular, especially where it entered into a narrow fissure in the mountain side, doubling back sharply upon itself and re-emerging. We were amazed indeed to find at the end of the Strada the grey ramshackle wooden remains of a military observation post, hoisted up above the path. It was hard enough simply treading the path; the prospect of fighting in such an area was painful to the imagination.

Trek was now winding down to its inevitable end. A steady pace along the road and a swift, short train ride brought us to our last campsite in the grounds of the Hotel Olympia, two kilometres from Dobbiaco. The last two days were now spent in an easy-going way, unlike the previous weeks of Trek.

A short walk took us to the Toblacher See and gave us the opportunity to swim, sunbathe and go boating, before wandering into Dobbiaco itself to buy presents and drinks or to inspect the restless decoration of the interior of the local church. On the last day a train journey to Brunico gave us further opportunities of spending whatever lire each one had left. But trek was not over yet; on the last night the afternoon's heavy rain turned into a thunderstorm which flooded one or two of the tents, so that late at night figures were seen moving through the dark and wet to take shelter in the hotel outbuildings.

By morning the weather had improved, the sun rose and it was pleasantly warm as we ate the final breakfast, struck camp for the last time and caught the train at Dobbiaco. Now there were only two days travelling before we reached home. And so back to Piccadilly Station, where we had foregathered and where we finally dispersed.

Apparently Trek might never have been; yet something did remain. We were browner, fitter and more assured, and somehow Northern Italy had lodged itself in the memory, so that the images of figures struggling up a stony way in the heat as the sun poured itself onto rocky mountains, of men scything and women forking the hay in the meadows as they must have done for years, of the great profusion of stars which decorate the sky at night, and of the similar profusion of wayside crucifixes with their sharply pitched roof sheltering a drooping, carved Christ - so that these recollections, and more mundane ones of trek routine, remain to cling within the memory.

It is possible to describe the outline and framework of a trek but it is beyond me to convey its value and its pleasure. Yet Trek is undoubtedly both pleasant and valuable and for what we gained and for the enjoyment we had we must thank the men who made it possible. Above all our thanks go to Mr. Cooke - you would never have guessed that this was the first time that he had led Trek - for carrying out the bulk of the organisation, and we owe Messrs. Kahn, Dobson, Bowles and Thompson a similar debt for their help and encouragement. To all of them go our grateful thanks and the hope that they enjoyed Trek as much as we did.

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Twenty-six hours of travelling sufficed to bring Foreign Trek 1962 to its starting point, Lenk im Simmental, situated in the North-West of the Bernese Oberland. We arrived there around noon, to be met by a hot sun as well as two taxis to drive us the two miles to our campsite, where lunch was promptly prepared. The site was next to a fast, wide stream, and owing to the fact that we were relatively low there were innumerable vicious flies whose name nobody knew but whose sting everybody felt, enough to remind some trekkers of a similar institution in Scotland. But to make up for this discomfort there was a nearby restaurant with the inevitable jukebox, where the local drinks were sampled that night.

The next day came our first excursion, and it proved to be a wet one. We climbed the Fluhhorn at the head of the valley, and we had lunch at a lake near the top. The excursion was mostly notable for the very strong wind that suddenly blew up, turning capes inside out and costing the party the loss of two hats. The next morning was at first misty, but it soon turned into a fine, sunny day, and there was a longish excursion up an adjoining valley. At lunch we were still short of our target, the Iffigensee, and those who wished to continue were led by Mr. Dobson, to be rewarded by the magnificent sight of a perfectly still lake, in which the surrounding mountains were reflected as in a mirror.

The following day's excursion was a very hot one. We walked down the valley and then climbed the grassy Schatthorn, but the path was none too obvious, and we had a long sweaty pull to the top. There was a very good view of the surrounding white-topped mountains, but photographers had some difficulty in keeping the swarms of flies that we found up there off their lenses. We descended by a different route, stopping at every cattle-trough on the way, and then spent a free afternoon reviving ourselves in Lenk. That evening at the campsite we were given a demonstration of how to play the Alpine Horn by two men who produced a very impressive sound, but who were rather deflated when Potter gave a fine imitation of them on their own instrument.

Another fine day dawned, and we set off at six on our first trek, to Adelboden. The last leg, to the top of the Hahnenmoos pass, was a steep climb in the hot sun, which exhausted nearly everybody. We descended into the next valley to find that Adelboden was rather full of tourists, but the campsite was about twenty minutes out of town. It seemed strange to be in a new place, for after three complete days Lenk had become almost a home. As we were all pretty tired after the trek, the next day was free and the weather was still sunny and hot, although clouds were beginning to build up on the surrounding mountains. In the afternoon most people went to the fine open air swimming pool in Adelboden which, though it was rather full, seemed to make room for our large numbers.

We left at five the next morning to trek to Kandersteg. Fortunately the weather was cool and dull, so the long climb to the Bonderkrinde was relatively easy. At the top we saw what was probably the most magnificent view of all Trek. To one side lay the Loetschen valley surrounded by high, jagged mountains. Before us was a view of the route of Trek as a whole, and far away the massive white shapes of the Jungfrau, Mönch and Eiger rose up, promising us some exciting scenery at the end of Trek. As we descended into Kandersteg the clouds came down upon us; we had been lucky to be at the top of the pass while it was still clear.

We camped under some pine trees next to the end of a cable-car lift, and the cables seemed to be floating on air as they disappeared into the thick mist. But by the next morning the weather was fine again, and we did a short excursion up to the Oeschinensee, which proved to be very hot and tiring. The next week we were to do a bivvy up the same route, and we looked forward to this with foreboding.

The weather was liable to change suddenly here, and the next day was dull and misty. We were expecting a long excursion up to the Gemmi Pass, but most of the climbing was done for us by the cable-car itself, which came as a surprise, and to some an unpleasant one, for not everybody appreciated the strength of the very narrow-looking cables.

At the Gemmi itself what might have been a good view was mostly obscured by cloud, and we were confined to a few glimpses of what could have been the Matterhorn. On the way back to camp the rain poured down on us, enough to make some people pay for the cable-car out of their own pockets. That night was very wet and in the morning there was still a lot of low cloud, leading to speculation as to whether or not to do the bivvy that day. In the end we set off, and after two easy legs we found ourselves in Gasterntal where we camped at an old scout campsite, but not until we had negotiated a long and very unsafe-looking plank bridge.

The next day's trek was the most interesting that we had, and also one of the most misty. We climbed up to the Loetschengletcher, and when we reached it the mist reassuringly cleared for us, revealing the dazzling white glacier. As soon as we set foot on it, the mist came down again, and did not clear completely until we had completed the two legs to the top of the glacier, where we had lunch on a large slab of rock on which was set a tall wooden cross. This long trek ended at Ferden, a very poor peasant village, with every building made of rough wood, except for the modern and very expensive-looking Catholic church. But for this church, the whole village could have been the same centuries ago. The excursion on the following day unfortunately lost itself, which was not considered a sad blow, because the weather was very hot, and the ensuing rest was appreciated.

We returned to Kandersteg via the train from Goppenstein; it went through a long tunnel of variously estimated length, and accomplished the journey which had taken us ten hours by foot in no less than fifteen minutes. From Kandersteg we bivvied to Oeshinenalp; the weather was as hot as the first time that we had done this walk, but to our great surprise and loss of sweat we did it in less time. The site was impressive, looking over the Oeschinensee towards the Bonderkrinde, and that night we went to sleep to the sound of fireworks as the Swiss celebrated their national day. We started at five on the trek to Griesalp in Kiental, being followed during nearly all of our ascent by a persistent little goat, which was finally taken off our hands (or should I say feet?) by someone walking the other way. We reached the Hohtürli pass, which at 9,450 feet was the highest reached on a trek, and then went down the very steep and tiring descent to Griesalp. This time the site was far from desirable, being on rough, boggy ground; with the nearest water supply some distance away.

The next day was free, but there was little to do except dry out kit that had got wet in the very heavy rain that fell overnight. Griesalp seemed to consist of three hotels, a shop and nothing else. There followed an easy trek on a pleasant day to Mürren, via the Sefinenfurgge. From Mürren we went on a rickety old train to the top of the cliff above Lauterbrunnen, and from there we took a rack and pinion train down to the bottom of the valley, camping next to the thousand foot Staubbach falls. Miserable weather on the following day prevented any excursion, so Lauterbrunnen was explored, and the great news that draught beer could be found there quickly spread around the camp. The next day was that on which a party was to take the train up to the celebrated Jungfrauoch, and it seemed that the weather was going to be unkind.

But fortunately the day dawned fine, and after the interesting journey the party reached the top to find a perfect view, especially of the impressive Aletschgletscher. We were lucky, for about an hour later the clouds descended and almost completely hid the view, giving just the occasional glimpse of the massive bulk of the Jungfrau. We all duly spent our money on the exorbitantly priced amenities, and then returned to Lauterbrunnen. There was to be a bivvy to Wengernalp, under the face of the Jungfrau, but the weather was very overcast, and this was put off, as it was quite easy to walk to Grindelwald in the one trek. So after spending yet another free day we trekked via the Kleine Scheidegg to Grindelwald. It was an easy walk, but the scenery was magnificent, culminating in walking under the famous north face of the Eiger, where so many climbers have been killed, and which was being climbed as we went past it.

The camp was just a little out from Grindelwald, but enough to keep the many tourists there away from us. On the next day there was an excursion along the Lower Grindelwald glacier, which gave us a good view of a large glacier and an ice-fall, as well as entertaining us with several avalanches. After this there was an excursion up the Faulhorn, a long walk that took us to the top of a mountain from which the view was completely obscured by mist. But on the way down, by a different route, we ducked under the cloud and had a perfectly clear view of the whole Finsteraarhorn range, which one could have admired for hours on end.

The last trek, to Meiringen, past the waterfalls from which Sir Arthur Conan Doyle resurrected Sherlock Holmes, led us to a pleasant little site above a large main road, some way out of the town. There was a free day, of glorious weather, on which everyone bought presents with what money he had left. The next day was our last, and probably the hottest of all trek, which made the preparations for leaving all the more painful, but at six we left for the long journey home.

We returned browner, and feeling a lot bigger, after an experience that is very hard to forget. Trek had started in the pleasant scenery around Lenk, and had steadily become more and more impressive, finally culminating in the majesty of the Eiger and the Jungfrau. The transition between this and rainy Manchester is hard to make, and as we got off the train at Piccadilly, we seemed to be leaving behind not a holiday, but a way of life. For this our thanks are due principally to Mr. Cooke, who must be forever writing and receiving letters, for the skilled organisation of the Trek. But we must not forget Messrs. Kahn, Womersley, Dobson, Medlyn and Barlow for the part that they have played. Let us hope that next year's trek will be as enjoyable.

When it first appears, Trek is not a very inspiring sight. The casual observer at Central Station on the morning of July 18th might well have noted, with some amusement, some drowsy end-of-term faces and one hundred and two rather pale legs such a collection of odd hats, and even odder knees, could not have failed to interest him. He would not, however, have been impressed.

Had this same observer been in the remote Austrian village of Planggeros on the following day, he would have registered a good deal of surprise, for the development of Trek's collective character was well under way. No time was lost before this emergent character was tested; it rained throughout the first night, and someone, in his eagerness to ensure efficient drainage, diverted a sizeable stream straight through Tent Five in the darkness.

In the morning, Trek got down to business with a pipe-opening excursion to a small lake not far away; many pipes were still being opened the following day, a Sunday, on which we made a most enjoyable excursion to a high point which afforded an excellent view of our valley, the deep, narrow Pitztal. Traditional Tirolean features abounded, we inspected this year's first mountain hut, the Neue Chemnitzer Hütte, observed the local villagers going to church in the familiar national costume, and were lulled to sleep in the twilight hours by the sound of cowbells in the rain.

The third and final excursion from the first camp was quite excellent passing an impressive waterfall and a forbiddingly grey glacier, Trek arrived at the Braunschweiger Hut, 9,190 feet above sea-level. Seventeen hardy individuals went on as far as the Pitztalerjoch, a high pass from which were to be had fine views of the terrain to be explored in the later stages of the Trek.

As the journey up out of the Pitztal into the next valley could not be done in a single day, our next target was the establishing of a bivouac camp roughly half way. After tramping through some most untypical jungle—Mr. Barlow's film sequences hereabouts will surely keep Armand and Michaela on their toes—we found our path, and much more besides, obliterated by a considerable landslide which had swept down the steep side of a hanging valley above Trenkwald, probably at the same time that another had cut the Pitztal road and narrowly missed our village of Planggeros early the previous evening.

Scrambling up interminable slopes of quite extraordinary steepness, we were eventually obliged to cross the slippery gully made by the landslide, painfully ferrying our equipment to safety on the other side. The hundred yards of horizontal distance involved took more than two hours to cover. Lemon tea has never tasted better than it did that evening.

In the early morning we struck camp briskly and were soon plunging down into the Ötztal over the Breitlehnerjoch ridge. The pace was quick for the rear of the party was being attacked constantly by herds of assorted cattle, held off only by the fearsome shrieks and stout tent poles of the junior officers. Camp was established at a recognised campsite in Huben where, thanks to our general fatigue and the compassion of Mr. Cooke, we enjoyed a rest day.

Our route now took us to remoter regions. Packing up in ghostly silence in order not to wake the rest of the camp, we made a businesslike trek, in relatively gloomy weather, up the valley to the small village of Zwieselstein. Our site here, amongst trees on the unusually flat banks of a glacial stream, was most pleasant.

At breakfast the next morning, Mr. Dobson proved himself the only trekker capable of watching the preparation of porridge and singing Madam Butterfly at the same time. No feats of comparable artistic significance were recorded during the day, although a very interesting excursion was made to Obergurgl, a skiing resort which claims to be the highest parish in Europe.

The nearby hamlet of Untergurgl has been completely reconstructed in the past few years, following a landslide disaster in which several of its people were killed. The little church here is dedicated to their memory and has been completely decorated and furnished by Karl Obleitner, a self-taught local artist.

One of the best excursions of the whole Trek was the next one, which took us to the top of the Nörderkogel, 10,550 feet. Had we been able to see the mountain when we set off, the climb might have seemed a lengthy one in prospect, but as we were plunged in thick cloud most of the way, we unconsciously maintained a brisk pace and soon emerged from the clouds onto the desolate summit, where, of all things, a visitors' book awaited us.

The next two days were very hot; the first was a trek day on which we walked up to Vent, a village at the end of the valley. The next day, with its pleasant excursion into some high and almost frighteningly barren terrain, was a very hot affair; not only did the sun shine all day, but Mr. Gibbs was let loose amongst the food. He came up with a soup which produced in ten seconds all the effects which the sun had failed to create in a whole day. Those who found they could still speak after eating Mr. Gibbs's creation agreed that he had been a little extravagant in 'seasoning' one pot of soup with two packets of black pepper.

The 11,332 ft. Kreuzspitze was the next target, and proved to be a surprisingly easy excursion. The peak was probably the highest that Trek has ever climbed and the views from the summit were quite extraordinarily fine. On one side rose white peaks which must have been in Italy, while far away in the other direction we could see the giant Schrankogel mountain near which we were shortly to be. A bowl of soup in the Martin Busch Hütte on the way down was a luxury all the more appreciated for being quite unexpected.

August 1st was another very hot day, and for Trek an arduous one. In order to move on to a completely new district we had first to retrace our steps down the valley to Zwieselstein, our earlier camp, and further down to Huben, where we now camped for the second time. Though a little tired after roughly nineteen miles walking along hot roads, we were very honoured to be given one of the best sites available because of the impression created earlier by our good camping, general demeanour and noiseless departure.

A free day at this stage was more of a necessity than a luxury, but there was still plenty to do. Mr. Medlyn in particular was kept extremely busy, as dormant blisters sprang into throbbing life and hordes of invalids invaded his tent, his inimitable and immensely popular cry of "Medical fag!" began to sound a little plaintive. He therefore shortened his daily announcement to "Surgery!" but an immediate outcry by outraged traditionalists effected a return to the old system. Uncomfortable but amusing mishaps were frequent, at dinner, a line of comfortably seated trekkers rose like a well-trained chorus troupe, each stung simultaneously by belligerent Austrian ants. Mr. Dobson, meanwhile, continued to sing lustily before breakfast, until swift and positive action was taken by his tent sergeant, Buster Wallwork. What actually happened will probably never be known but their tent was seen to collapse one morning before a single operatic note had sounded.

A short, hot trek brought us to Gries and an unusual site along a narrow river bank. In the late evening, a local brass band, boasting two Wagnerian tubas, was entertaining a large crowd under spotlights in the village square. To a party of critics brought up on Black Dyke Mills and the C.W.S., the quaint uniforms made more appeal than the music produced but the experience was unique and as much a part of Austria as the magnificent mountain which we climbed the next day.

This was the Gamskogel, up which we made an early start and maintained an astonishing speed. At the windy summit, an informal singing contest began; three factions attempted to drown each other in noise, but what the main 'choirs' possessed in volume, Messrs. Dobson and Forster could match in subtlety. For vocal acrobatics and entertainment, their Blaydon Races was quite unrivalled. We attained a considerable speed on the way down, one of the consequences of which was a series of excellent Windmill imitations performed quite involuntarily by Mr. Gibbs on the more slippery stretches of path. When we reached Gries below, we had to describe the summit of the Gamskogel in profuse detail before the local sages would believe that we had reached it and returned in such a short time.

Two days of vigorous walking now followed, over two high, rocky passes. The first, the Winnebachjoch, was a long, gradual climb with a sharper descent on the other side; the second, the Horntalerjoch, was a steeper climb, especially for the last few hundred feet, but a view of the distant Dolomites from the top more than compensated for the effort. On both these strenuous days the whole party was revived during the descents by a good bowl of soup in mountain huts. On the Horntalerjoch, a couple of Austrian climbers offered to go ahead and order our food, but our speed was so great that we arrived half an hour ahead of them. Almost four more hours in intolerable heat passed before we finally reached our destination, where we all patted each other vigorously, but pardonably, on the back. Only Mr. Barlow, always fit, seemed quite unaffected by his exertions.

At our new camp near Neustift, we first had what was virtually a free day, and then made an excursion which ended half-way up the Maierspitze in thick cloud and mist. At the Nürnbergerhütte it was decided that we should return to camp, but not before a joyful and gloriously inappropriate rendering of 'Ding Dong, Merrily on High' had been hurled defiantly into the drizzle. The next day was even wetter, and the value of our dykes, designed by Mr. Forster to keep a nearby stream from inundating our tents, was conclusively proved.

As no site was available for us in Innsbruck, we stayed for six days in Neustift, but a visit to the city was arranged. Carefully saved money disappeared at once in Innsbruck, much of it going on huge, greasy meals; these can only have aided the minor outbreak of 'gut rot' which prevented a few trekkers from taking part in the final mountain excursion, a walk made all the more enjoyable by the return of the fine, warm weather.

We left Austria on August 12th on a very late train which caused us to miss the boat and The Mancunian; we finally arrived in Manchester at six o'clock in the morning, looking tired, perhaps, but feeling, without any doubt, healthier in every way.

Trek remains the only School activity during which one is likely to see a group of eminent schoolmasters standing in the path of a landslide and for this reason, if for no other, it is to be heartily recommended. The success of this year's Trek is in large measure attributable to the masters who kept the collective character of the group healthy, while making their own rich and willing contributions to Trek's manifold eccentricities.

Special thanks go to Mr. Dobson, who, in his less musical moments, led Trek most vigorously for a period when Mr. Cooke was medically forbidden to walk. Above all, however, we thank Mr. Cooke himself, without whose unfailing skill in organisation Trek would probably never make its first appearance at the station, let alone spend an interesting, exciting and wholly valuable holiday abroad.

The route: Pitztal (Planggeros) via Breitlehnerjoch to Ötztal (Huben, Zwieselstein, Vent, Huben) and Sulztal (Gries); via Winnebachjoch to Lüsens ; via Horntalerjoch to Stubaital (Neustift).

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**A is for Arrival**, perhaps the most traumatic experience of trek. Having spent approximately 18 hours crossing the Continent by train, desperately trying to catch a few minutes sleep on luggage racks, in the corridor or in the First-class compartments, we arrived at Tiefencastel, surrounded by mountains of then frightening dimensions. We were then subjected to a nerve-shattering mountain bus-ride and eventually came to rest in the calendar type village of Savognin.

**Amenities.** These varied from palatial accommodation at Savognin (new club-room, hot running water and showers) to small, crowded, freezing troughs at Maloja.

**B is primarily for Barlow (Mr.),** the intrepid trek cameraman and anti-plague officer. He and his mate Mr. Phythian (q.v.) put up a splendid fight against the whole spectrum of disease and complaint from constipation to its antithesis.

**Beer.** Doubtless some pseudo-statistic could be devised, relating to what could be done with all the beer consumed by trek, but I have not bothered - let it be enough to say that it was a lot.

**Bivouac.** The only bivvy of the trek was on the Septimer Pass, 7000 feet up in mist and pouring rain, and surrounded by cows (who took an unpatriotic liking to BAP's Union Jack). The bivvy went quite smoothly, except for Tent 5 who were determined on pitching their tent on a 45° slope in a thistle bed. A small, select group (the 'Septimer Male Voice Choir') gave rousing versions of *All things bright and beautiful*, *Clementine*, and many other favourites, in a torrential downpour.

**Blisters.** Everybody had them, nobody wanted them.

**Bomb.** The affectionate name for the weighty pressure-cooker which ceased to function properly early on, causing a fascinatingly varied menu from frankfurters to spaghetti bolognese and back again.

**Butt.** A microscopic quantity of butter spread liberally over a large slab of yesterday's Swiss bread. Also known as 'breakfast' and 'lunch'.

**Boredom.** This can easily set in during periods of inaction.

**Boval Hütte.** An excursion we did from our last campsite at Morteratsch, up the side of a spectacular, crevasse-strewn glacier to a hut overlooking a magnificent panorama of snow and ice including the Piz Bernina and the Piz Palü.

**C is for Cooke (Mr.).** This was Mr. Cooke's last MGS trek before leaving for his new post. He has been associated with 11 treks and has led four of them. Without all the hard work and effort that he put into this year's trek, it could never have gone as smoothly as it did. Our thanks to him for a very enjoyable trek.

**Climb**, that is, the act of getting up mountains. A lot was done, although much to everybody's disappointment we never reached 10,000 feet and only once attained a position from which we could ascend no further (i.e. the top of a mountain). However, we did obtain some unrivalled views, especially from the top of Piz Lunghin.

**Cows** are numerous and handsome in Switzerland, but are less attractive when driven through camp. Cows are responsible for **Chocolate** and **Cheese**. They must be praised for the former and cursed for the latter.

**Coaz Hütte** was the destination of our first excursion from the Hotel Roseg site. Alarmingly perched on a rock-slide and cracking open on one side the hut overlooked a fine view of glaciers and ice-fields. The path to it contained several hazardous crossings of fast, rocky streams that plunged down the side of the glaciated valley. It was there that we saw our first marmot (q.v.).

**Corned beef** (canned typhoid) was a weighty but welcome innovation on this trek and made for more pleasant, if monotonous, lunches.

**Cards.** Various tents contained dens of vice and iniquity where such fiendish games as Black-Maria and Bridge flourished. They did, however, relieve Boredom (q.v.).

**D is for Distance**, an important factor to be considered when going somewhere. (Vertical and horizontal components should be considered.)

**Diavolezza Hütte.** A hard climb from Morteratsch, including a somewhat hazardous crossing of a melting snow-field, but very rewarding as far as scenery was concerned. Spoilt slightly by the presence of a large cable car and consequent crowding of the whole area. In my view this was the most exciting excursion of trek.

**Dixies.** These are invaluable but cumbersome and dirty (until Mr. Barlow got to work on them). We originally had five until a certain person placed one in a foaming torrent to cool the butter off.

**Disagreement.** There were very few of these, the exception being when tents 1 and 3 declared war on the store tent.

**Dettol.** This was an effective gut-rot preventer which caused such new dishes as Dettol Soup and Dettol Porridge to appear on the menu because of over-zealous washing of utensils.

**E is for Energy**, which nobody had and everybody needed (with the exception of Messrs. Barlow and Medlyn).

**Effort**, a great deal of which was expended in a great many ways by a large number of people.

**F is for First Excursion**, another traumatic experience of trek. This year's was energetically led by Mr. Medlyn to a beautiful ice-cold lake, high up in rocky, bare surroundings. Some of our less sane brethren had a swim.

**Food**, an essential part of trek life, which mainly consists of survival from one meal to the next.

**Fag**, or getting up at 4.00 am in pouring rain to light a fire and make scrambled eggs for 52 people. An experience, however, not to be missed.

**Flies**, of which there were many, especially at Savognin, where existed the most gigantic horse-flies ever seen as well as many unidentified species.

**Fuorcla Surlej**. Across this saddle and down into the Val Roseg was the longest trek we did, and the cold, combined with the extortionate prices in the hut were hardly conducive to enjoyment. The scenery, however, made up for this, and this was our first view of really high mountains.

**Flood**. It was Mr. Phythian's lot to have the only flood on trek and this occurred, with much cursing and complaining, in the middle of the night at Morteratsch.

**Free Day**. This eagerly awaited event occurred in St Moritz, which, to everyone's disgust, is run purely for tourists and is incredibly expensive. Two afternoons in Pontresina were enjoyed much more.

**G is for Games**, including podex, tariff-football, twenty questions, and a fine version of Trekology devised by Dai Davies.

**Guardians**. We were placed at the mercy and under the wing of a whole succession of fascinating characters at campsites. At Savognin there was 'Herr Klubmann', and his new clubhouse; at Maloja a very suspicious-looking character whom we christened 'Al Capone'; at the Hotel Roseg we were welcomed by Herr Thom, and the hotel was subsequently known as 'Uncle Thom's Cabin'. Our lord and preserver at Morteratsch became known to one and all as 'Smoky Joe'.

**Glaciers**. We actually got on to two glaciers, the first being the Forno glacier, close to the Italian border behind Maloja. This was the first time many of us had seen a glacier close to and we found it extremely interesting, if a little hair-raising at times. The ice had a beautiful blue colour a little way below the surface, with the result that the fast, clear surface streams made a beautiful sight. We were impressed by the size of some of the boulders the glacier was carrying, and by the size of the holes and crevasses at the side. The second glacier was above the Tschierva Hütte, and only a few of us ventured on to it, but the result was very rewarding, the streams and huge ice-fall making for some fine photographs.

**H is for Heat**, which most of the time was excessive, especially at Savognin, where we had to take the thermometer out of the sun to prevent it breaking at 131°F. It was, thank heavens, a dry heat and for the rest of trek the temperature was very comfortable.

**Hotel Roseg**. Although miles from anywhere, this was the most impressive and awe-inspiring campsite we had. The view of the Piz Bernina and the surrounding mountains and snow-fields was unequalled on the whole of trek. Swiss national day occurred while we were there and a few fireworks were produced, a crate of refreshment procured and a small celebration held.

**I is for Interpreter**, which we often badly needed when Mr. Cooke was not available.

**Inn** (river). We did one excursion to the source of this river before ascending the Piz Lunghin, and were interested to discover that from that mountain rivers flow into the North Sea, the Adriatic and the Black Sea, a point unique in the Alps. The river Inn forms the five beautiful lakes of the Engadine before joining the Danube.

**J is for Junior Officers**, of whom we had eight, all fine characters who wended their efficient way through trials and tribulations, mutiny and self-sacrifice.

**Jungle Juice**. This lurid coloured liquid (of two antithetical varieties) was administered by the spoonful to unfortunate sufferers.

**K is for Krauts**, there were a lot.

**L is for Landing Ticket**, which one of our illustrious junior officers mis-laid, but much to the disappointment of many the school captain was eventually allowed on shore, and not destined to ply the Channel for the rest of his days.

Piz **Languard** was an annoying mountain which defeated us - we set out too late to complete the climb and terminated the excursion at the nearest Hütte.

**M is for Manchester Central Station**, where it all began.

**Maloja**, the place of our second campsite, pleasantly situated by the side of the lake, a comfortable distance away from the apparent squalor of the regular campsite.

**Marmots** are curious creatures, somewhat like overgrown gophers, which we saw several times in the rocks at higher altitudes. They can grow to several feet in length and great amusement was had in watching people clambering about or perched motionless at the entrances of doubtful holes, trying to get startling photographs.

**Medlyn (Mr.)**. An indispensable, energetic organiser, well-known for his galley-digging talent and odd methods of expression.

**Medical Fag**. An occasion not to be missed as a source of public entertainment where all the techniques of massaging, blister-bursting, jungle-juice administering and skiving may be learnt.

**Morteratsch**, our last campsite, where we stayed for a week owing to difficulties with the site at Champfer. It was here that we had our one day of almost continuous rain when we were forced to remain in our tents for most of the day, and Boredom (q.v.) set in.

**N is for Novels**. A large and varied library of doubtful paper-back novels circulated around camp, with the occasional 'Crime and Punishment' thrown in.

**O is for Ostentatiousness**, mainly with regard to headgear, which ranged from the popular and appropriate Alpine hat, through female beach-wear to the magnificent and unrivalled sombrero of Buster Wallwork.

**P is for Phythian (Mr.)**, whose insatiable, morale-building verbosity along with his Union-Jack kept many a weary heart going.

**Porridge**, a curious delicacy, varying enormously in density, with which trekkers cheerily greet a new day.

**Q is for Queue**, or the supposedly organised rush for food.

**R is for Rocks**, of which we saw vast numbers, half of which it seemed I was carrying around with me in my rucksack. To anyone mad enough to be interested in geology it was a fascinating trek.

**S is for Savognin**, our first and most luxurious campsite, where there was a newly built **Ski-lift** which several of us ventured up, our feet dangling peacefully into space. Unfortunately we were caught in a storm coming down and were cold and soaked to the skin - but all very character-building.

**Semolina**. A solid favourite for dessert - it had to be. (Copies of the song available on request.)

**Sils Maria**. We arrived here at nine in the morning, having trekked from Maloja, and set up camp for two days. This site will be remembered as the first at which we had our first home-made lat - a source of great comfort to many. Here also Mr. Barlow discovered a spring and Smethurst sprained his big toe.

**Sciora Hütte**. To visit this we took a coach from Maloja to Promontogno, a delightfully colourful village, down the 15 hairpins which we had so dutifully trekked up two days before. After a long, hard, but impressive climb we reached the hut, surrounded by some of the best known rock-climbs in the area, giving rise to some spectacular scenery.

**T is for Tschierva Hütte**, a hut we went to from the Hotel Roseg, situated on a rock-strewn, marmot-ridden hillside. Unfortunately the weather was bad with a good deal of low cloud, and our hopes of climbing the Tschiervaspitz, and making a trek altitude record, were destroyed.

**Tan**. Everyone came home with a good brown, healthy complexion, but some determined individuals exposed large portions of themselves to the sun and referred to the resulting red burn and peeling as Tan.

**U is for Undernourishment**, which most of us suffered from, and that, combined with Effort (q.v.), caused considerable difficulty in maintaining trousers at a decent level.

**V is for View**, which is something one tends to become a little unappreciative of after a while, but on the whole the magnificent scenery was enjoyed by all, and looking back you realise just how lucky we were.

**Val Fex** a valley we visited from Sils Maria, quite gentle and filled with hay fields and a great variety of wild flowers. It was here that we discovered a remote building with 'BAR' painted in large letters on the outside. We were however, disappointed.

**W is for Weather**, the chief factor determining the state of mind of trekkers. We were lucky on the whole, although conditions deteriorated towards the end of trek. On clear nights it was exceedingly cold - at Morteratsch water bottles left outside were frozen up in the morning, but generally a good cloud-cover made for reasonably warm nights.

**Y is for Yodelling**. We didn't hear any.

Suggestions for X and Z will be gladly received.

IT is not long before you realise that Trek is different. No matter how much school camp experience you may have had, after 29 hours of travelling with the 50 people with whom you are destined to spend the next 26 days, the thought strikes you that this is new.

Trek consists essentially of three graded forms of masochism - excursions, bivouac treks and treks. The least painful sort is the excursion, which is a walk from a set camp. The choice of excursions this year (there were ten of them) was very good. The climb from an 8,000 ft. campsite to the Quintino Sella hut at almost 12,000 ft. along a path 'prone to avalanches' (to quote a certain master), and the last excursion of all, to the top of the 11,188 ft. Mettelhorn, were excellent. I am told by the seven who reached the summit that the Testa Grigia, a peak climbed from Gressoney, was also in this class.

Bivouac treks had their advantages and disadvantages. If the distance between two places was too great to do in one day's trekking, we would get as high as we could on the afternoon of the first day and then complete the journey after a bivouac at about 8,000 ft. The great luxury of a free morning before starting off was rather offset, however, by having to carry enough food to last from lunch-time to 6-30 p.m. the following day, as well as the dixies, tents, bogdiggers, firewood and other paraphernalia that had to be carried from campsite to campsite either clipped to tent-poles or strapped to rucksacks.

A trek day meant getting up at 5 a.m., breakfast at quarter past, on the move by quarter past six. This sounds rough, but there's plenty of interest on a trek. All the treks involved going over passes and there was always a spectacular view from the respective ridges. Whether or not we saw the view, however, rather depended on the weather.

Somehow things seemed to happen on treks. On the very first one ten of the party were forced to take cover while blasting was in progress further up the Mattmark valley, and the only cover we had was some small pines. From the frantic way people had gesticulated at us we thought the mountainside was going to be blown apart. In fact, all we got was 45 seconds worth of bangs.

But the prize must go to Craig Mackintosh, who dropped his passport somewhere on the Theodule Pass (10,904 ft.) while trekking over to Zermatt. He was lucky. Somebody handed it in to the Zermatt Polizei, where he claimed it the day before we left.

The weather was not as good as it could have been, especially during the first fortnight. On the day we crossed the Swiss-Italian border over the Monte Moro Pass (9,390 ft.) it rained continuously. For 5,000 feet we walked down a precipitous mountainside in absolutely miserable weather. Our boredom was relieved only once on the descent. Edward Hiscocks was good enough to sprain his ankle when the party was spread out over 200 yards of rock-strewn slope in thick mist. Messages, some helpful, were passed back and forth, while Mr. Robinson ran up and down the line looking for the medical kit. It is only fair to mention that we also had eight scorching hot days.

Altogether we walked at least 180 miles, ascended about 70,000 feet, and visited seven places. These varied from the clean Swiss ski resort, Saas Fee, to the rather less clean Italian village of Alagna Valsesia; from the restaurant and cow shed that was Fiéry, to the bustling tourist traps of Breuil and Zermatt. It is difficult to assess which village Trek liked best, but I think it is true to say that Alagna, where we were doomed to spend our first of three free days, was our pet hate. My favourite stop was the charming village of Gressoney la Trinité, which, coming as it did directly after Alagna, was a very pleasant change.

And then there was the Matterhorn. We walked three quarters of the way round the base of the 14,872 ft. peak, took at least 300 photographs of it, and stayed at both the bases used for an assault upon it, Breuil and Zermatt. In fact, the Matterhorn was the main reason for visiting this particular region of the Alps this year, it being the centenary year of the first successful climb of the mountain by Edward Whymper and his companions. To represent MGS in the celebrations Mr. Harris and Mr. Barlow climbed the Hornli ridge to the top. They set out from Zermatt at midnight on the 5th of August and returned triumphant at 8 p.m. on the 6th.

There are various other odds and ends of Trek '65 which don't seem to find a place under any previous heading. Mr. and Mrs. Dobson paid us a three-day visit during the last few days, eating out of one plate with a fork and a spoon between them; Mr. Harris fell through a barn-floor in Macugnaga and somehow managed to retain his dignity; John Butterworth's boots split along the sides and he did a quarter of the total walking with a length of string holding each boot in one piece.

The success of the whole venture was due to two groups of people, the seven junior officers and the masters. The former generally looked after fagging and discipline, but it is to the latter that most of the thanks must go, especially to Mr. Barlow, who led us. We started off with four masters, Mr. Barlow, Mr. R G Harris, Mr. Robinson and Mr. Hunt. They struck a perfect note of firm and friendly discipline which is so essential to any school camp and, as a result, the relationship between masters and boys was very good indeed. Our thanks go also to Peter Fallows (1962), who came along to help out.

I can only hope that Foreign Trek '66 is going to be just as enjoyable.

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SWEAT, dripping in a blinding, eye-stinging stream from my nose, freezing the shirt to my back, drying in a yellow ring on my wilting sunhat; snow, treacherous and comfortless, breaking away under my trip-weary feet, burning its white fire into my brain, climbing over my socks and dribbling cold and wet into my boots; sun scraping the skin from face, arms and legs, hiding the horsefly bites under its purple pricking glow. Damp nights in sodden tents, wet feet and greasy plates, meals in the mud, mud in the meals. My resolve became firm: I would destroy trek. My report would tear aside the customary curtain of hearty camp fire humour and present the dreadful truth. Public outcry. Trial and execution of the culprits. Trekking declared illegal. MGS sells lat. screens, buys luxury liner. But now I settle down to the kill I find myself incapable. After all, I enjoyed it too much.

Even discomfort and disaster are enjoyable, certainly amusing in retrospect, and the transient fits of misery seem somehow childish and unimportant. Trek must be endured to be enjoyed, but there is much enjoyment even in the enduring. The worse an experience at the time, the clearer and more pleasant the memory. The only adequate reaction to any inquiry about trek is a buoyant "It was hell". My advice to anyone contemplating it, is "Go."

This year trek trudged widdershins round Mont Blanc. It was a trek of innovations, of lost equipment, of new records; a trek of three countries and nine borders with never a passport stamped; of seven treks, four bivvies, eight excursions, and three rest days; of places beginning with C, of rain in France. It was a great success.

After all, it is not every day one camps below the highest precipice or climbs to see the highest mountain in the Alps. We certainly trekked across most rewarding terrain and in general had most rewarding weather to view it by. The feeling of motion was most important here. Our method was to trek up a valley towards a col, bivouac, trek over the col into the next valley, camp, and then excursion.

The constantly changing mountain panorama, and the numerous vantage points at which we could see both whence and whither trek gave us an impression of great distances covered and considerable achievement. This was heightened by our continual passage from one valley to another of an entirely different character, often, in fact usually, in a different country. Thus we exchanged the deserted rocks and storm clouds of Les Chapieux for the more homely ruggedness of the Italian Val Veni, and the quiet lushness of Trient for the busy fields and townships of the long Val de Chamonix.

For a month we became a well-knit pioneer community, hedge-hopping from one outpost of civilisation to the next. There is everything for everyone on trek. It is a complete experience. You climb with and without kit, up or down in all weathers, on all surfaces from blizzard-swirled snow slopes to sun-baked stream beds. You cook for forty-six people and eat the result. You sleep in every conceivable position and you fall ill at least once. Above all, you coexist with your companions for a whole month without committing murder.

We did not always trek in the sun. Memorable for that very reason was the trek from Les Contamines to Les Chapieux over the Col du Bonhomme. The rain started on Sunday, 17th July, in Contamines. The tents were packed wet and we trekked through the downpour, with a storm-swollen stream down the middle of our path, to the bivouac site at Hôtellerie de la Balme, about 10 feet below the clouds. The rain penetrated our capes to mingle with the cold sweat of our inner layers and we were wet through.

We slept the night in tents, satisfied merely to slow down, not stop the earthward passage of rain, and woke with no dry kit at all. Near mutinous we climbed into the cloud, feet soaked from fording a mountain stream. Snow began to fall in a fine, silent mist and visibility was virtually nil. Almost inevitably we got lost and our tracks led 33 other trekkers astray. We turned back. Stumbling, cursing, ready to cry with frustration, we cut our own steps up a precipitous virgin snow-field, and at last reached the col.

The sight of 79 people strung out dimly skein above skein across the snow was strangely stirring, Arctic rather than Alpine. We saw more people on that mountain than on any other - or perhaps they just show up better against the snow. At any rate, we bounced back with amazing (though not unusual) resilience at Chapieux. Two dry hours and we were singing our heads off.

Of the four bivouac treks (start after lunch, trek with food a short way towards a col, camp, eat and sleep) the last was the most remarkable. We had trekked from Trient (Switzerland) over the Col de Balme into France without finding a suitable campsite. The cloud was low and the hour late. Finally we chose a gently sloping rock-strewn ledge with a stream nearby and pitched the tents. Above us, crystallised from the swirling clouds, high in the sky, where only clouds should be, Mont Blanc grew forth, a silver luminous wraith, then faded and was engulfed.

From the darkening mist the outline of a grim-faced herdsman hardened into surly reality. Impressed by the holes we had dug, if not by our singing voices, he gave reluctant approval to our stay, hiding his cloak-swathed figure in a further cloak of cloud. We slept as the dim forms of cattle moved threateningly around us and woke to our best view yet of the Mont Blanc massif, ranged peak after snow-capped peak before us with the green Val de Chamonix below us flecked with clusters of residential white. The Hôtellerie de la Balme had its rain, Les Mottets had its rosy snow at dusk and dawn, La Vachey had its interminable herd of marauding cows, but none can compete with the site above Chamonix, with its views and its misty guardian spirit.

Our most dramatic experience was on neither a trek nor a bivvy, but on an excursion from Peuterey to the Rifugio Torino at 11,250 feet. We climbed twice the height of Snowdon in eight hours, at first at the excellent pace of 2,000 feet per hour, but the way became progressively more difficult. A little above the snow line we had to start rock climbing. The pace slowed literally to a crawl. Stones began to roll and much of the time we were scrambling up very loose scree. Twice we had to stop and be pulled one by one up pieces of sheer rock.

Rest fags were abandoned and we toiled up at our own pace in a long single file. On two snowfields we had to use the rope and we finished with a squirming, twisting climb round several exposed rock faces to the top. All this with a drop, or rather a roll, of 2000 feet or so nearby, at one time within a foot on either side. We certainly deserved the cable railway journey down. At least we had our first real view of the summit of Mont Blanc, cause of all our troubles. Somehow we seemed to have won a strange victory over it.

Excursions were a mixed bag this year. As a trek we climbed to the top of only one mountain (Mont Chétif, 7,810 feet), but there was a voluntary excursion to the top of another. We climbed to two glaciers (the Trélatête and the Mer de Glace) and saw many more. At Champex we struck cloud at a col, abandoned the original plan and ran down into the town. At Trient we had a rest excursion. We strolled gently up the valley, lunched, looked up at the places we should have climbed to and strolled back. A most pleasant change.

Of the campsites Peuterey was certainly one of the best. Soft sleeping ground shaded by trees, a sheer wall of rock straining skywards just across the field, the bustling cleanliness of Courmayeur nearby. It was here that we were visited by Mr. Harris, whose death occurred so tragically a few days later. The news of this, reaching us as it did in London, cast a deep shadow over the last hours of trek.

If this trek is to be known for anything, it is for the considerable breach made in the more inhibiting and unjust trek traditions. The reforms were numerous. Junior officers started doing lunch fags, non-volunteers cleared up after volunteers had made lunch, semolina was discarded entirely from the menu, mincemeat was used instead of stewing steak in bomb stew. Above all, for the first time we took a primus. It proved invaluable, and we hardly ever needed to augment it with a wood fire. A primus and sacking alone are quite capable of providing trek with a good hot meal. The days of damp matches and dripping wood at 4-0 a.m. are over at last.

Again, the description of regular legs on the Bonhomme and the Rifugio Torino taught us the principle of flexible trekking—in half legs (25 minutes trekking and 5 minutes rest) uphill and in full legs (50, 10) over easy ground. Loads were always changed after 25 minutes and the moving load change in the middle of a full leg became the rule. There was even talk of nylon tents with fly sheets and sewn in ground sheets. But Mr. Simpkin put us right here. "Oh no," he said, "we wouldn't bring those; they'd be too light - besides, they'd be waterproof."

Our thanks must go to Messrs. Kahn, Phythian, Robinson and Simpkin for leading trek so efficiently, agreeably and successfully. Anyone who can push boys up and down mountains in all weathers and yet make them enjoy doing it and reach the end of trek fundamentally liked and respected, has a rare gift. They have it in abundance. Our thanks must also go to John Rowbotham (1965) for his considerable contribution towards the success of trek, over and above the call of duty.

NO ONE can deny that many scorn the instinct which compels Sixth Formers to volunteer for a holiday traditionally involving an excess of physical strain. Such people were not surprised at the reduced support for this trek. We do not wish to appear propagandist; the smaller number was in fact an advantage; but only the School Captain failed to complete the course; it was easy.

Before irate blistered trekkers object one might point to improved conditions brought about by the innovations in camp procedure. Cooking by tents replaced the fag system, eliminated large awkward dixies and reduced trek loads in general. Gone were the five o'clock starts, for no movement was ever noticed outside or inside the zipped entrance to Mr. Phythian's new tent before 7 a.m.

Remarkable also was the absence of calamities, but the staff still had many problems to face; Mr. Wilde's cry of "Blisters" always drew a crowd; Mr. Kershaw will not easily forget a 20-mile hike for Gaz already at the site, and at one point Mr. Phythian found himself the victim of a local feud between the site owner, the grocer, and the Society for the development of St. Luc, none of whom would help if we were dealing with any of the others.

Our thanks go to these three, and to Mr. Dobson who was unable to go on trek but whose presence was always felt, since he had done the preliminary organisation. He became the scapegoat for all types of misfortune and the number of Dobson Practical Jokes [DPJ's] at one time numbered 40. Nevertheless those who had trekked before paid compliments to the choice of route. The way we could see future and past sites from high ground made on excursions was highly impressive.

The first site, on half a football pitch at Pralong, and the first excursion, to the Pic d'Arzinol, put trek in a very good humour, and indeed places were very important to the spirit of the party. It would be wrong to think of what followed as an anti-climax but nowhere else was there quite the same friendly atmosphere and no other excursion reached quite such a satisfying conclusion. The Val de Moiry was the other extreme, where we camped in a narrow valley at the end of a reservoir and the impression of being enclosed was strong. Two hours' walking brought us out of this, however, to a superb view down the Val d'Anniviers and the resumption of singing signalled better surroundings.

The end of trek was anything but an anticlimax. Zermatt was the biggest and brightest of our stopping places, and even the 20-minute walk into town did not depress anyone. One lucky tent, pitched in what proved in wet conditions to be the site of a large puddle, was rewarded with two luxurious nights in an actual Swiss chalet, complete with view of Matterhorn through doorway; this scene ranked with the arrival at Pralong, or with the multi-coloured and thunderous sunset over Meidsee.

But trek deserves discussion as a body of people, as distinct from 'Foreign Trek' as a touring organisation. The difference is worth emphasising. To an outsider trek is a much-administrated travel party intruding overseas. But while trek is happening, a strong sense of community grows. It became fashionable, for example, to suggest that 'the whole of trek' should wear cowbells across Paris, or should gnash its collective teeth at Mr. Dobson on the return . . .

The feeling of unity is well exemplified by a particular incident. At Gruben our German interpreter enquired for a site while trek sat in a large field. He returned to guide the foot-sore company to a small, obscure plot covered by trees. The organised tents were put up at once without regard for remaining space in proportion to canvas still to be erected. With guy-ropes entangled and feet ensnared, tired and blistered trekkers became cross.

But Herr Wilde and the community spirit overcame slight tiffs caused by the cramped conditions. He had been accosted in the village by an Old Wife who told him that our site was a "viper's paradise". This bad feeling was stopped by the addition of this new and highly original DPJ to the long list. And only one nightmare about snakes was enacted audibly.

With the one exception mentioned above, we were on good terms with the Switzers throughout. Our service at Pralong was excellent and the proprietor's wife opened the shop late at night especially for us, and then stayed talking for a positively friendly amount of time. The games facilities provided in the Zinal Hilton were appreciated too.

Trek was a social success with other nationalities: a Dutch party helped to enliven Zinal, a car-full of campers from Coventry seemed pleased to see us at St. Luc, and we could hardly avoid the very large numbers of American girls from expensive touring parties who were swarming all over Zermatt for the three days we happened to be there. The true warmth and humanity of their companionship can be judged from the complete absence of takers for a voluntary excursion the day before we left.

A stray copy of the *News of the World* and an article on the flower children what a laugh put these wild flowers that just happen to be handy on our clothes and all you need is Love making the main street scene in Zermatt and give flowers away and Mr. P disowns us . . . Next day's Swiss National Day, oh boy, and it ends with the municipal band striking up Colonel Bogey of all things after a 20-minute tolling of bells . . . bonfires on the distant cliffs and a long love-in on the post-office steps with guitars and songs—And there let us leave trek in festive mood in the semi-darkness; trek reunion will be held in California; gather ye rosebuds . . .

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"It's going to be hell tomorrow". The words of this year's Trek leader still ring in my ears long after the rest fag has ended all too abruptly, long after the last Trek meal has been cooked and long after the last tent has been taken down. The words remain in my mind not simply because it was 'hell' the following day, but because they are part of a memory which will last when details about Trek '68 have long been forgotten.

The details are that we made seven excursions - and missed one due to bad weather - that we bivvied three times and that we trekked seven times. Excursions - walking without packs from a set camp - were the easiest part of the programme; bivvies - breaking up a long trek by going as far as possible in an afternoon, leaving the major part of the trekking to the following day, and camping miles from anywhere - were less easy as one was carrying a pack (plus the tent if one was unlucky) although one only walked for a short time; and treks - moving over a pass from one camp-site to another - were the most gruelling because one was walking with full kit for a whole day. The facts and figures show that Trek did a great deal of walking this year - as always - but they by no means show the whole story.

Lunching on top of the Bondechrinde pass with a 4,000 ft. drop on one side; being greeted by pouring rain at our first camp-site and, nevertheless, having to put up our tents as well as having to cook a hot lunch; blisters; mist enveloping Trek on the way down from the excursion to the Rottalhütte - losing a boy, having to retrace our steps to look for him and, after not finding him, BAP's brave decision to carry on down; doing a twelve-mile road slog in bad weather conditions; two-thirds of Trek taking the wrong turning when coming to Ferden and, after escapades like sliding down an almost vertical slope to cross a river and then climbing up the same slope on hands and knees because the river was too strong to cross, arriving three and a half hours late; the view of the French Alps from the Gemmi pass, the view of the Eiger, the Mönch and the Jungfrau from the Sefinenfugge and the view of the Eismeer from the window in the Eiger are just some of the memories of this year's Trek.

Despite the hardships that we endured, the satisfaction of actually reaching the top of a pass and often having most spectacular views in some way compensated for the laborious journey down that was to come. Whether one had reached the top by walking over a snowfield or by plodding up a scree face (which at times demanded the most tremendous effort of will-power) there was always a sense of achievement - if not relief - that one had 'made it'.

It is a truism that one's memory rejects the bad things in favour of the good. One can apply this idea to Trek in that one remembers the ecstasy of a rest fag but the physical pain that one suffered is, for me anyway, impossible to recall. Perhaps this is all for the good; it certainly helps to make certain memories a great deal more pleasant than the event itself.

Such 'pleasant memories' exist for the last trek (from Grindelwald to Interlaken). After being shrouded in mist for part of our lunch-hour we met with pouring rain - so frequent on this year's Trek - which made the ground underfoot slushy, muddy and slippery and consequently very unpleasant to walk over. After two hours of such walking, Trek came to a railway station. Boys looked hopeful and murmured their approval. But surely Trek wasn't going to take a train merely because it was soaked to the skin? Well, it did as on another occasion when Trek strode into Murren at 4-00 to cries of "Here comes the army" (from the English tourists), having set off at 7-30 that morning.

The train journey from Murren to Lauterbrunnen was gratefully received not least because of the exhilarating views. "It would never have happened in Lob's day", was the comment from Trek's eldest member when such luxuries were indulged in. Lob? He ran Foreign Trek for sixteen years before the Second World War. In his day Trek rose at five (or even four if you were on breakfast fag), had the same type of food every day excepting trek days, and had to carry large dixies on poles for cooking fags. However, nowadays things have changed and Trek life - excluding the walking - is an easy and enjoyable one.

One of the exciting episodes this year was 'The Night of the Long Knives', which starred John Wylde as the defenceless hero and co-starred Brian Phythian as the man with the money and David Bowyer as the northerner who played it cool. The plot was as follows.

Thirty four innocent English schoolboys camped for the night above Lake Oeschinensee. Within two hours of arriving at the site, peasants from the hut on the hill came down to demand payment. This was unheard of. Never before had such a catastrophe occurred in Trek history. The boss-man stood firm. The peasants went away only to return again within the hour with two older bandits - one was wielding a knife rather too near the tents for comfort. It was pay up or get out. Interpreter Wylde could do nothing; his pleas fell on stony ground. Equipment Officer Bowyer said nothing, keeping his innermost feelings to himself; and the man with the money did nothing except to make himself the man with less money when he had handed over the payment for the site.

Despite such adventures occurring at least once a week there has been, in the past few years, a reduced support for Trek. This is a pity for it means that a large number of boys are missing the pleasures of this holiday and are failing to recognise the subtle combination of hardship and enjoyment. One must admit that, if it does nothing else, the hardship makes one appreciate the luxuries of life - sitting down, for example - that little bit more.

Three experts in the field presided over this year's hardship. Mr. Bowyer looked after the equipment; Mr. Wylde - his first aid book always at the ready - looked after our health; and Mr. Phythian - who claims that his only exercise during the year is Borrowdale and walking up the Sixth Form Block - looked after us all and managed to lead us more or less successfully up 50,000 ft.

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THE MEDICAL bag was aired, new improved tents bought, and 1968 porridge removed from billies. With this preparation forty-one impressionable boys, accompanied by four of their more hardened seniors, left for Foreign Trek.

The Matterhorn dominated Trek. Our itinerary almost encircled this incomparable landmark, looking gentle where covered with snow and menacing when silhouetted, at night, against an electric storm. Of course, the walking made Trek. The figures, 6,000 feet up [*presumably 60,000 feet - Ed.*] and 200 miles walked, are impressive on their own, but even more so when the quality of the terrain is considered, and the fact that several walks were dogged by the snow which was thicker than is usual for July.

But it wasn't all walking: John Howarth's contribution to Anglo-Italian relations finished with his football team being held to a draw by a group of ten year olds; some amazing local talent was discovered—all, however, overshadowed by our leader's falsetto renderings of oratorio.

We trekked from Alagna to Macugnaga on a mountain road built by Mussolini, or was it the Romans? Our descent found an unexpected snowfield. Various people favoured different methods of descent but eventually David 'Il Duce' Bowyer baptised the Trek rope by leading us straight down. The next trek, over the Monte Moro pass from Italy to Switzerland, was ambitious by any standards, since we were planning to take one day less over it than previous Treks. However, to the consternation of the purists, led by Geoffrey Thorpe, and to the evident or concealed delight of the majority, the snow forced us for safety's sake to take the cable car up.

We aimed to finish walking each day by mid-afternoon to try to avoid the worst of the powerful alpine sun. A typical Trek day therefore began at 5.30 a.m. with John Raffan and his alarm clock awakening us. Breakfast was individually cooked by each tent (the writer considers himself to be one of the few people ever to have breakfasted on a spaghetti omelette at 6,000 feet). We had three 'bivvies' (an afternoon's walking, pitching camp anywhere suitable and then completing the trek the next day). These remote sites were often the most picturesque. Few people will forget sunrise over the reservoir at Mattmark on our last bivvy.

By comparison the excursions were easy (even if one gentleman had expected them to be coach trips), and perhaps the best two were from Zermatt. The first, to the Mettelhorn, the only peak reached on Trek, entailed a climb of 5,000 feet and gave a view of the Zermatt valley and surrounding peaks. The next day we walked to the Hörnli Hütte, a mountain hut on the Matterhorn just below the final face. Zermatt itself was full of tourists, the predominant accent being American. Despite (or perhaps for) the tourists, August 1st was Swiss National Day. Flags flew, alpenhorns were blown and of course the inevitable Sousa was played.

Our campsites were varied. In Italy they were simply fields which, although short of facilities, were later appreciated when, in Switzerland, at two official campsites, we had to queue for everything. Finally in Zermatt, Messrs. Brydon and Jackson achieved a diplomatic success by smuggling forty-one boys into a field unknown, we hope, to most of the natives. The Trek cuisine, however, was superb: ice creams were eaten, jam butties made on station platforms. Spaghetti had a fascinating variety of flavours when burnt to different degrees; and complaints about the time taken to boil water were countered by a lengthy description of the wood fag in Lob's day.

In short, everyone found something to enjoy and we can only hope that Trek is now re-established as an annual event. Thanks must go to all the masters but especially to Mr. Bowyer whose organisation and patience made Trek a success.

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SINCE 1910, when it was founded, Foreign Trek has been generally regarded by those too indolent actually to join it as an earthly purgatory suitable only for madmen and masochists. Indeed, after the first day of the 1972 Trek those 21 adventurous individuals who had decided to question this conviction found themselves barely able to pitch the first camp at Les Contamines after only eight miles walk on the flat, and tending to agree with that same opinion. Backs were broken, necks sunburned, feet aching, rucksacks disintegrating, and Harry Rosenblum's heels were covered with blisters. You can't put old feet into new boots, as he painfully discovered. Thus Harry was unable to come on any of the excursions, a fate which caused him much anguish, but the next morning the rest of Trek, leaving kit at the campsite under Harry's ever watchful eye, trudged to the top (or almost to the top) of Mont Joly, a mere 8,300 feet high.

Somewhat exhilarated by the stroll, and rejuvenated by an enormous meal, the next day's excursion to the spectacular Tré-la-Tête Glacier was awaited with less dread. The glacier was reached in record time, and to celebrate the achievement the French very considerably arranged a firework display. The date was July 14th, but this, we felt, is irrelevant. The following morning, fully fit and no longer condoning the aforementioned general opinion of Trek, the adventurous 21 took up their packs for the first day's proper trekking, and proceeded to complete two days walking in one.

Trek is not only for madmen and masochists: the details are not too startling. In all the Tour du Mont Blanc does not measure more than 130 miles. This distance was spread over 11 days, the remaining 13 being either rest days or voluntary excursions from a base camp. Trek days tended to consist of a long, gentle climb from a valley up to a col - a high mountain pass - and a equally long descent into another valley. Excursions led the unsuspecting voyager into all kinds of perilous situations; to the top of a mountain over 11,000 feet high using a path classed as dangerous on the map, and unused for ten years: into the inner depths of the largest glacier in Europe, and onto the surface of smaller ones; and occasionally, to the destination intended at breakfast.

The Tour du Mont Blanc is one of the oldest Alpine routes. It is reputed that the first year MGS Trek used this route, and despite the fact that Mont Blanc itself was sighted no more than three times, it provides imposing scenery of the Mont Blanc massif, and great variety in surroundings. Three countries are visited - France, Italy and Switzerland. The French football team was beaten 2-1; the Italians, who arrived with their arms wrapped round each other and played as one would have expected them to play, were massacred 11-2; the Swiss hid, obviously having heard of these Mancunian phenomena.

Trek is primarily a walking holiday, and it would be decidedly unwise to contemplate it if one is not fond of walking. Some can walk better than others. Mr. Brydon could walk very fast. Others tended to mutter rude things about his ostentatious displays of physical fitness behind his back, being somewhat jealous of the longer rests he enjoyed. Nobody is expected to climb anything. The Trek rope is taken purely to reassure the nervous and impress other passengers on the Channel ferry, which purposes it serves admirably. Enjoyment, however, is not derived only from walking.

On Trek one begins to prize mundane experiences. Never has water tasted so delicious; never have peaches been so welcome as when Mr. Blagden, whose eccentric generosity is now famed throughout the Alps, produced from his rucksack a veritable hundredweight of them, and gave one to everybody; never has sitting down been appreciated so much; never has the slow progress of a growing moustache excited so much speculation.

Trek coincided with the 'Match of the Century', which prompted the greatest Board 19 player that Oxford University has ever produced to show off his enormous skill. As Chief of the MGS Chess Club, Mr. Erskine should have walked over Andy Paterson, but he was resoundingly defeated. Admittedly, he never looked at the board, but as it was dark anyway this made little difference to the final result.

Various memories linger on; the abundance of food; community singing of Rule Britannia and other songs. But now it only remains to thank the three gallant Trek leaders, and recall that Trek has been with MGS for over 60 years, yet it now seems as though its days are numbered, so few are the applicants to join it. Considering that out of 19 boys who went to Mont Blanc this year, 19 returned unscathed and would admit to thoroughly enjoying it, it seems ridiculous that the existence of Trek 1973 is feared for. It would be a simple matter to right this situation.

5 A.M., ALBERT SQUARE, 16th July 1973—a horrible start to trek: bleary eyes and thick heads which found it difficult to imagine the three weeks of sunshine and mountain scenery which lay ahead of us, or so we thought. It was even more difficult to think of rain, snow and discomfort. The trek lay across two national parks—Vanoise in the French Alps and Paradiso in the Italian Alps, rich with chamois and marmots, steep valleys, snowcapped peaks and cosy bistros. We were to camp in groups of four: 44 of us in eleven tents, each group cooking for itself and carrying all its own food and equipment.

10 a.m., a day later, having arrived in Modane on the edge of the Vanoise National Park and had our breakfast there, after a night spent without sleep on the train via London and Paris, we put on our 50 lb. packs, looking set to climb Everest but in fact totally unfit. We all thought that the chamois would be skipping around us the moment we entered the Park but it was a long while before we were to see any.

We crossed our first col two days later— Chavière at 8600 feet—and down across some thick snow on the other side to a conveniently placed refuge where six bottles of local wine and 44 glasses helped us on our way. We could see the edge of the enormous Glacier de la Vanoise spilling over the steep sides of the mountains on the other side of the valley.

Pralognan was the next little village en route and we spent three pleasant nights here, testing Génepy and some of the boys finding that the 'natives were friendly'. Our stocks of imported English delicacies such as 'Smash' were running out by now and so the menu widened to include such delicious dishes as "Ratatouille Niçoise" and "Cassoulet Toulousain"—after a day's walking you can eat anything!

On our second day in Pralognan there was a violent storm: the first time our tents were put to the test and also the first time that we realised the weather could be wicked in the Alps. Luckily the rain was not yet here to stay and we packed up camp and set off over the Col de la Vanoise, 7800 feet, for a two-night stop in a privately-run refuge Entre Deux Eaux. Fourteen were squeezed into the refuge itself and thirty into the straw-filled barn below. Several of the thirty developed imaginary hayfever on hearing the news but they did not escape their stay in the barn. Here our enemy number one—the weather—turned nasty. We had intended to attack the Glacier de la Vanoise but the cloud was too low and we had to abandon this project.

By now also our second great enemy was beginning to play havoc—the runs, the gallops, the squits—call it what you like—those who experienced it will remember vividly waiting in long queues in the pouring rain for the one primitive toilet at that refuge. Incidentally the squat variety of toilet was a new experience—certainly prevents the long stay!

From Entre Deux Eaux we set off in driving rain and mist towards Val d'Isère. It rained non-stop all day apart from an hour's blizzard as we crossed the Col de la Leisse. We went to bed that night wet and cold, with the temperature still dropping. It was like midwinter when we woke up—snow everywhere and the tents bowing under the weight. We were fortunately able to get a gym to sleep in for the next night and so we were able to get dry and happy again. Also that evening we all went out to a smart restaurant for a celebration meal, mainly on the funds. French cuisine is fabulous!

From Val d'Isère our intention had been to go over the Col de la Galise—a tricky pass—and into Italy, but the inch of snow which had fallen in the campsite, was feet deep further up, and that route was impossible. So we had to go a longer way round over the Col de Vaudet. This 'detour' gave us in fact some of the most beautiful and exciting walking we were to do.

The weather had cleared up while we were in Val d'Isère and we bivvied one night on the snowline at 8,000 feet in a hanging valley at the foot of the Col. We were up the next morning at 5 a.m. to see the sun rise on the Mont Pourri—a fabulous sight—and by 7.30 a.m. we were well on our way up the Col de Vaudet, 9,000 feet, which is the Franco-Italian border. By about nine that morning the crust on the snow was softening and we were falling through up to our thighs. It was exhausting work and we were glad to get below the snowline in Italy.

Rhêmes-Notre-Dame, two cols later, was our next stop, for two nights. We were in need of a rest by then and we had in front of us the highest col of trek—Col d'Entrelor, 9,500 feet. As usual, the maps, which had warned us of danger, were wrong, and we were soon over the top through a short section of slushy snow.

Before reaching Pont de Valsavaranche we had another session of blister bursting and repairing, the injured being brought to 'Doctor' Wylde who operated with the aid of disinfectant to increase the pain and Elastoplast to hide the horrible sight. And so we marched—and limped—on to Pont, our last base camp on the revised itinerary.

Gran Paradiso, 12,700 feet the highest mountain of the range, lay before us. Unfortunately it was shrouded in permamist! The guidebook said no crampons, no ropes needed. This was to be a glorious end to trek. We had the whole day off before to recuperate, restock empty stomachs and have a well earned drink of lemonade at the conveniently placed Albergo. During this day, some of the by now sickeningly fit boys, instead of resting, organised a volleyball and football match with a crowd of Italians camping nearby. Those who survived the volleyball match went on to lose 11-9 at football, mainly due to the efforts of the obese Italian goalie who totally filled the goal-mouth and crushed anybody who came near.

4 o'clock Thursday morning 8th August: pitch darkness: the only thing to be seen was the tiny blue glow from eleven camping gas burners slowly heating our early morning tea. The weather didn't look too bad—we had seven hours climbing up 7,000 feet before lunch. It was grim as we trudged off, the twisting path lit only by the feeble yellow light of worn out torches. We had a short break at the refuge Vittorio Emmanuele II at 6.15 a.m. and then set off up the snow field and glacier which led to the summit some 4 hours away. The weather was deteriorating; we were soon swathed in blizzard and mist. There was no trace of footsteps and eventually about half an hour from the top we had to turn back. But Trek had reached its highest point: 12,500 feet.

This really marked the end of trek—when we got back to camp that evening about 5 p.m., we kicked off our boots for the last time and fell asleep for twelve hours.

If trek needs summing up then let it be in this word: "GREAT"!

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