



ALPINE MEET

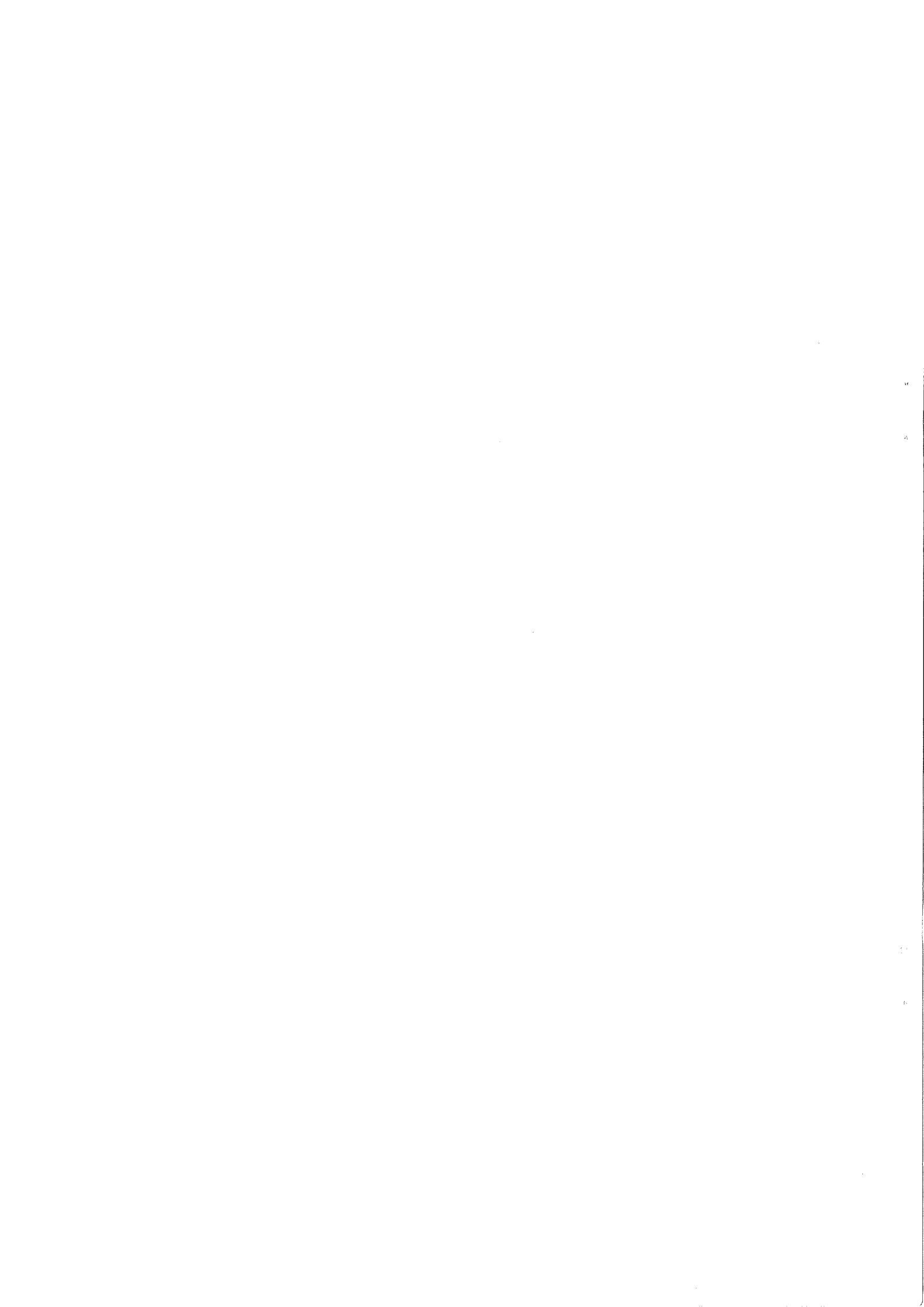
1988



YORKSHIRE RAMBLERS' CLUB

The good grey rock that loves a grasping hand.
The stress of body and the soul's rebirth.
On tall peaks where gods and men may stand
Breathless above the kingdoms of the earth

Showell Styles



THE HOME FRONT

Midday Tuesday: Sue returned suffering from the heavy cold that had afflicted several of us, with news of their intention to climb Piz Roseg and traverse to the Marco e Rosa Hut to meet Roger and Graham. It sounded like a long expedition.

Wednesday 1.30am Wakened by the thunderstorm and a sudden premonition - I hope they are not out in this!

3.30pm Roger and Graham come into camp: "Don't ask me where he is. I don't know."

All the possible alternatives - they could have returned to the Tschierva Hut, or made in the direction of the Coaz - but in either case they should have been back by now. Still, they would move more slowly - three in the party, and one inexperienced. To eat or not to eat? Keep something to heat up quickly when (if) they get back.

7.30pm Roger heads for the 'phone - contact the huts to try and get news. Queues for the 'phones: it's after 8 before he returns. "They are all right - at the Marco e Rosa - I've spoken to David - they spent the night in an ice couloir - Arthur's lost his axe. They'll be on their way back in the morning." At least we can get a night's sleep.

Thursday am It all starts again - the one really bad day we've had. Cloud only a couple of hundred feet above the camp - and it rained all morning. It'll be snow up there. Will they set off or not? Probably - it's an 'easy' route - they're probably running short of both food and money - and Shirley's due to leave for home tomorrow evening. Anyway they've already done the second half of the route last week.

No good arranging a last evening's dinner - have to tell Ian to call it off - no telling how long it will take them.

The cloud lifts at midday - but not high enough. Alan and Angie go up the Boval Hut path to look over the glacier and the track they would be coming down. Roger and Graham had taken six hours, how much longer would they need? Can't realistically expect them before 5.30: 6.00. Who's trying to be realistic!!

The Linfords return - no sign of them anywhere. Graham takes the car to the foot of the Diavolezza cable car - Arthur might have remembered the times of the last run.

7.15pm Action stations. Roger enlists the help of the Warden's wife, an excellent linguist, to ring the huts in turn. First the Marco e Rosa to check that they had left - yes: early. Then the Diavolezza and the Boval, both of which overlook the Fortezza ridge and the Glacier to ask them to keep their eyes open and let us know if there's any sign. Roger to

stay in the day-room to wait for messages, Alan to check with Graham and them wait at Morteratsch with the other car - all to report to HQ (the caravan) at 10pm when we would have to alert the Pontresina Police that a search would be needed the next morning. That left the women with the whisky bottle.

9.35pm Roger back with news - "We've heard from the Boval - they've seen three lights low down on the Fortezza Ridge - we've got to believe it's our party." He'd arranged to ring back just before ten - when they close down for the night: in fact they kept their lights on till midnight as a beacon. Everyone foregathers at 10 pm Excitement all round. The second call confirms that they are on the glacier. Obviously they are due for another night in the open. Rescue party to be up at 2.30 - soup, coffee and fruit.

Fri. 3am Roger, Graham and Alan leave in two cars. We turn over to try and get some more sleep.

lam Alan's shout "Elsbeth!" Michael and David stagger over the grass. Half an hour later Roger and Arthur return - then Graham - who had dashed up to the Boval to give our thanks and the news that all was well. Thank God. **E.A. Smith**

The 1988 Alpine Meet was based on the campsite at Plaunus two kilometres south of the Morteratsch glacier in the Bernina Alps. The area offers something for everyone with great snow peaks, rocky ridges and beautiful valley walks. The weather was generally very good with two evening storms. The highlights were traverses of Piz Palu and of Piz Bernina via the Biancagrat. The lesser peaks are such that one need have no alpine experience but can enjoy being in amongst the great peaks of the Engadine.

This meet report is a joint effort with contributions covering the various excursions from a number of members. F.D.S

PIZ MORTERATSCH (3750m)

After three days to get our eye in and our legs going it was generally decided that it was time we tackled one of the big ones. Piz Morteratsch seemed to fit the bill, a good position for viewing possible later routes, and accessible from the Boval Hut.

A party of ten set off at midday in brilliant sunshine and trudged up the M1 to the Hut (Z500m). This took about two to two and a half hours. We were all glad to sit on the terrace, take in liquid, and absorb the stupendous view across the glaciers to Piz Palu and Piz Bellavista. The night proved to be hot and sticky, when we had expected cold.

Reveille was 4am The hut came to life in the time-honoured slow, sleepy manner, exactly the same as before a long walk - inward anticipation contrasting with laborious chores of dressing, checking equipment and eating. We left the hut at 5am taking the steep path upwards. Dawn gradually showed itself very red, reflecting off the light cloud cover. After an hour we reached a small field of hard snow, which was followed by a path over loose stony ground that some found hard after the relentless climb of the last one and a half hours.

After the stones came the big scramble up a steepish rock face. The route was marked with red paint blobs and it was about 200m long. Some parties roped up but we scrambled up, taking care. One member however required some assistance.

This took us to the col. Here we put on crampons, ate and drank something, added more layers of clothing and roped up in twos and threes. One member of the party decided that she had had enough and remained in a bivvy bag at the col until we descended. We set off when ready - the party was separated now - up the steep snow slope (maybe 45-50°). The final steps were along a short flat ridge, quite broad enough for comfort. The peak was a rocky outcrop. The time was 10am

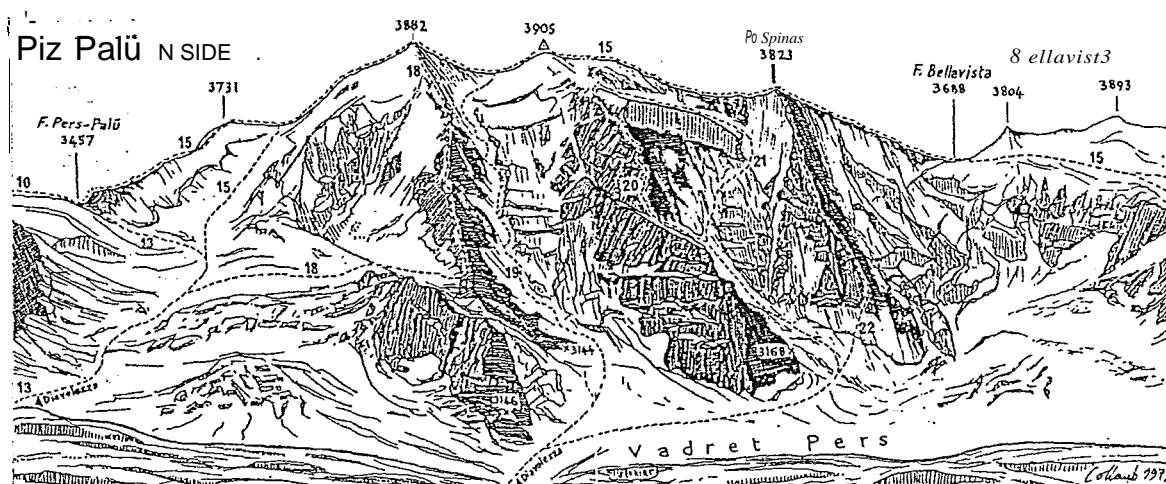
There were some thirty people on the summit, who had come up from both sides of the mountain. It was rather crowded. It

was also cold. The cloud level had thickened and from the south-west bad weather was getting very near. The peaks were still clear, but grey and black, no blues and crystalline white this morning. So after a few compulsory photographs we set off down - by the same way we had come up.

We roped up for the descent of the rocky scramble - a precautionary move, but there were no problems. The final descent to the Boval was in steady rain-Gortexes very evident.

We reached the Boval at 2pm - rested, ate and drank as much as possible to replace the many centilitres lost through effort in the last ten hours. Then back to the camp. It had been a good choice for a first peak, providing adventure for novices and training for experts who would go on to tougher things.

D. Armstrong.



PIZ PALU 27-28th July

Five members and two guests assembled late on Thursday afternoon at the Diavolezza hut (2973m); two puritanical members had scorned the ascent by cable car and had toiled for four hours on foot in the blazing July sun. The hut is well appointed in every way providing amenities for tourists arriving by cable car to enjoy the spectacular panorama of the Bernina Alps. Dortoir spaces for alpinists were all of thirty inches wide with foam mattresses, and on this occasion the hut was uncrowded. Another British party was seen to bivvy out on the glacier with sleeping bags and carrymats to save the £10 for B & B in the hut, however only £4.50 was charged for a splendid supper with very moderate charges for an impressive selection of wines. Reveille at 3am was followed by breakfast at 3.15 with waiters serving excellent coffee and fresh bread..

The party left in good order at 4am to follow a route representing a rough circle with the Palu ridge forming the southernmost quadrant. Initially the route went eastwards along

a rugged track involving the occasional short scramble and contouring round the base of Piz Trovat; with good head-torches the main danger was from stray climbers pushing through to find their parties. The Pers Glacier was reached as dawn broke at about 5am, crampons were fitted and the party roped in one three and two pairs and set off up the gently rising snow. An hour or so later an ice fall was reached at 3200m; here the glacier steepened and was interrupted by deep and wide crevasses; a labyrinthine path had to be followed with care, working backwards and forwards along narrow adjacent strips and crossing from one to the other by dubious snow bridges. This section provided excellent material for dramatic photos especially crossing the large bergschrund at the top of the icefall.

A steep snow climb then led to the Palu ridge, a snow ridge which could be comfortably followed up to the first peak (3882m), an exceptionally extensive cantilever formation of snow projecting to the north, no doubt sculptured by fierce winds at this frontier of both countries and weather systems. This peak was the final objective of several other parties.

A further snow ridge, exposed on both sides and very narrow (15 ins. in places), led to the main peak (3905m) on the border with Italy. Two ropes reached the summit under calm conditions, but the third had to claw their way along fearful of being blown off by a fierce crosswind.

The snow ridge to the third peak (3823m) was more comfortable and the view to the south, a vast plain of snow at about 3500m to endless peaks beyond, could be enjoyed to the full. The next section of the ridge to the Bellavista pass, still very exposed, was formed of good granite slabs with plenty of holds, and it went well once the crampons had been taken off!

At the Bellavista pass the route left the main ridge and descended northwards down the Fortezza ridge. Guidance from the book to take the west side of the ridge was helpful but the route was not entirely clear, and being exposed, required some care. It was reassuring later to come up to a French party who were just successfully abseiling from a fixed ring. They were duly followed and there were no further problems in descending to the main glacier, the Valdret Pers. From here the so-called "dry" glacier was crossed on the level to the other side where an intermittent track wound up a 200m high slope of boulders and scree back to the Diavolezza hut. The party returned some twelve hours after departure at the very moment when the weather changed to a torrential rainstorm.

A memorable day, fine, bright weather, a route of varied character of rock, snow and ice, requiring some care and effort, with the reward of interesting features and spectacular views.

I. Potter

ASCENT OF PIZ ROSEG via La Crasta (Middlemoregrat)

The previous day we had walked, up to the Tschierva Hut from Pontresina, and after the customary Biere on arrival, we did a bit of route reconnaissance in the hope that we would be able to find our way through the steep and loose moraines the next morning.

It was clear and moonlit as we crossed the dry Tschierva glacier, passrig below the rognon before climbing its righthand rock and scree slope to reach the glacier above. We worked our way up the higher glacier with considerable ease as kindly providence had provided a zig-zagged path through the maze of crevasses which allowed us to contour our way round the large snow basin until we reached the bergschrund below a short ice slope and the start of the ridge proper. From here we were able to see clearly two people half way up the impressive north face. The ridge was composed of good solid rock which allowed us to move quickly. There were fixed ropes at one point, but these were not used as the nylon looked decidedly decayed. From the edge of the rock ridge an easy snow slope led to a saddle where the route is supposedly joined by the normal route by which we were going to descend. From the saddle we climbed the fairly steep ridge and reached the Schneekuppe, the subsidiary peak of Piz Roseg, and descended a narrow corniced ridge before removing our crampons to climb to the summit (3937 m). Just as we reached the summit the two climbers who were on the north face reached the Schneekuppe, where their climb ended.

After a brief lunch we started our descent, following the same route to save time, as large thunder clouds were starting to form in Italy. We retraced our steps to the point on the rock ridge where the fixed ropes were. There was also a well placed abseil point comprised of bolts and steel rope, so we decided to shorten the time it would take us to reach the bergschrund by abseiling down. We came across more of these well built abseil points, so in no time at all we were 250m further down and only a few feet from the bergschrund. Unfortunately there was no bridge to cross it and we had to climb precariously down into it to reach the other side. The return to the hut across the glacier still held a few surprises due to the now soft snow balling up on our crampons and causing numerous slips and falls, one of which resulted in a crampon being embedded in the back of a leg. However, the route was interesting and a very worth while trip; completing it in guide book time made it even better!

G.R. Salmon

DAYS OF EPIC PROPORTIONS

Leaving the Tschierva hut at 4am. Arthur, Michael and I headed down the terrain to the Tschierva glacier to cross it and join the Amguaglious glacier en route to Pf.z Roseg. All went well until we reached the head of the glacier when Arthur plunged almost waist deep in an icy pool. The ordinary route up the west side of the mountain was anything but; what should have been hard snow on rock was replaced by loose scree on steep rock making progress desperately protracted. The guide book refers to a triangular glacier after crossing several gullies but we must have taken to the snow too early and found ourselves climbing steep rock.

Dark clouds began to form and as six hours had already gone by we decided to retreat via a snow slope to the Sella glacier below. It was about 4pm by the time we had reached the Sella Pass about four kilometres from our rendezvous with Roger and Graham at the Marco e Rosa Hut. Crossing the Scerscen glacier was slow and tedious due to wet snow and water on the ice. We eventually reached the rocks and couloir of the Fuorcla Crast Aguzza on which the hut stands. It was now 6pm.

Here we made the great mistake that was to saddle us with an epic ascent. The rocks looked very loose and very steep; subsequent reading confirmed this adding that the fixed ropes were not to be relied upon. The snow looked the better way. We did have some difficulty crossing a number of bergschrunds with many detours but all this seemed preferable to the rocks. The time whizzed by, the snow became steeper and changed to ice. We gained height with little chance of retreat until we climbed on to a rocky shelf.

Now it was ten thirty, the hut was silhouetted against the dark sky but much ice separated us from it. A bivouac was decided upon. This was only just in time; soon we were to be treated to a most dramatic storm as we settled into our bivvy bags. Lightening split the sky punctuated by tremendous crashes of thunder. We felt reasonably safe belayed to a four foot square block of sloping rock. The night dragged on but eventually at 6am it was time to make a bid for the hut.

The snow and ice at this stage increased in steepness and in difficulty. To add to our problems Arthur dropped his axe which slipped a thousand feet below. The safety of the party was dependent upon two ice screws and extreme care with every move. The wind cut through the best of clothing reducing us to uncontrolled shuddering rather than shivering. Now the situation became even more tense as we forced a passage along the ice adjacent to a vertical rock wall dripping with water.

Great slabs of ice had to be hacked away to provide a gangway, hand holds had to be carved into the ice, but we were moving upwards. The red painted hut appeared and disappeared

first in mist and then rain: but by midday we were safely inside the hut. Without a word the guardian lit a gas heater, a French girl lent us some dry clothes and after hot soup and lemon tea we felt human again.

Our plans for the next day had to be drastically changed when the day dawned misty, Piz Bernina was out. The wind had gone however and it was agreed to return to camp via the Bellavista traverse and the Fortezza ridge. Within the hour our second epic was to begin; snow began to fall and very soon all the tracks had disappeared. Compasses are only of limited use in such a crevassed area but we somehow managed to stay on course as periodically a trace of a footprint was to be seen.

A narrow ice bridge afforded us a way over a crevasse but within inches of the far side the leader ran out of rope and was pulled backwards into the yawning gap. All was well - a wedge of ice some ten feet below halted the fall and recovery was not difficult. As we neared the Fuorcla Bellavista a deep crevasse barred our way. No matter - a good stride solved the problem. The leader was moving on to give additional safety to the rest when a hidden crevasse opened up and the unfortunate alpinist disappeared from view. It was a dramatic experience - crashing through a host of icicles suspended from the fragile ceiling of the crevasse. This time I was suspended twelve feet or so below the surface but was able to swing towards an ice ledge and gain a knee support only to be pulled off again. Repeating the process and using the axe to fend off the wall behind me, I gained height inch by inch using the front point of my crampons and a hand on the rope. This technique proved successful but much energy both physical and nervous had been expended.

The route down was by the Fortezza ridge; a week before it was mainly rock, now it was snow lying on rock which could be either loose or firm. The traverse took an inordinately long time. The thick mist made the estimating of distance impossible and it was ten-thirty before we reached the Morteratsch glacier. All that was left was a walk down the dry glacier.

The light from the Boval hut helped us; but thinking it would be easier to follow a moraine in the middle of the glacier we failed to head for the hut. A series of very deep crevasses necessitated a zig-zag course which took an age. By 2am we were exceedingly tired and a rest was essential. Again we used the bivvy bags, this time on the hard cold moraine. It was so cold that by three we were on the move again. Up on the Boval path we saw three lights and then heard Roger's Scottish call echoing into the night. It took us a further three hours to reach the snout of the glacier where we were greeted with hot soup fruit and other delights by our friends. Tired but little the worse for wear we arrived back at camp from an exciting adventure that tested us to the full. Never underestimate distance in the Alps; always read the guide book carefully and study the map before setting out. F.D.Smith

REPORT OF THE CAMP FOLLOWERS

The Alpine Meet! Reports of hard snow and ice climbs! We wonder are non-alpinists put off this most enjoyable meet. If so read on because this section of the meet report includes the activities of an alpinist who broke his thumb just before the meet, and joined what have been referred to as "camp followers and snow widows."

Members and, their ladies arrived at the camp site by various routes and at various times. The Hull-Zeebrugge Ferry again proved a popular start to what is now almost complete dual carriageway to the centre of Switzerland - Colmar has an excellent camp site close to the town which meets its reputation as the little Venice of France.

Camp followers have the pleasure of greeting everybody into and out of the camp; the Allens arrived, fresh from the Oberland, in the middle of a thunderstorm and when the worst had passed, refreshed with coffee and cake pitched tent in true YRC style. The Hon. Treas. and family came via Chamonix. Shirley Salmon travelled solo both ways by train; as quickly as by car! The Mackay camp arrived by easy stages and provided much speculation in camp. The frame one day - cooking gear, chairs and miscellaneous gear next, then finally the canvas, but the bits never seemed to form a whole. Being "in camp" means you can be on hand to help your friends who have been out longer than expected: when you know they have spent one night out on the mountain and are not where they should be the next night. Someone has to decide what to do. What better display of fellowship than to meet them at first light on the glacier and watch them eat a huge juicy peach.

Switzerland abounds with footpaths and cable hoists of one form or another and they can be useful with careful planning - they are usually crowded, but a hundred metres away from the terminus you are on your own. The hoist to the Diavolezza lifts you over 800m of horrible path to join the tourists to the top of the Munt Pers tillen on our own to Piz Trovat, across the Vadret Pers glacier under Piz Palu, across the bottom of the Fortezza ridge, over the Morteratsch glacier to the Bova hut. A drink with the Warden - a lady from Yorkshire, and back to camp. A long day, but no real difficulties. A standard route which can be made longer or shorter. Flowers everywhere, but no edelweiss so we set off to combine a hunt with a day's mountaineering. From the Bernina Pass we climbed over open alp to the foot of the Caral glacier where we found the remains of an air to air missile) up the glacier -steep but safe to the col, the Forc Du Caral - found our own way over the rocks to the summit of Sassal Mason and a steep ridge descent back to the Pass. A good day - one of those hills that never give' up - but no edelweiss, no people and no paths.

Pontresina has snow views at one end - a rock peak skyline at the other. By rail and car you can extend the scope of the meet to peaks like Piz Ot - a summit of 3246m, 1700m from bottom to top, paths through pine forests, alps rich in alpine pansies and magnificent rough and easy rock. If the Piz Padella is included you have a challenge equal to any big Scottish traverse. We had ten such days out in an area officially described and protected as "an area of outstanding natural beauty", which provided close contact with kites, deer, ibex, fox, marmot, red squirrel and voles. Other camp followers, by judicious use of the train made several valley walks and shopping tours including trips into Italy.

Any members attracted to three day back-packing trips or mnl alpine excursions, join us next year. I would be prepared to repeat this year's activities. W.A.Linford.

Once again we succeeded in having an excellent meet, new friendships were made and older friendships enhanced. The recovery party just being there was a tremendous fillip to the tired party returning from our exciting though not-to-be-repeated experiences around Marco e Rosa. There is much still to be done in this alpine area and a return is a must for the not-too-distant future. F.D.S.

M.G. Ackerley Guest	A. Linford Guest	S. Potter Guest
C.R. Allen	W.A. Linford	G.A. Salmon
S. Allen Guest	A. Mackay Guest	G.R. Salmon
B. Armstrong Guest	D.R. Mackay	S. Salmon Guest
J. Armstrong Guest	S. Mackay Guest	E.A. Smith Guest
J.D. Armstrong	I.M.D. Potter	F.D. Smith