

Yorkshire Rambler's Club

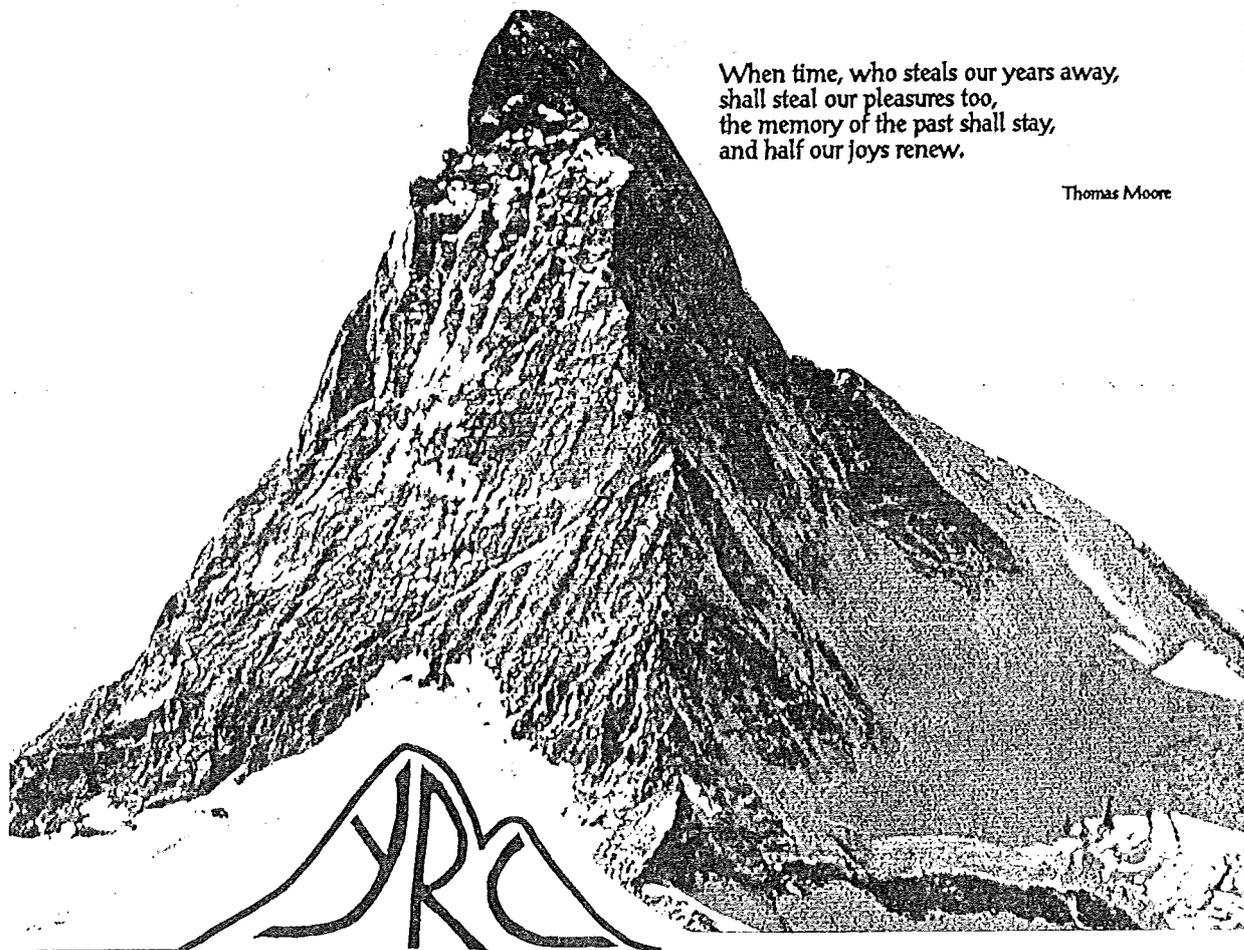


Alpine Meet Pennine Alps

July - August 1993

When time, who steals our years away,
shall steal our pleasures too,
the memory of the past shall stay,
and half our joys renew.

Thomas Moore



THE YORKSHIRE RAMBLERS' CLUB

ALPINE MEET 1993.

The Meet

The question asked of many mountaineers is, 'Have you ever climbed the Matterhorn?' This year was the opportunity for our members to do just that. The valley boasts many very fine peaks, the Weisshorn, the Dom. and the Monte Rosa, to name but a few. With a total of 39 attending, the meet was the best attended so far. The average age was considerably down on that of earlier alpine meets and the activity was very high with the majority of the major peaks bounding the valley being climbed.

Location

The campsite chosen was at Randa in the Saint Nicholas valley- perhaps the most famous valley in all the alpine regions. It lies to the south of the Rhone valley, leaving it at Visp and extending up to Zermatt. Randa was preferred to Zermatt as it is less spoiled and does not attract so many tourists. The dominant peak seen from the campsite is the Zinal Rothorn.' A massive land slip of a few years ago only a two kilometres away demonstrated the anger that these mountains can exert, but it also illustrated how man can respond;" the Swiss re-routed the road, railway and river in just one week.

Campsite

Most people considered the site to be the best so far. It was fairly crowded, but there was a rapid turnover. The site shop was very handy and there were the villages of Tasch and Randa in easy walking distance. Also easy rail access for Zermatt and a cheap minibus ferrying to and from Zermatt. The owner and staff spoke good English and were extremely helpful in booking huts for us by telephone at no charge.

Weather

On our arrival the main peaks were liberally covered in snow, particularly the Matterhorn, which seemed not to be in good condition during the first week. However, the weather was mainly fine and warm, except for the thunderstorms which caused the climbers some problems. Most of these were in the afternoon while people were descending, but one early morning storm caused an ascent of the Dom to be abandoned.

Those Attending

Of the 39 people attending, there were 16 members of the Club, 7 wives of members, 4 children of members, a Norwegian family of 5 and 7 guests. 23 were active in the high mountains, but all the others spent time on the many and varied alpine walks.

Arthur Salmon	David Gott	Jack Short	Simon Waddicor
Shirley Salmon	DavidHick	David Smith	Martyn Wakeman
Barbara Salmon	Christine Marriot	Elsbeth Smith	Daniel Wood
Graham Salmon	Alan Linford	Fiona Smith	
Sue Allen	Angie Linford	Richard Smith	
Tim Bateman	David Martindale	Michael Smith	
Stephen Beresford	Alister Renton	Helen Smith	
Christine Beresford	Chris Renton	Kjetil Tveranger	
Ken Bratt	Joyce Renton	Ann Karin Tveranger	
Peter Chadwick	Neil Renton	Kristin Tveranger	
Harry Curtiss	Jonathan Riley	Marte Tveranger	
John Devenport	Howard Rutter	Andreas Tveranger	

Mountains Climbed

Monte Rosa (4634m)	Breithorn (4165m)
Dom (4545.4m)	Allalinhorn (4027.4m)
Weisshorn (4505m)	Adlerhorn (3988m)
Taschhorn (4490.7m)	Feechopf (3888m)
Matterhorn (4477.5)	Leiterspitzen (3409m)
Zinal Rothorn (4221.1m)	Mettelhorn (3406m)
Alphubel (4206m)	Unter Gabelhorn (3391.7m)
Rimpfischhorn (4198.9m)	Lo Besso (3358m)
Strahlhorn (4190m)	Unter Rothorn (3102m)

Weisshorn (4905m)

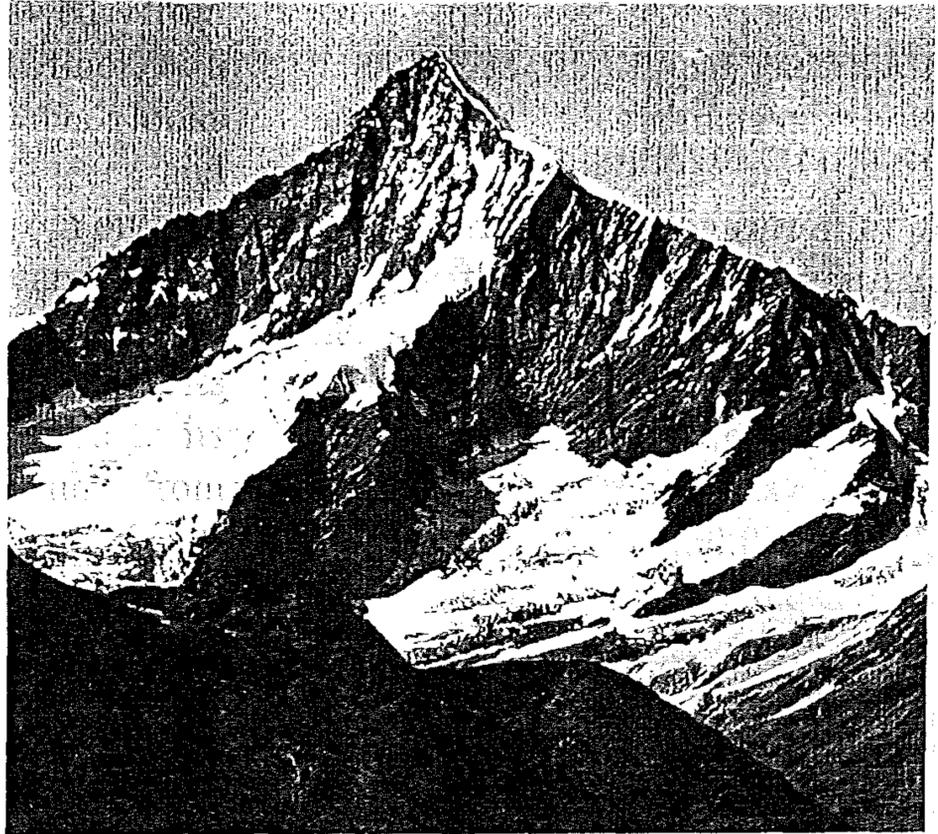
An Account by Peter Chadwick

Occasionally I wander round Leeds City Art Gallery at lunchtime. I never tire of renewing old acquaintances and seeing if I can find yet different aspects and meetings with them. One of my favourites is an oil of the Weisshorn painted by George Sauter in 1913. If I could have just one this would be it.

It shows the lower broad slopes and shoulders in a mixture of bold greens and purples. Then the icy mass of the glaciers and lower snow slopes. Rising up still further comes a swirl of mysterious cloaking cloud. Then breaking out above this massive bulk; like a spearhead piercing the sky, two summit ridges come together in an exquisitely shaped point. The final touch, a master stroke, is an arced plume of white cloud blowing off the very peak itself into the upper atmosphere.

I looked at that picture since I was quite small. Then one day six years ago, I managed to get a little closer to my dream. Coming down from the Dom, I looked across the valley and saw directly opposite the seemingly razor-edged ridge leading straight up to the summit. The immense drops to the glacier on both sides were given relief and substance by the fluted effect of the snow and rock ribs on each face.

When viewed from the valley floor, a mountain always looks foreshortened and insignificant. You are lucky if you can see the top. You get no idea of the distances, nor of its position in relation to its neighbours. But, from middle height, say 10,000 feet, you can usually see the whole of the mountain in much better perspective. It is a truth universally



acknowledged that the Weisshorn is the most

beautiful of all alpine peaks, being constructed of three ridges and three faces of majestic proportions. The view I had of the Weisshorn that day was an almost near-perfect translation of the artist's vision into reality. I knew I would never be happy until I had climbed it.

We were woken at 2.00am. We knew the early hour meant serious business ahead. After a hasty breakfast we stumbled out of the hut at 2.45am. There were two other parties behind us, both with guides. We went well and were heartened by our early start. After crossing the glacier and climbing the steep snow slopes and a long loose rock rib we eventually joined the main ridge at 7.00am. The situation was breathtaking. At that point things became decidedly more interesting.

The lower rocky section of the ridge consists of a series of steeply rising steps interspersed with a number of gendarmes, each 20-30 feet high, which are mostly taken direct. These were accomplished without difficulty. I was really beginning to enjoy the situation as each step took us closer to our goal.

Where the rock finishes, the next section of the ridge is a steeply twisting snow crest. When I looked up to see what was involved I have to confess that for a moment a little voice said inside my ear 'Turn back now, just look at the exposure down there on the right; the snow is getting soft and you can't trust it.

Think what it will be like on the way down.' Then another voice said, 'Don't be silly, come on, pluck up your courage, you haven't come this far to turn back and it's not as bad as it looks!' So without hesitating further, we went on. First across a delicate traverse and then up the slope which varied between 40-50 degrees, crossing one or two well concealed bergschrunds in the process. It seemed endless. We had to stop to catch our breath. The two parties behind were slowly catching us up. The mist came down and the world closed around us.: Then eventually we had to climb a steeper snow pitch which we had to protect. Then the muffled shout came from above me. We had made it! It was 10.00am. We had taken 7 hours compared to the guidebook time of 6 hours. Very soon we were joined by the others. There isn't much room for 9 people on the top of the Weisshorn and after peering down the Schalligrat ridge (SW) and Younggrat (NW) we began our descent.

-All went well, except that the snow was now becoming increasingly fragile and soft. . With a sigh of relief we eventually reached the rocky section. However, :relief'soon vanished as we heard the distant rumbling of thunder. Looking to the south we could see a mass of inky blue thunder clouds rolling in from the direction of the Matterhorn and the Dent d' Herens. Then a flash of lightening. We quickened our pace as I subconsciously counted the seconds. We had to get off that ridge as quickly as we could.

At about 2.00pm. the storm hit us. I have to say that being in the middle of an electric thunderstorm is an experience I shall never forget, but one that I don't wish to repeat too often. Climbing off the end of a gendarme, I suddenly felt a flash and a shock, like a violent jerk.: I managed to climb down. I was surprised to be still alive. I didn't require a second thought. David Hick and I both dived for cover under the nearest rock and peered down into the abyss. It started to blow hard and to snow. What could we do in such a situation except sit tight and pray?: There was a continual loud and ominous buzz of static in the air. Then there was another flash close by and we both received another mild shock. The clanging and banging over our heads sounded like an orchestra gone mad with demonic frenzy.« a concerto for timpani and bass drums. Below us we could hear the rocks and ice crashing down. It became dark, as if the end of the world had arrived. I thought of Turner's storm pictures and hugged the rock tighter.

After a while, the wind lessened and I saw the centre of the storm, a dense steely blue murkiness; drifting away down into the valley. The rumbling became fainter: Away to our right we could see a hint of brightness in the sky. Gradually it became lighter and a tranquil calm came over everything, like the dawn of a new day. We stood up and shook the snow from our clothes. Then came a friendly wave from the gendarme below us; the others were alright as well! We picked up our gear and carried on down.

Matterhorn (4477.5m).

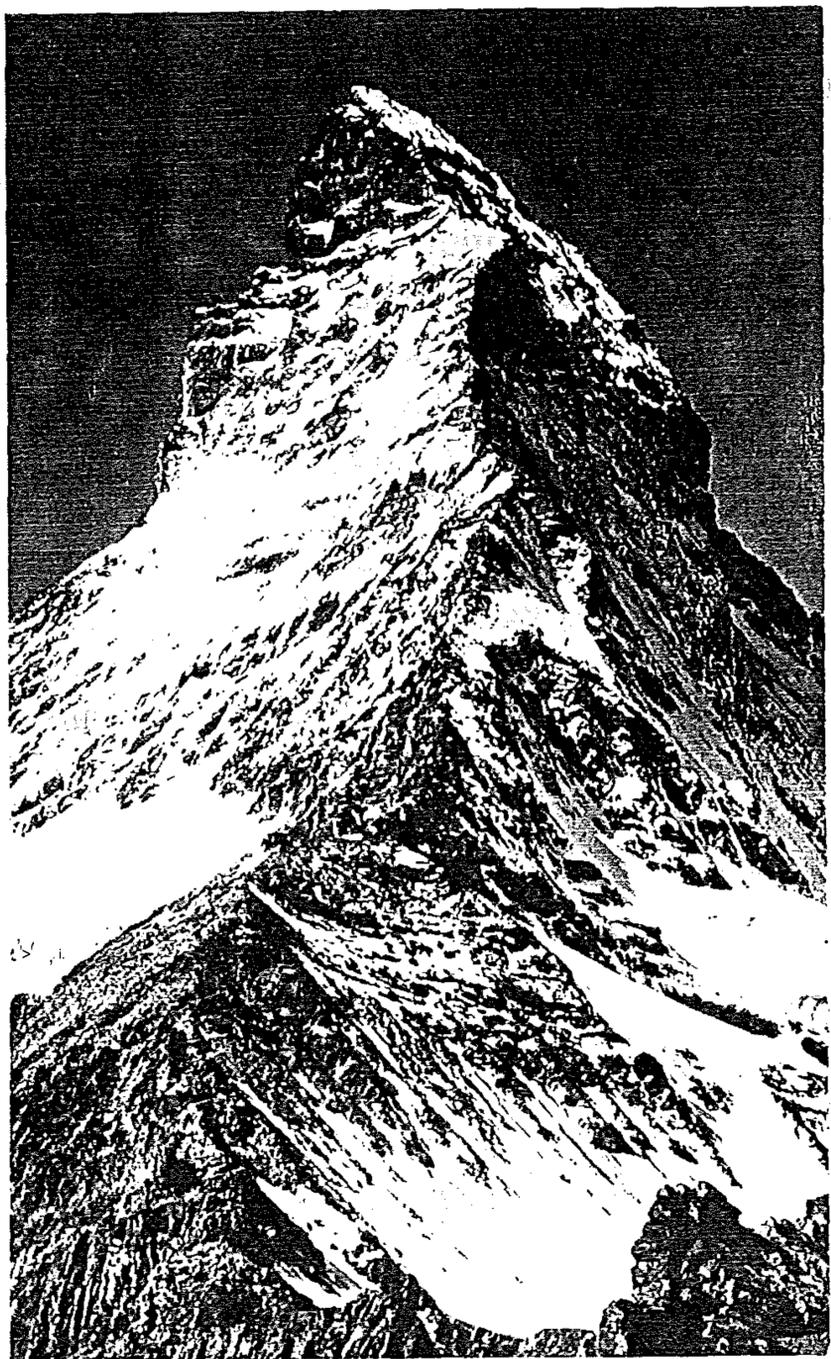
An Account by Jonathan Riley

The first time I set eyes on the Matterhorn was at sunrise from the Dent Blanche. Such a magnificent shape lying isolated from its neighbours and on a par with many Himalayan summits in terms of its beauty. To the non-mountaineer, it's the mountain that they have heard of and thus it seemed a good idea to make an attempt. The most popular route is the Hornli Grat - conflicting accounts and stories abound about this route. So it was with mixed feelings, that Graham and I set forth to walk to the hut.

We started our toil at midday and were glad to leave, the last of the tourists' on the outskirts of Zermatt and arrived at the Hornli hut four and a half hours later dripping with sweat. We watched climbers descending and attempted to pick out the route. It was obscured by cloud above the shoulder, but we did see the Solvay hut halfway up the ridge. The morning brought a clear sky - to the north were the lights of Zermatt and to the south the lights of the faster guides dragging their hapless clients up the ridge.

We soon came upon the first fixed ropes. There followed many short easy climbs and scrambles on slabs and up chimneys. The rock was rough and cold to the touch and loose in places. Graham and I moved steadily, unroped, passing some climbers before reaching an exposed ledge with a hand traverse.

Large metal spikes strategically placed allow one to move together with protection by passing the rope through the rings whilst passing. We arrived at the Solvay hut in the first of the morning sunshine. We had had no route finding



problems and were making good time and were very happy. From the Solvay we rounded a corner and climbed directly up onto the ridge proper. At this point the exposure was quite fantastic. Behind us, to the left and right, the rock fell away to the glacier and moraine below. Ahead rose a snow field that was being buffeted by a strong wind which threw spindrift into our faces. We decided not to use axes and crampons as we could make faster progress in the bucket steps of previous climbers. It was a decision we were both to regret; as the angle of the snow increased we were forced to use our hands in the sugar snow. Thankfully, there were still more metal spikes sticking out of the snow which we used as runners.

Eventually we reached the famous fixed ropes. They resemble very thick car towrope and were fixed to more spikes. It was very busy, guides on their way down having little empathy for their clients who were timidly grasping the rope for grim death and the guides following nonchalantly, sliding down the rope facing downwards towards the valley - a slick performance born out of many repetitions of the descent. As we climbed the ropes' hand over hand, a constant stream of men and women came down on top of us showering us with snow and pebbles and narrowly missing our hands with their crampons.

Two guides offered us advice, 'Keep moving up even if others are still coming down'. The second looked at us and remarked, 'This is crazy'; we just laughed in full agreement. More fixed ropes up the near vertical sections and then finally over the overhanging lip. I climbed until the rope went tight on my harness, Graham was not in sight so I shouted down for more rope - it did not come - it was an interesting situation dangling on a rope looking down the ridge, with my feet gently swaying in mid air and a tight rope! Unbeknown to me Graham was in a similar fix, as he had lost contact with rock when the rope below him had gone tight as someone descended. Graham heaved himself up the fixed rope allowing me enough rope to pullover the lip where I promptly dislocated my knee and fell over into the snow gasping, much to the amazement of three French climbers. Grahams hands and then head appeared over the ledge. My knee felt okay so we carried on up the final snow slope and on to the Swiss summit.

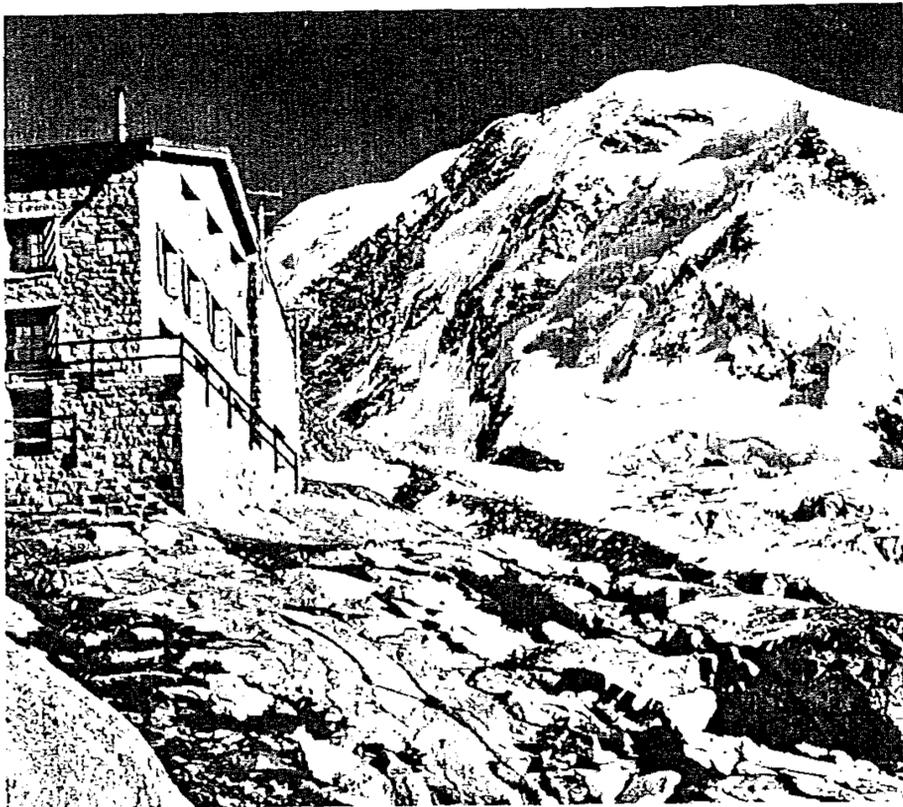
Ahead of us we could see the iron cross on the higher Italian top. Between the two summits is a very fine arete about 50 feet in length. Graham cautiously picked his way across, pausing only briefly to look down into Italy. As the rope went tight I followed, standing in each one carefully and deliberately. We arrived at the cross taking pictures and blowing up balloons and admiring the incredible view.

We were hit by wind-blown snow and the cold wind that froze on our hair and faces persuaded us to start our descent. We arrived back at the hut after many hours of down climbing and abseiling, both of us drained mentally and very tired. However we decided to walk the extra three hours down to the valley, and turned our backs on the mountain. Its fantastic shape drew our eyes for many a last look; it had been a great alpine day.

Monts Rosa (4643m)

An Account by Martyn Wakeman

This was my second Alpine season, the first being under the tuition of two Snowdonian guides with all decisions theirs. My introduction to the Y R C was on their winter Scottish meet with Steve Beresford. I arrived with Simori earlier than the main party and made a decision to select a peak within our competence.



We talked to the campsite warden who suggested the Dufourspitze, the highest point on the Monte Rosa. To avoid some of the slog up to the Betemps hutte, we took the train to the Gomergrat. I felt a little tense, but Simon seemed carefree.

After crossing the dry glacier to the hut, we found a flat space where we could bivi. We practised knots and rope work and tried to estimate the time we would require for such a long route.

We didn't sleep "much and at 2.00am we ate some food before we saw lights" coming towards us from the hut. At 3.00am we started off to join 40 or so others up the Monte Rosa Glacier. The stars were amazing, the Milky Way shining brightly in the clear sky. It was very cold with a sharp cutting wind. Our progress was slow, a snails pace, but we reached the col despite our unacclimatized state. The route is PD with II+ on the summit ridge, the thought of which did worry me as it might be iced up. It proved to be excellent climbing and I almost forgot about the altitude apart from panting after each strenuous move.

Simon complained of headache and was a little subdued, but the final ridge wasn't too bad. The snow was hard, quite a change from Scotland. The summit block looked intimidating. I am not sure whether we took the best route. We followed another group to a short chimney which barred our way, but there was a fixed rope which took us directly to the summit. Simon just wanted to get

down as the altitude was taking its toll. The views were amazing with a whole panorama of alpine peaks before us.

The snow plod back seemed to take ages - it was impossible to glissade. The guide book recommended getting off the glacier before 1.00pm. We were already two hours late..the snow was soggy and the snow bridges weakening, We ate our remaining food back at our bivi before setting off back to the Gomergrat. Our strength was waning and we agreed that we would not make the last train. We reached the station at 9.00pm and were relieved to be allowed to use the waiting room for a much-needed night's sleep. An eventful and satisfying three days.

Traverse of the Feechopf(3888m) and the Allalinhom(4027m) - 3/4th August.

An account by Arthur Salmon.

Ascent by Jonathan Riley, Arthur Salmon, Graham Salmon and Daniel Wood.

Jonathan had only arrived from England on Monday (2nd August), but as he and Graham had to leave Randa the following Sunday, was keen to bag some summits in the short time available. The decision was made to drive up to the Tasch Alp rather than repeat the long walk from the valley, as a number of us had done the week before on our first excursion of the holiday (on route to the Alphubel). By comparison, the relatively short walk from the hamlet to the hut was a pleasant stroll. Harry Curtiss, who had shared his car with Jonathan on the journey from England, joined us on the walk to the hut.

After dinner we sat outside for a while admiring the scenery as the sun went down until we were driven inside by the chill of the evening, leaving Harry to find himself a bivouac site some distance from the hut. The four of us retired early in the hope of getting some sleep before reveille at 3.00am.

Breakfast at that time of day is not a meal to be savoured, but each of us got something down and then joined the chaos of the preparations for departure. The small entrance 'foyer' of the hut is jammed with rucksacks, people tying to fit gaiters, others sorting out crampons and ice-axes. The only sane way is to get out of the hut as soon as possible and complete the preparations on the terrace. However, our ability to cope had improved in the space of a week, and by 3.45am. we were kitted up, headlamps at the ready and prepared for the rough track up the moraine. Harry joined the party and off we went, Jonathan and Graham to the front and Harry to the rear. The moraine is a mixture of boulders, rocks and rubble and the narrow path is very much a single-line affair. As is often the case, a short distance up the track we caught up with a slower moving guided party of at least a dozen. Eventually frustrated by the pace, Jonathan, Graham and Daniel took to the rough to overtake and disappeared into the night.

Harry, who was freshly out from the plains, was lagging so he and I followed on at the more leisurely pace dictated by the guided party. Eventually we went down from the moraine onto the glacier and, there among a sizeable group donning crampons, we rejoined the boys who had waited for us there. Harry was feeling the altitude and decided to go back to the hut. Here we roped up, Jonathan and Graham on one rope and Daniel and I the other and off we set up the Alphubel Glacier as the darkness of the night gradually gave way to the dawn.

Progress was rapid up the glacier towards the Alphubel joch. However, as we approached the pass, storm clouds which we had seen gathering to the SW enveloped us in a flurry of snow flakes. We crouched behind a snowdrift at the pass to shelter from the wind as we waited to see whether the weather would clear or deteriorate. Luck was with us and in about 5 minutes the skies cleared so we set off over the broad snow ridge towards the Feechopf. Soon after leaving the summit the ridge narrowed to become a distinct rock crest and after a few yards we realised it was long enough to warrant taking the crampons off. The guide book describes this section as delicate and exposed, although in reality there were no real difficulties. Also, the guide book recommends staying on the crest of the ridge, but again we found at least one of the teeth was more easily traversed on its west flank. All along the ridge, the snow covered N. flank of the Allalinhom was in full view and the track to the summit was very obvious. Towards the end of the ridge, hard snow was encountered again and so we had to go through the job of putting crampons on again. This is where plastic boots and step-in crampons come into their own. Sorry for the delay Danny! Anyhow, by this time Jonathan and Graham were well up the [mal slopes towards the summit. We had been apprehensive that, with the sun beating down on it, the slope would be in bad condition, but, in fact, the snow was good all the way, with just a short icy patch just below the [mal crest. The boys had relaxed on the summit and awaited our arrival. The panorama was breathtaking with all the major peaks of the Pennine Alps on display. Not far below us was all the activity of the pistes below the Feejoch 'and, beyond that, Saas Fee and the valley. . . .

After taking lunch, we were off again down the upper snow-covered section of the SW. ridge. From Point 3921 we dropped off the ridge onto the SE. flank for some distance before joining the ridge again lower down. This section down the SE. flank was decidedly unpleasant having a strong resemblance to a semi-frozen pit tip interspersed with piles of very unstable rocks. At this point, with hindsight, we deviated seriously from the standard route. Crossing the ridge we followed a spur down which led us into a steep couloir which took us down the flank of the ridge. Initially the snow of the couloir was good, but the slope steepened and the snow became hard ice covered with , perhaps, one-to-two inches of snow. Jonathan and Graham front-pointed down. This was really something to get the adrenalin flowing. Looking up the slope all I could see was the soles of Danny's boots. He really seemed to be almost vertically above me. How long this lasted I can't be sure, perhaps 100m, but it was certainly a relief

to my calf muscles when, at last, the angle eased and we could face outward down the slope and quickly rejoin Jonathan and Graham who were, waiting by the bergschrund. A short traverse to the north brought us to a point where we could easily cross the crevasse and descend to the relative flatness of the Mellich Glacier where we were all ready for a well earned break.

After the break Jonathan and Graham set off at great speed down the glacier and were soon out of sight. During our stop, storm clouds had again been massing to the west and were moving rapidly towards us, so off we went following Graham and Jonathan's trail. In places the glacier was heavily crevassed, but worse still, the snow at this level had softened so much that in places we were sinking in to the waist.: The trouble was that one couldn't tell whether you were just sinking into the soft snow or going through a snow bridge. To make matters worse, while we were in the middle of the crevasses, the storm struck with its full fury, lightning striking around us and immediate thunder claps which reverberated from the rocks of the Vorber Wand just to our right. Just at that time I went into a crevasse up to my chest. Danny held me firm and I was able to get my axe-head into firm snow and pull myself over the lip as Danny carefully released the tension on the rope. Off we went again as fast as we could, surrounded by the storm. Finally we were off the glacier, but the moraine became a fairly prominent crest. Not too happy with this, we dropped into the ravine beside the moraine and carried on down until, at last, we were in the relative safety of the hanging valley below the glacier snout.

A traverse of about a mile and an ascent of about 150m and we were back at the hut where the boys were already stretched out in the afternoon sunshine and drying the gear. An hour's relaxation and then down to the car and the rather exciting z-bends back to Tasch.

The guide book describes the route as popular with British parties and 'Recommended'. Who would disagree?

Lo Besso (3667.8m).

An Account by David Smith

'If you are English then you must climb Lo Besso', this was the advice of Alphons Supersaxa, the Saas Fee guide to five Yorkshire Ramblers back in 1955. We had intended traversing the Ober Gabelhom from the Mountet back to Zermatt. During a conversation on the merits of guideless climbing of which he approved, he suggested our attempt be delayed one day to climb Lo Besso and Monte Blanc de Moming and the day after follow his tracks over the complicated Gabelhom traverse.

We gladly accepted this advice and offer and enjoyed an excellent day on Lo Besso rock followed by the traverse of Mont Blanc de Moming: he was absolutely right, it was a magnificent route eminently suited to our abilities,

although only 3668m it was all on splendid rock. That day lingered in my memory for the intervening years, but was it as good as I remembered?

In the second week of the holiday, having slogged up several snow peaks, Alister Renton, Martyn and I decided to drive round to Zinal to have a change of scene and for them to experience a rock peak. Zinal has changed far less than most alpine villages over the years and is still relatively unspoiled. The path up to the Mountet Hut has not changed at all; it is long and winding and seems to go on forever. However, the increasingly spectacular surroundings do compensate greatly for the effort.

The hut has a stunning location, probably the most beautifully placed hut in the whole of the alpine regions. The head of the valley is dominated by the Dent Blanche, the Ober Gabelhorn and the Zinal Rothorn supported by the fine, though lesser peaks - Point de Zinal, Mont Durrand, Grand Cornier and Trifhorn. Just to be amongst these wondrous mountains fills one with awe and wellbeing - a truly fantastic situation

One of the advantages of climbing Lo Besso is that it is not necessary, not even helpful, to set off early. We made a start at 7.30am heading up the ridge towards the Morning peak, then at la Forcle heading off across the safe glacier/neve of the Besso. The route on the Besso ridge can be clearly seen. A broad couloir known as the Cheminee about a third of the way along signals the start of the climb proper. Steep, but sound, rock leads up to the ridge. En route, numerous varieties of alpine flora decorate the route adding to the experience. On gaining the gap, what seemed to be an obvious way, judging by the scratches, lead to a difficult and apparently holdless wall with evidence of a previous retreat. However, a short descent of about ten feet brought us back on course and on to the main ridge. The ridge was quite reminiscent of Skye although not so rough and on a larger scale. Soon we encountered an enormous gendarme, climbable, but time consuming. The guide book suggests a traverse to the right, which we followed. Two further gendarmes presented themselves, both were turned as before. The final part of the ascent was on good rock, roughly following the crest to the summit block; then large blocks and even the suggestion of a path before we encountered the large iron cross marking the highest point.

Time was getting on. We were not making good time. Safety must always come first, especially on what was a different type of mountain for Alister and Martyn. In order to save time, we elected to descend rather than follow the normal way up the ridge to the Mont Blanc de Morning. We set off down the so called 'Ladies Route', but a little too early on the ridge, which necessitated several tricky ropings down which consumed much of the time we had hoped to save. Two ibex demonstrated the way to proceed quickly down steep rock, but sadly we lacked their agility and were limited to two legs. Alister and I headed straight down to the track leading back to Zinal, whilst Martyn gallantly offered

to collect our belongings from the Mountet hut. He was clearly well acclimatised for he reached the lower part of the path at the same time as we did.

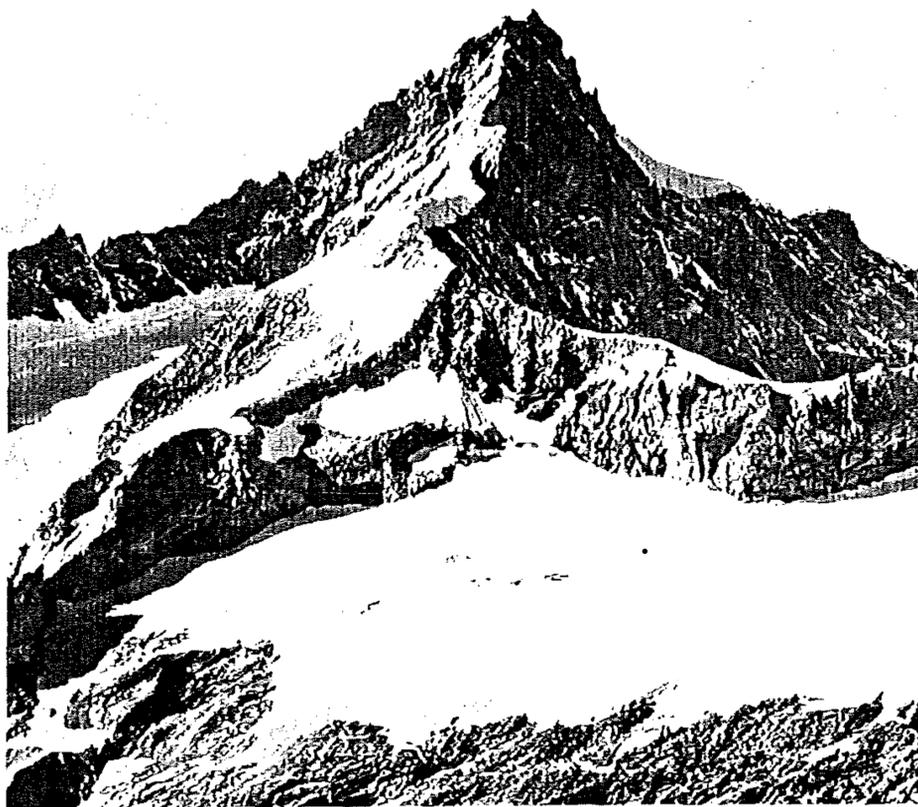
Yes, Lo Besso is still the fine mountain that I remembered. Its dramatic location and its superb rock make it a must to be sure for every rock climber visiting the valley. Those wonderful views of the Gabelhom and the Dent Blanche added so much to a great day in the hills.

The Zinal Rothom (4221.1m)

An Account by Jonathan Riley

After returning from the Matterhorn and lying in the sun, I felt fit again. What about the Zinal Rothom? Harry was easily persuaded; soon we found ourselves dangling from the handrail of the Randa-Zennatt train getting funny looks and being filmed on video cameras! The walk up to the Rothom Hutte starts in the woods, but is soon into relentless zig-zagging following a cool mountain river and into a deep grey gully.

Upon emerging from the head of the gully, we found ourselves in a large natural amphitheatre with a café and people, walking their dogs! The café was expensive so we headed back to the zig-zagging upwards and over the lip of the bowl into a flat glacial plain. After crossing a river and following the many 'cairns, we could just pick out the red and white Swiss flag, at the hut against the grey scree and the orange rock. A final



hours climbing over steep moraine' and I reached the hut tired and very dusty. From the bench outside I could see across the valley to the Dom and Taschorn, the Rimpfischhorn and the Allalinhorn, and to the south the Ober Gabelhom. Behind the hut was the start of the ridge that leads to the Zinal Rothom. Our evening meal was the now standard pasta with comed beef, followed by the usual disturbed doze and that horrible 3.00am wake-up call.

The weather was fine, we treated ourselves to a hut breakfast, got on our gear and began our trudge up the glacier. We found a snow gully in the rock band and climbed first the loose rock and then hard snow onto the start of the ridge. This was followed by a steady snow-plod up onto a very thin snow arete and the true start of our climb. The first of the sunshine greeted us as we picked our way along the arete, It led us finally to the rocks, with some interesting short scrambles into a snow gully bounded on either side with rock.

Four pitches of easy front pointing and mixed, climbing allowed us to cross the eastern face of the mountain and join the end of the south-east ridge, the Rothorngratt, at a gap between boulders quite reminiscent of Tower Gap on Nevis. From here the climb was mainly on rock, in a fantastic position, but of a fairly easy standard. Then the route left the crest of the ridge and took to slabs on the western flank. Pitch after pitch of delicate slab climbing with large undercut handholds and small friction footholds in an amazingly exposed position led finally to a short snow climb and then back again to the crest of the ridge.

At this point the route continued along the knife-edge, around gendarmes and the 'Toe Traverse', which forced us along a ledge with good holds but which meant that we had to lean gently backwards over the abyss below. - Finally we gained the summit. We paused for photographs and food before beginning the long climb back down to the notch on the Rothorngratt. From there, a series of abseils deposited us back on the snowy arete of the Schneegrat.

As we trudged down the final slopes of the glacier towards the hut, the skies opened up and soaked us both. We set off again in a break in the weather, but it started to rain and thunder more continuously during the walk down. It felt good to get wet as I walked back along the track to Zermatt, but I felt sorry for the men and women on their way up to the hut, for it appeared that we had snatched the last bit of good weather - the forecast was for a bad spell - a very satisfying feeling.

Taschhorn (4490.7m).
An Account by Simon Waddicor .

After hearing of a 25 hour epic from two Irish climbers and having spent the last two years eating dinner under a giant poster of the Matterhorn, the last thing on my mind was to climb it. My mountaineering career having progressed through Wainwright to the Munros in winter, I now find that I am starting from scratch again in alpine climbing.

The Taschhorn, perhaps misleadingly, unimposing, looked good, this was my target for the holiday. I jumped at the chance to climb with Peter who also wanted to make the ascent. We strolled up the track to the Taschhutte on a quiet

still evening to the sound of cow bells. Unfortunately we had chosen the Swiss National Day and the peace was shattered shortly after we had gone to bed by fireworks and the shrieks of children. The moonlit walk that was the commencement of the expedition became an awkward traverse of two glaciers separated by a 100 foot rock band with a steep loose gully to climb. This was followed by some crevasse dodging before reaching the west spur and afterwards the main summit ridge. The guide book describes it as usually snow free below the summit cone, but it was overhung by dripping cornices this time.

Each pinnacle on the ridge gave us a choice of traversing under them on loose rock, or crossing a 50 degree slope of melting snow on the opposite side. Fortunately some clouds came in to prevent further melting in the strong sun. There was a considerable difference in temperature between the windward and the sunny side; we either froze or were boiled.

My natural instinct favoured the steep snow, whilst Peter was clearly much more at home on the steep, 'but loose rock. We did some of each. The summit cone which looked hard, proved to be quite friendly, almost easy, but I was not looking forward to the descent. We checked the guide book to see if the Domhutte face was feasible and even considered it, only to discover that our map only covered a third of the way down. Peter very sensibly decided that we should return whence we came. This worked well, but not without incident. Our earlier instincts were justified - I had problems on the rock and Peter slipped on the snow. Before I moved off, I asked Peter to belay me round a large rock, which appeared to be the only sound thing around, but it was not safe and it rolled off over Peter's foot bending his crampon, fortunately not taking the rope with it. I was very unhappy about descending the gully back to the Taschhutte, so we pioneered a non-guidebook descent down the glacier and straight to the car. This was quite easy except for numerous crevasse jumps; these reminded me of my years of leaping across cloughs on Kinder Scout, equally deadly after a good week of rain.

Below the Snowline.

An Account by A/an Linford

This Alpine Meet started much the same as previous meets with the early arrivals taking advantage of the fine weather to stretch their legs after a long journey and gain some altitude by a walk from camp at 1401m to the Bergi at 2300m. The group left the camp by a delightful narrow path winding up through the pine forest with flowers, butterflies and bugs in abundance, causing numerous stops and the opportunity to become reacquainted with the geography of the valley, and the route and progress of two groups on the Weisshorn. Most of our group stopped at the tree line to take in the stunning views of the Matterhorn as it gradually appeared from behind the Mettelhorn. After the tree line, the ridge becomes a serious climb leading eventually to the Leiterspitzen at

3409m, not achieved due to the many stops and brews, but the views were compelling.

The Bergi walk was typical of many trips taken with the lower alps providing excellent walking (some marked and some not), highly photogenic views, and the opportunity to press on over serious rock or unmarked terrain. and with very few people. The Mischabel Dom side of the valley is now provided with lifts/of one form or another and most members, made good (if expensive) use of them to gain height and then move into the mountains away from the crowds,

As the Taschalp can now be reached by road - I was very hesitant, about a visit, but hardly anybody ventured up the valley to the foot of the Mellichgletcher, the valley ringing with the sound of cowbells (now almost extinct in the valley), a farm with fresh milk, cheese and butter and more surprisingly, edelweiss in its 'natural surroundings.' The attempt on the Sattlespitze 3164m was abandoned due to loose rock.

Other excursions on the Mischabel side were walks; from Taschalp to Sunnega by various routes, overnighting at the Flualp, hut and the Findelngletcher which provided an excellent training ground for front-pointing, screwing in ice pegs, wandering through ice falls and crossing crevasses. Most members will recall their first experience of the smooth, blue scold walls of a crevasse. The old hut is still standing in Flualp, but sad to see, the old wood burning stove has been cast aside to make way for gas and electricity., Ah! - those were the days.

Zermatt resembles a construction site, best avoided as it has lost its uniqueness, but lies in the direction of access to other splendid walks such as the Hohenweg. This high level walk starts at the English Church, goes through the Trift gorge passing the alp at Edelweiss to Trift Alp 2337m; under the Unter and Ober Gabelhorns to the foot of the Zmutt glacier, under the Matterhorn" to the Schonbiel hut at 3694m and back to Zermatt. The Hohenweg was not crowded and gave clear views of the Mischabel range, Monte Rosa, the Breithorn, the north face of the Matterhorn and the Dent d' Herens. "It takes about 12 hours, but can be shortened or lengthened to suit individual requirements,

The Mettlehorn 3406m is accessible and was climbed from Trift Alp. The massive 1990m landslip at Randa (still evident) prevented a safe access to the Gross Kastel 3400m (Brunegghorn), but the walk from camp up to Rotioden, at 2246m and Schaliachen is a most acceptable alternative - lovely alps, a fraction of the people on a Munro, and safe passage through the cliffs by alters depicting the 14 stages of the Crucifixion,

Excursions were made via the cable lift at the Klein Matterhorn to the Breithorn, 4164m, (akin to Helvellyn on Bank Holiday Monday), the Schwarsee, and the Zinal and Lotschental valleys.

There is now vehicle access high up in the Zinal valley, bringing the crowds. However once passed the cafe, the terrain is as difficult as ever it was. All the time the route is overshadowed by the awe inspiring massif of the Dent Blanche. Incidentally, the old village of Zinal has been isolated from the traffic and remains as many **will** remember it, but it is today contrasted by tower cranes.

Three snakes were seen on this meet at close quarters, two on the same day in the Lotschental, all vipers. Two were the European adder, the largest of the three, at least 4 feet, still unidentified. The first sightings that I have had after many camping trips. I cannot find a reference in books or journals - have any members any experience of these snakes?

A new large car park at Fafleralp provided easy access up to, but, still providing a good walk to, the base of a more formidable Breithorn. It leads to a tourist route up the Lonza river to the glacier. A YRC party was benighted by the side of this glacier in 1966. This valley is dominated by the Bietschorn, a massive, difficult and underrated mountain worthy of the Clubs attention. We failed to climb it during our 1966 visit to the area.

Walking in the rain to Zennatt on the first anniversary of Roger Allen's death, Sue placed a candle in the church there. His daughter whilst in Chamonix did likewise, both favourite areas of Roger. For many of us our thoughts drifted back over the past expeditions we had had with Roger.

The '1994 Alpine meet will be held in the Bemese Oberland providing ample scope for walkers and the,4000m climbers. A three or four day glacier walk is quite possible and the climbers have the chance of a 10 day expedition on the Breithorn, Wetterhorn; Mettelegri ridge of the Eiger, the Guggi face of the Junfrau the Hasler Rib of the Aletschorn, Finisteraarhorn, Schreckhorn and Gross Grunhorn. The camp will be at Murren, Wengen or Lauterbrunnen. Have any members any first hand experience of these locations?

Alphubel (4206m).

An Account by Steve Beresford

The 1993 Alpine Meet will be a lasting memory for me. I must admit to not having had a lot of snow and ice experience and, as we were crossing on the ferry and driving to Zermatt it had me wondering what I had let myself in for. However; a week of fine weather, in good company, amongst splendid mountains, was enough to totally enthuse me.

Did I say good weather's Well, it was apart from that during my last alpine peak of the week - the Alphubel. The weather had become unsettled and many of the climbers on the campsite had opted for a days relaxation. However, David, Coos" Alister, Martyn and I decided to drive to Ottovan, part way to the Taschhutte and there to re-assess the situation.

After sitting in the car for an hour amidst a thunderstorm, the rain lightened sufficiently for us to go and look inside a small alpine chapel. Whilst we were inside the sunlight beamed through the interesting and modern glass windows, each having a Resurrection theme giving us a sense of optimism for the peak. We embarked on the relatively short walk up to the hut.

Having been wakened on several occasions during the night and hearing the fury of the storm outside, I did not rate our chances of getting to the summit very highly as we put on our boots at 3.30am. The cloud was low, but the route is relatively straightforward to find. It followed first a river, then a rocky ridge.

When we reached the snow, a guide and his clients passed us and blazed the trail in fresh snow up to the Alphubeljoch col at 3782m. I particularly enjoyed this easy snow plod, exchanging memorised quotes with David. One which fitted the sacred theme of the chapel below was a 'Benediction on Mountaineers and their Gear' which goes :

'Bless, O Lord, we pray, these ropes, boots and ice axes, and all the equipment here, that whosoever will use them amongst the great mountains, amongst the snows, glaciers and storms, may be protected from all harm and dangers. May we climb happily to the summit and may we return safely to our own. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.'

At the col, the guide and his party turned back, visibility was poor, and the weather was deteriorating. We continued up towards a fine snow ridge where we came across two lonely ice axes sticking out of the snow. Close by lay two bodies in bags lightly dusted with snow. I hoped that nobody had perished in the storm! David called 'Hello is anybody there' a couple of times. Thankfully, the snow started to move and a face emerged saying in a Birmingham accent 'Is it morning already?' Relieved, we chatted for a few minutes to our benighted English colleagues.

A splendid snowy ridge with a well defined cornice, but no visible rock, took us right to the summit. At the summit, snow was beginning to fall and a cold wind was blowing and views were absent, so we decided only to pause for the obligatory summit photographs before commencing the descent by the now familiar route.

We returned feeling pleased that we hadn't missed a very enjoyable summit due to the poor weather conditions or the benighted Midlanders!

Voter Gabelhorn (3391m).

An Account by Tim Bateman

The Unter Gabelhorn is a low level rock peak just across the valley from the Matterhorn and right above Zermatt. It's what I describe as one of those in-

between mountains which doesn't warrant a two day expedition, but instead is quite a long day trip. Two of us embarked on the trip, myself along with Sue Allen. Our objectives were twofold, first to see if we could find Sue's purse which was lost the day before and secondly, of course, to get to the top of the mountain. Unfortunately we didn't manage to achieve either of these goals, but still had one of the most eventful and enjoyable days of the whole two weeks, with one rather dodgy moment!!

Our first port of call was the lost and found department of the local police station in Zermatt. They had some purses, but no blue ones.' So off we went up the mountain keeping our eyes peeled along the way. After the first pull up the valley, we forked off to the left, 'circling up and round. Gradually as we climbed, the Matterhorn appeared right in front of us. This surely must be one of the best views one can get of the mountain. The only problem was that, the clouds building up behind it looked like heading our way. Still we continued on, past the bench where we hoped the purse might have been lying, left the beaten track and headed for the top.

We decided to take the direct approach to the summit - 'a scramble over two peaks and then a few pitches of climbing to the top. We made good time reaching the top of the second of these peaks. Then we descended a short way and got out the rope to make the traverse across to the base of the first climb. Up until now everything had gone well, but time was against us and we decided not to start the last section as it would have taken us far too long to complete and the sky, which up to now had been blue, was rapidly turning grey. So quite content with what we had achieved, we headed off back towards the valley.

It was just as we came back over the second summit that we had a very worrying few moments. As I stuck my head up above the summit I felt a very strange tingling sensation all over my body. Sue arrived next to me and calmly suggested that we move down from the top as quickly as possible. This seemed like a very sound idea, so off I shot at a great rate. " Sue followed after me' throwing the rope down in front of her. Somehow it had generated a blue glimmer and crackled quite audibly when it hit the ground. As we descended I turned and looked up to see, Sue's hair pointing out in all directions. I wish I'd had my camera handy, but this was not a good time to stop.

Eventually after descending another 50 feet or so, the tingling stopped and we were treated to the wonderful sight of two rainbows down in the valley to the north. The skies then slowly cleared and the sun came out again. No longer in such a frantic rush, we carried on down taking the left fork of the Trift valley, arriving back in Zermatt just in time to get the last taxi back to the campsite. It was certainly an enjoyable day and one of the most memorable of the holiday.

(Sue's purse was returned to her a few weeks later by the Zermatt police)

Summer Skiing.

An Account by John Devenport

After being confined to camp with badly blistered feet, I needed to find some activity that would get me back up into the high mountains, so I decided to explore the possibilities of summer glacier skiing in the Zermatt area.

On Swiss National Day, 1st August, an early minibus took me up to Zermatt shortly after 7 am. After hiring skis and boots from one of the many rental shops to be found in the town and taking the cable car for Klien Matterhorn (3884 m), I was greeted by blue skies, brilliant sunshine and surprisingly good, crisp snow on the summer skiing area on the Plateau Rosa glacier at the Swiss/Italian border.

After a couple of tentative turns, my ski-legs returned, and I was able to enjoy the flattering runs, surrounded by spectacular mountain scenery, but dominated by the slender pyramid of the Matterhorn. A late breakfast on the terrace of the refuge near the Theodulpass in the blazing sunshine helped to recharge the batteries, before pounding the reasonably extensive pistes for the rest of the morning. By early afternoon, the snow was softening so it was time to call it a day, and return back to the valley on the cable car along with tourists and 'climbers' descending from the easy slopes of the nearby Breithorn. A most enjoyable day.

A second day was spent on the Feegletscher above Saas Fee, reached-most unusually by cable car and the world's highest underground railway to the Mittel Allalin in an impressive bowl perched on the edge of an equally impressive snow bowl. Soggier snow and stormy weather conditions contributed to a less pleasant, but nevertheless worthwhile day.

The cost of each day, including ski and boot hire and lift pass, was about £45, but was well worth the expense. To make the most of the limited skiing time one generally has at this time of the year, I would suggest hiring the equipment the night before to ensure an early cable car can be caught.

Compilation and pictures by David Smith.