

A Brief History of The Climbers' Club (1898 - 1990)

A Personal View, © Pip Hopkinson

In August and September during the 1890s a group of about 40 men met regularly at the Pen y Gwryd to climb and explore the Welsh hills and crags. After one Saturday evening's dinner it was proposed that a club be formed. This idea was pursued at a dinner in London on 19th May 1897 at the Café Monico and the next dinner was fixed for 6th December 1897 at Pen y Gwryd. This was not well-attended; only 25 of the group turned up. Nevertheless the foundations of the Club were laid at this dinner. The resolution 'That a Climbing Club be formed' was proposed by Mr Roderick Williams and seconded by Mr H. G. Gotch, both of whom were already Alpine Club members. This was approved by the group and a provisional Club committee was elected.

The provisional committee drafted and sent out a circular to all those known as climbers whose names could be obtained from various sources. It read:

The Climbers' Club

Dear Sir,

It has been determined to establish a Club under the above title. The object of the Club will be to encourage mountaineering, particularly in England, Ireland and Wales, and to serve as a bond of union amongst all lovers of mountain activity.

The qualifications of members will be determined by the Committee, who have the sole power of election. The officers will be a President, two Vice-Presidents, an Honorary Secretary and an Honorary Treasurer.

The Committee will consist of the officers and nine additional members all to be elected annually at the Annual Meeting.

The first officers will be:

President C. E. Matthews,

Vice-Presidents Frederick Morshead and F. H. Bowring

Hon Secretary George B. Bryant

Hon Treasurer T. K. Rose

The Annual Subscription will be half a guinea and there will be an entrance fee of the same amount after the first hundred members are elected.

The Annual Meeting will take place in London at the end of April in each year, and will be followed by a dinner.

The first Annual Dinner will take place about the end of April next, on a day and at a place which will be duly notified.

The Club will be in no sense antagonistic to any existing institution; but will, it is hoped, gather together all those who are interested in mountaineering in England. Ireland and Wales.

Should you be willing to join, will you be good enough to return the enclosed form immediately to Mr C. E. Matthews, The Hurst, Four Oaks, near Birmingham.

At the First Annual Meeting the Formal Laws of the Club will be presented for adoption and the First Annual Dinner will follow.

Yours faithfully,

C. E. Matthews

F. Morshead

F.H. Bowring

G. B. Bryant

T. K. Rose

25th March 1898

The response exceeded expectations. Despite the limited number of the initial circular, by the first AGM exactly 200 applications for membership had been received and all were admitted as founder members.

The first AGM was held in the Alpine Club rooms in Saville Row on 28th April 1898: 62 members attended. Of the membership approximately one third were already members of the Alpine Club. The first committee included W.C. Slingsby (President, Yorkshire Ramblers' Club), R. A. Robertson (President, Scottish Mountaineering Club), Owen Glynne Jones and W. P. Haskett Smith.

The President knew about founding clubs. He was a founder member of The Alpine Club and described himself in his inaugural speech as a 'professional mid-wife at the birth of a new bantling which is destined to be as healthy and prosperous as any previous member of the great family' (of mountaineering clubs, following the formation of the Alpine Club, the Austrians Swiss, Italians, Germans, and French had formed their Alpine Clubs in that order). The President also reminded members (as many have done since!) 'that the Club is an institution towards which every man must contribute his share'.¹

The initial members were drawn very much from the professions and senior universities. In those times the common man needed to earn at least a guinea a week to keep a wife and three children (without holidays and if he didn't drink). There was much short-term working and hence little security.² It would have been impossible for him to join in the luxury of climbing.

¹. *The founding of the Club is dealt with in great detail in Vol 1 Number 1 of the CC Journal*

². *Seebohm Rowntree, Poverty: A Study of Town Life (1901)*

Today we would find some of the founder members' views and ideas ill-conceived. There appears in the first President's speech the notion that "climbing is a sport that appeals to the cultivated intellect - 'arry or 'arriet would never climb a hill." As Brecht later said: "What keeps a man alive?... Food is the thing — morals follow on." ³ It would take two major wars to change these attitudes towards class.

³. *(Erst Kommt das Fressen dann kommt die Moral)*, Brecht 'What Keeps A Man Alive?'; *The Threepenny Opera*, 1928

The first meets were held in the Lakes at Wasdale and in Wales around Pen y Gwryd. Notices were to be sent to members of these. Winter meets were also proposed for both venues at Christmas and Easter.

The initial rules were circulated and adopted. In general, they are not dissimilar from the rules that we have today. Rule 1's first sentence survives intact from these rules. One may just speculate, if, considering the stated aims of the Club, the founders wanted an all male Club, or whether they would have embraced a mixed membership had that membership been there.

The Club grew slowly. Its more adventurous members started to make their mark as they have continued to do on mountains around the world. Not surprisingly, by 1903, women had started to appear on meets, usually someone's wife or someone's daughter, but not all fell into that category. Oscar Eckenstein did Kern Knotts Crack with a lady, giving her a shoulder at the niche so that she could successfully lead the top section of the crack. ⁴ This was a climb that in 1903 was a tour de force in anyone's book.

⁴. *The woman was Miss S Nicolls.*

These developments did not go unnoticed. But already the CC had mandarins, an old guard of traditional Alpine Club members and their sons who would defend the all-male membership.

Owen Glynne Jones first published his *Rock Climbing in the English Lake District* in 1897. The Second (posthumous) Edition was published in 1901, a book by a founder member which may have given others the idea of a separate club for those interested in Lakeland climbing. Archer Thomson⁵ was working on his guides to Lliwedd and to the Ogwen District. Rock climbing was a growing sport.

⁵. *Archer Thomson together with Bretland Farmer could well be considered the first 'weekend' climbers.*

Gradually the Club started to acquire its second generation of distinguished members: Puttrell, Winthrop Young and the young man described by Sir Francis Younghusband as "slim and supple if not broad and beefy, the delectable George Leigh Mallory."⁶ Their arrival was fortuitous. They were going to save the Club.

⁶. *Younghusband, Patrick French.*

In 1910 the Club's rules were revised and the rule that very nearly destroyed the Club some 60 years later was introduced: 'Rule 2: All gentlemen interested in the objects of the Club as defined in Rule 1 shall be eligible as members'. ⁷ The new rule could not have been inserted into the rules without the President's and Secretary's approval: Professor J. B. Farmer MA DSc FRGS and C. Myles Matthews BA LLB. ⁸ These two were both very much products of their class and their times.

They had gone to public schools followed by a senior university education. Relations between the sexes were often strained, especially within the same social class.⁹ There was also a new 'breed' of women, increasingly violent, shouting and demonstrating for universal suffrage. I have no doubt that these distinguished gentlemen thought, paternally, that the membership should be protected from them and not embrace them. It was an attitude that stayed with Myles Matthews all of his life.

⁷. *CC Journal*

⁸. *Both were also AC members*

⁹. *A. F. Rodda, historian to the author (P.H.H.)*

By 1912 the Club membership had slowly risen to a comfortable 300. It was a gentlemen's climbing club and the Committee's job was to maintain the status quo. Unfortunately, other people in other countries had different ideas and Europe descended into the misery of the First World War. The stable class system and attitudes towards women would never be quite the same again despite the Establishment, despite the Club's Committees.

Like most British clubs and organisations, the Club encouraged its young men to go to war with enthusiasm and patriotism.¹⁰ Only pacifists such as Geoffrey Winthrop Young resisted the 'call' and he lost his leg driving ambulances around the Front in the Friends Medical Corps.

¹⁰. *With hindsight, knowing the horrors of this war it is difficult to appreciate how popular it was initially. Football teams, groups from factories joined en masse to fight. The War Office expected 50,000 volunteers in the first three months of war; it got 500,000*

By the end of the war, the Club had lost most of its younger members. Membership was falling and it could no longer rely on its Alpine Club connections to provide it with new members. Other than the Journal and its social dinners, it had little to offer anyone.

With A. W. Andrews as President, George Leigh Mallory took over editorship of the Journal and Winthrop Young was in charge of publications. The main Committee looked for new members and realised that if there were going to be any, they would be in the universities. The only universities at the time with mountaineering clubs were Oxford and Cambridge, so the Presidents of the OUMC and the CUMC were elected onto the main Committee, a practice that was to continue until 1965. This may have been a necessity at the time, but it echoed into the future.

Slowly the Club started to recover. The main Committee decided that it either needed rooms in London where members could relax and read the morning papers, or that it should find a property in Wales where members might have cheap accommodation. The Committee was divided equally. S. A. Marples had the casting vote and voted in favour of finding a cottage in Wales. Two of the Club's new young members, Raymond Greene and Herbert Carr, searched for a property and were principally responsible for finding Helyg. It was to become, for many, the jewel in the crown of the Club. Helyg was opened on 31st October 1925 by the Vice- President S. A. Marples.

The younger members proposed to the main committee that the rules governing the use of Helyg should allow women guests. Once again, Myles Matthews exerted his authority. (He was now President, having succeeded Mallory who had died on Everest in 1924.) He was not going to have women staying at his Club huts! But it was too late. Before he made his pronouncement a woman had already stayed at Helyg and the rules were not broken — there were no rules! ¹¹ From then on nearly every generation would conspire to break that particular rule in their own way, until 1975 when women were finally admitted to the Club. Energy that could have been used for better purposes would be used by the young to defy and confuse their elders.

¹¹. *Helyg (1985) by Geoff Milburn.*

With the opening of Helyg the Club's future became assured.

In 1927 a small man stomped down the path to a group of members outside the hut and asked what was going on. He was politely told that this was a Climbers' Club hut. He instantly asked to join the Club, thinking that any club that had a hut situated where Helyg was, was a good club to join. To their credit the Committee elected him almost immediately ¹² and the Club gained for many what was a characteristic member and one of its great enthusiasts, A. B. Hargreaves.

¹². *AB Hargreaves in conversation with the author (P.H.H)*

If the Club only had one Golden Era it was the one which was about to start. H. R. C. Carr's *A Climbers' Club Guide to Snowdon and the Beddgelert District* had just been published by the Club, the last in the first series of guidebooks. It gave a new generation of climbers a lot of routes and it also showed the gaps in the cliffs where no routes existed. The Club once again had competent and good climbers, Ivan Waller and Jack Longland being at that time amongst the best and attracting similar enthusiasts to them.

It is hard to realise today, but at that time everyone worked on Saturday mornings. The weekend started with a mad dash to the hills at Saturday lunchtime, by whatever transport was available. Having transport at all implied a certain social status. For most of the year, in the bigger hills at least, the 'arry's and the 'arriets were still being kept in their place. ¹³

¹³. *When they did get out to bigger hills they were content to do traditional routes – to build up the knowledge that already existed in the major clubs. Eric. Byne in conversation with the Author (P. H. H.) c1957*

Wales was becoming an exciting place to climb. The Rucksack Club had its route on Cloggy, the East Buttress Route (later to be called Pigott's), and the West Buttress Route (Longland's) had been climbed by a joint CC/Rucksack Club party. For the first time men who were trained on gritstone and sandstone (Helsby) were showing what could happen when those techniques were applied to granite. Colin Kirkus, often accompanied by A. B. Hargreaves, was redefining the art of the possible, backed up by a solid team of people such as Hicks, Linnell, Cooper and Bridge. The Club had a Northern Committee that was the driving force in the Club. ¹⁴ Then the next great climber arrived leading the newly formed Liverpool University Rock Climbing Club meet — its President — one J. M. Edwards.

¹⁴. *AB Hargreaves in conversation with the author (P.H.H)*

Leading Club members were then arguably the best rock-climbers in Great Britain. The only ones who could gainsay this were the 'arrys and 'arriets breaking out of the northern towns during the long depression to make their mark on the moors and gritstone edges of the central Pennines. But their word was not yet strong and it would take another war before their potential was unleashed on the rather exclusive and genteel world of Welsh and English rock-climbing.¹⁵

^{15.} Compare the technical standard of *Wall End Slab Direct* and *Count's Buttress on Stanage* with Welsh routes of this era.

The Club carried on with its business. It expanded Helyg and started to produce, with Edwards and Kirkus, the second set of definitive climbing guides to North Wales. In doing so it defined British guidebook writing.

Sadly towards the end of the decade, Colin Kirkus, understandably slightly taciturn and no longer climbing his best after his traumatic fall on Ben Nevis in 1934, felt uncomfortable in using Helyg and started to stay at the youth hostel in Ogwen where many young climbers benefited from his tuition. But there remains a strongly lingering suspicion that the Club's old guard did not really like an insurance clerk in their hut and made him unwelcome.¹⁶ Once again thoughts of war started to disturb people's minds.

^{16.} This is hinted at in Steve Dean's book, *Hands of a Climber*, and in conversations with AB Hargreaves he always advised cutting mandarin's legs off at the knees to remove their pomposity. Paul Orkney Work was more forthright and said to Jim Perrin that Colin had told him that he found some CC members' attitude towards him snobbish and that he preferred the more liberal attitudes at Idwal Cottage. Connie Alexander, the first Idwal Cottage Warden was also a good friend to Colin. She is portrayed as Miss Elliott in Elizabeth Coxhead's *One Green Bottle*.

Despite the loss of good members during the Second World War, these were not entirely unproductive years for the Club. At the beginning of the war the Committee had taken out a 250 year lease on a broken down cottage in the Llanberis Pass that had no access to it. The price was cheap — £10p.a. for Ynys Ettws. Menlove Edwards and John Barford (one a conscientious objector and one exempt from military service) produced the first guidebooks to Clogwyn Du'r Arddu and the Three Cliffs in Llanberis. David Cox and Nully Kretschmer produced the *Craig yr Ysfa* guide.

During the war occasional meets were still held at Helyg and it became for many a small haven of peace in those difficult times.

Many Club members worked during the war at training mountain and cliff assault troops. As the troops came home the Club was in good shape. It now had two huts, Helyg and Bosigran, and was refurbishing Ynys Ettws. Its members in the South West had started seriously climbing the cliffs of West Penwith as A. W. Andrews had always predicted that they would. In North Wales CC members were climbing at the current top grades.

The Club asked Peter Harding to rewrite the fastest developing area guide —The Three Cliffs. There is no doubt that this stopped him from doing many other first ascents. For 10 years this book became known as the 'Bumper Fun Book', partly for the area it covered (Llanberis and Clogwyn. Du'r Arddu) and partly because of some of the proof reading and 'typos'.¹⁷

¹⁷ *I remember leading my first VS in the Pass. The guide described a 20-foot pitch which today has become 90 feet! I had originally thought, reading the description, that it was a slightly soft touch – the technical grade is 5a!*

Ironically the guidebook, as many have been since, was out of date before it was published — for this was the beginning of the days of 'arry and 'arriet. ¹⁸

¹⁸ *This guide was criticised in a CC after-dinner speech by Stuart Chantrell for having too many hard climbs and too few easy ones. The guide incorporated a Dinas Mot section written earlier by H. A. Carsten.*

To the newly emerging post-war clubs of the late '40s the Climbers' Club looked and behaved like the Establishment. This was compounded when they sent details of their new routes to the Club. Nat Allen, the Rock and Ice chronicler, sent the details of Noah's Warning, Cemetery Gates and Cobweb Crack. The reply from one of the Club's officials ¹⁹ suggested that interesting as these routes were, they were only 'fillers in' of detail and suggested that the Rock and Ice might be better employed applying its talents to something more serious, like the Nose of the Ogof. ²⁰

¹⁹ *E. C. Pyatt.*

²⁰ *E. C. Pyatt in a letter to J. R. (Nat) Allen.*

Peter Harding was now sitting on the Northern Committee. One of the functions of this committee was to vet candidates to the Club before the main Committee approved them. His climbing partner, Gordon Dyke, came up for election. One of the Club's officials ²¹ blackballed him on the basis that Dyke had addressed him by his Christian name when introduced to him and when questioned by the Committee about this replied "Dyke himself is probably okay — but he has some rather objectionable friends." Later in the meeting Peter was asked to support another candidate, G. W. S. Pigott. Peter objected, saying, "Remember G. W. S. P. like myself, is a friend of Gordon Dyke." ²² At another clash with the Club's old guard, Peter and Alf Bridge, the Club Secretary, resigned from the Club.

²¹ *Stuart Chantrell.*

²² *Peter Harding in conversation with the author (P.H.H.)*

The Club had two new huts, Cwm Glas²³ — where things were more relaxed and women occasionally stayed — and Ynys Ettws. Ynys was set in an ideal position. It was ruled with a rod of iron by the Custodian, Roy Beard, no doubt following the example set by Stuart Chantrell at Helyg. ²⁴ When the custodian was away things were a little more relaxed. When the Rock and Ice visited on one such day to record some routes, they found a sink full of unwashed crockery and not a clean cup in the hut. They never forgot it. Neither their mothers nor their NCOs (many had done National Service) would have allowed them to get away with that. ²⁵

²³ *Cwm Glas Custodian was B. McKenna – he who planted the Helyg trees and those on the island in Lyn Bach.*

²⁴ *P.T.J.H. and H. Banner to the author (P.H.H.)*

²⁵ *J. R. Allen and D. Whillans to the author (P.H.H.)*

If members of the Club could no longer do the hardest routes in Llanberis, they started to make up for that in explorations elsewhere. Tony Moulam was especially active in discovering new areas of rock and producing stunning lines on them. Many others made their mark on the Greater Ranges. Most UK expeditions of the 1950s had CC members on them or organising them. In the Alps members were helping to write a new edition of English Alpine guidebooks.

Membership at this time had very much of an Oxbridge bias, a legacy from the '20s. The Club was still one of gentlemen, despite the high jinks a well-known athlete ²⁶ walking his muddy Vibram boots over the new painted Ynys ceiling and the making of a film of a young lady from Pen y Gwryd taking a bath in the men-only hut of Ynys. ²⁷ Hard climbers who might have joined the Club didn't, although thankfully there were a few notable exceptions. The Club was not exactly welcoming to those who might have been from the 'other ranks'. ²⁸

²⁶ Chris Brasher (J. R. (Nat) Allen to the author (P. H. H.)

²⁷ You don't expect e to name names here do you? The incident was told to e by J. H. Longland.

²⁸ P. Vaughan and J. R. Allen to the author (P. H. H.)

From its early days, the Club had always had a healthy radical liberal strain in some of its members and in their politics. It could be traced back, I suspect, to people like Eckenstein, but certainly to Winthrop Young, Longland, Waller, Hargreaves, Edwards, Cox and Barford. The old guard had not managed to extinguish it. Geoff Sutton (CC) was climbing fairly regularly with Don Roscoe from the Rock and Ice and new friendships were being made. Geoff proposed his climbing partner for membership. Don didn't think too much about this but was astonished to be told by one of the mandarins ²⁹ on his election that "I don't think you are the sort of chap we want in the Club. I'll be watching you very carefully." To be fair, this particular member apologised three years later for his remark and said he had been wrong. ³⁰

²⁹ Roy Beard, Custodian, Ynys Ettws.

³⁰ Don Roscoe (diaries) to the author (P. H. H.)

By 1955 the second series of guidebooks was out of date. The Ogwen guides were not too hard to update, but a mammoth task — one to which Tony Moulam valiantly responded. When Don Roscoe was asked to write the new Llanberis guide, he climbed all but five routes. Noticeably the first acknowledgments in the guidebook are to his Rock and Ice partners.³¹ Hugh Banner started to write the Cloggy guide. He was determined to climb all the routes on the cliff before publishing the guide. He had got down to the last two (Woubits Left-Hand and Taurus) when his climbing partner offered help. ³² Giving Pete Crew a draft up-to-date manuscript to Cloggy fired him and his club, the Alpha, on to great things. They quickly added another 12 new routes before the guidebook was published in 1963. Trevor Jones — another star at that time — produced the first major guide to 'Snowdon South' now known as Tremadog (1966). ³³

³¹ Don Roscoe to the author (P. H. H.)

³² H. Banner to the author (P. H. H.)

³³ This wasn't a great guide. It was quickly superseded by Pete Crew's West Col guide to the area.

Peter Crew's guidebook writing helped the Club recruit members of his club, the Alpha. All this started to give the Club momentum. A. B. Hargreaves, still full of fire, succeeded the wonderfully gentle Oxford don David Cox as President, and once again young climbers wanted to join the Club. By then, they felt that it was their Club, their heritage, and if some of the rules were not to their liking, that wasn't too serious; rules could be changed.

This was the generation in rebellion — driving to Wales as fast as you could on a Friday night, living hard and fast through the weekend. Inevitably on Saturday nights they wanted their girlfriends/partners to come into the hut to share the late-night argument and debate. For a while, when custodians were present, cups of tea were passed to the girls outside.³⁴ But this generation could argue its case well and this strange practice didn't last too much longer. In the midst of this were two major figures, Ken Wilson and Dave Cook, both very articulate, 'politically correct' before those words were fashionable, skilled in analysis and debate, and competent as climbers.

³⁴ *Brian Evans to the author (P. H. H.)*

Perhaps the most important difference between this generation and those that had preceded it was that the former generations expected, or accepted, an establishment, conservative leadership whilst the new members were progressives to the core. This is an important distinction and one that had far-reaching implications for the Club. (Members of both the AC and the FRCC have said to me that their clubs too, at that time, were controlled in the same way.)

In 1964 Peter Crew turned his attention to the newly discovered Gogarth Cliffs, climbing some 50 new routes in five years — a record only beaten at that time by the Club's newest Honorary Member, Joe Brown, who claimed 51 in the same period.

It was at the 1966 AGM that the rule change allowing women to join was first proposed. This was among six motions proposed by K. Wilson at his first AGM. He proposed changing the wording of Rule 2 from 'gentlemen' to 'persons'. The committee thought that this was about letting working-class men join the Club. The motion was treated sympathetically by the President, Sir John Hunt, and the Hon Sec, The Right Hon Roger Chorley. Later, one J. M. Baldock was proposed for membership without a hint of her gender. She would have been elected, but somebody informed the Committee that this was a woman (later to be President). Many said that if a less controversial figure than Ken Wilson had proposed the motion it might have just passed, but the time was not yet right for the old guard to be defeated. This was to be a running sore in the Club for the next eight years. It was obvious to many that it was an anachronism that women could not use the Club's main huts or join the Club. There were very competent women climbers around such as the aforementioned Jancis Baldock, Janet Rogers, Barbara Sparks, Jo Scars, Denise Evans, Sally Westmacott, Jo Fuller, many of whom climbed regularly with Club members. Why was a major Club ignoring them?

As a future President said in one of the debates, "If I can stay with my boyfriend, my lover, my catamite in Ynys Ettws, why can't I also stay with my wife?" ³⁵ The younger members responded in the only way they could — they encouraged no one to join the Club. If, occasionally, on a stormy night some bunks had two sleeping bags on them, then this new generation said nothing.

³⁵ *Harry Sales.*

Membership started slowly to fall. Despite this, the Club's guidebook activity continued and to help the emerging BMC, the Club published the new limestone guides to the Peak District (1969 & 1970).

Eventually, in 1972, a President came into office who was a new convert to the cause of women. Hamish Nicol had a pedigree to suit the Club's old guard: ex-Oxford, a reserve (due to a broken jaw) for the 1953 Everest expedition, ³⁶ a leading Alpinist in his time with a dry acerbic humour. His regular climbing partner was Robin Prager, the Club secretary, who appeared externally to be conventional English Public School. In fact, Robin was Anglo-Indian and radical in his politics. ³⁷ They were both persuaded of the rights of women and Hamish wanted them to be eligible to join the Club during his presidency.

³⁶ *Also led by a CC member, John Hunt (now Lord Llanfairwaterdine). It is not generally known that John Hunt was the third CC member to be asked to lead this expedition. Charles Evans was asked first. He said he would lead it if he could include the current 'hard men' of the Rock and Ice — the Alpine Club mandarins on the Himalayan Committee refused this, wanting only Oxbridge chaps on the team. Shipton was asked next — but the Committee felt his team selection was too small to give them the success they desired. Finally, John Hunt was asked. All his army training and extremely powerful personal and organisational capabilities were called into play and ensured the deserved success of the chosen team. (Sir Jack Longland to the author (P. H. H.))*

³⁷ *At a later AGM a blimpish member asked the chair if "having let women into the Club would we be allowing coloured gentlemen in next?" Robin addressed the chair and said, "Excuse me please, but I think the Hon Member should know I am a wog."*

At his final AGM in 1975 the motion was passed that 'All people interested in the objects of the Club shall be eligible as members' and a sufficient majority obtained to allow the rule to be changed. Happily Club members who voted against the rule have since proposed women for the Club. ³⁸

³⁸ *Frank Fitzgerald for one.*

Gradually the Club took its bearings; it wasn't overwhelmed with women wanting to join. Membership was at a 15-year low and falling. The Club's guidebooks were losing money. The Club's huts, which by now had increased to five, were scruffy. On the positive side there was a will to turn the Club around.

Membership was initially a problem. Many climbers knew what the Climbers' Club was and wanted no part of it. The image had to be changed and young climbers recruited to the Club. Alec Sharp was one of the first of these. He rewrote the Cloggy guide (1976) and a new guide to the still developing Gogarth cliffs (1977) for the Club. The committee made sure that it had a high profile so that they became well-known to active climbers. This policy paid off. Once again the Club had the leading climbers of the day in all spheres as members.

After two disastrous A4 editions, the Journal needed reviving. Ken Wilson (by then a very able magazine editor) and Bill O'Connor edited the first one before handing it into the capable hands of Geoff Milburn. Later at the 1979 AGM Ken and David Cox proposed the motion that the Journal be published three times every five years, ensuring its continuance.

At the end of the 1970s the committee could look back with satisfaction. It had made the Club accessible to everyone who was qualified to join regardless of class, creed, colour or gender. It would never revert to the stilted gentlemanly days of the 1950s.

During his presidency Hamish Nicol also started to re-organise the Club's guidebooks. Up until that time the Club had regarded guidebooks as charitable work and did not aim to make a profit from them. Then it recognised that if it did not aim to make a profit it would make a loss. The Committee were not prepared to subsidise every climber in North Wales. Initially Hamish became the first publications business manager and recruited Bob Moulton to be the guidebook editor. A quick glance at the Club's 5th, 6th, and 7th series shows what a powerful force this Sub-Committee became. At first the guidebook finances were handled through the main Committee³⁹ but this became unwieldy. Also, there was the suspicion that guidebook sales were subsidising other Club activities. It wasn't until the early 1980s, after acrimonious debate, that the guidebook finances were split from the main Committee finances. Again, this reform has worked well to the benefit of the Club.

³⁹ Principally between the Treasurer, J.H.Longland, the guidebook business manager, A.H.Jones and K. Wilson.

Not unnaturally, the Club, reconciled within itself, started to prosper. South Pembroke was the newly developing climbing area, and in that area, under the presidency of Trevor Jones, the Club purchased its sixth hut. The huts gradually, under Henry Adler, started to improve in condition and standard, though Tim Lewis's axiom of 'Cleanliness is next to Godliness — make friends in high places — clean the hut before your next route', should be upheld by a Club of active climbers.

Having missed Helyg's 50th anniversary as a hut (it was still a men-only hut) the Club celebrated its 60th anniversary with style and produced a definitive history of the hut, its life and times (Helyg by Geoff Milburn). Further modifications to the accommodation at the hut brought back its atmosphere and once again it is a pleasant place to stay, even if, like this Journal's editor, you have to nod to the occasional ghost.

Almost as a matter of course, some 15 years after allowing women to become members of the Club, the Club elected its first woman President, Jancis Allison. Appropriately, she was someone who on cold stormy nights in the '60s had slept in the outside toilet at Ynys Ettws, not being allowed then into the hut. At this point the Club moved quietly into the 1990s.

It is obvious that throughout all of its history the Club had the potential to lead, inform, and form opinion. It needs to keep its established place at the centre of debate. There is a tremendous survival instinct within the Club. Consider the Club's life to date: in the 1900s it mixed English provincial intelligentsia with the Welsh members; in the 1920s and 30s the Oxbridge members with the hard men from Liverpool; in the 1950s it accommodated, albeit slowly, the new, often working-class, provincial clubs; in the 1960s it reinvented itself and almost adopted the Alpha: in the 1970s it elected women and the Yorkshire activists. All this is reflected in our membership. We should be very proud of this.

In writing this version (I have no doubt that there are others) of the Club's history I have almost lost count of the times that I realised that a crisis was emerging. Yet we are better than this. The last 20 years have shown that. The ferocity of debate surrounding the Club shows not only how diverse we are, but how highly members treasure the Club. This needs to be remembered by all generations. The Club needs to focus on the main climbing issues of the day and not be complacent about them. They need to be debated and managed, and we can all play a very full part in this. We need to encourage adventure climbing in all its aspects, and most of all we should ratify a sin of omission from the 1930s and start to fight very hard for the freedom of access legislation for all the high uncultivated ground and open country in our land. In doing this not only will it benefit our own and future generations, but it will help to realise the most important dream that our founding members believed in.

Postscript:

In writing this article I am aware that there are many omissions; the article could easily have been many times its length. Any writers of history have problems of what to put in and leave out. I have tried to follow the trends and patterns of the Club's history as I have perceived them. Many members have helped me. It may not have been historically important to record A.B.'s (Hargreaves) arrival to the Club, for example, but I have no doubts that many would want this celebrated in a history of the Club.

I have made no pretence about my political stance. I could not have written any kind of history without it. I regret not being able to delve more deeply into the 1940s and 1950s, especially in the establishing of the R. O Downes hut, but again length prohibited that.

I can hear a certain Salford/Rossendale plumber (Don Whillans) saying, "He was alright, was Bob (Downes) ..." but I had better stop. Talking with ghosts has its own reward.