

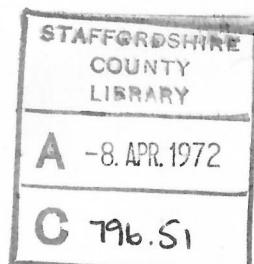
**MANCHESTER PEDESTRIANS  
1903-1970**

**BY ERNEST KERSHAW**

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Published by  
The Manchester Pedestrian Club

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#### THANKS AND INTENTIONS

In writing this account I have tried to use material which has not been touched upon in Club handbooks of the past and have therefore quoted as little as possible from them. I have to thank the Manchester City Librarian and his staff for their help in lending books from the reference library and in supplying me over many days with newspaper files. Much of what I have included has come from conversations with members of the Club, some of them now dead, and it was these conversations which made me see the character of the club I had joined, and made me want to record what I had seen.

I hope the present members of the Club will find the story of its past and my view of its present acceptable. I even hope that they may be of interest to some who are not members.

## PEDESTRIAN BEGINNINGS

The name of Manchester Pedestrian Club arouses reactions of amusement and curiosity. Some find it quaint, some find it incredible - imagine using the word Pedestrian these days.

The answer is, I think, both simpler and less pretentious than they imagine. From at least the latter half of the eighteenth century the name had been applied to those who, usually as professionals or at least for prize money or bets, had undertaken feats of walking. Foster Powell, as an example, walked 112 miles between London and Canterbury in 24 hours. Nine years later he walked 100 miles on the Bath Road in  $23\frac{1}{4}$  hours. With some justice he is described in his biography as 'The Great Pedestrian'.

The beginning of the present century saw a revival of 'pedestrianism' in this sense. But in addition to the bets and record walking, there was a growth of road racing and of clubs who trained for and competed in this sport.

It is interesting to speculate on the reason for this out-break. The first thing to realise is that it was not an isolated phenomenon occurring only in the world of walking. The same florescence can be seen in cycling, in football and in fact in physical training in general. Gymnasiums grew up in the larger towns and cities and were well patronised by a wide social range of the population.

This resembles too much the state of affairs in Prussia - the fact in Germany as a whole - in the early years of the 19th century to be a mere coincidence. When Napoleon had defeated Prussia at Jena and Austria at Austerlitz a tidal wave of physical discontent ran through the German states. Defeat was ascribed to decadence and rehabilitation was only to be found in physical resurrection. 'Turnvater' Jahn spread the gospel and physical culture clubs sprang up everywhere in answer to his call.

At the turn of this century England was being humiliated by a handful of Boers who did not play the war game according to the rules. This was in effect the *raison d'être* of the Scout

movement. I think there is little doubt that the explosion of interest in physical activity sprang from this too. And it is significant to remember that much the same thing happened again in Germany after 1918.

In the 1953 Jubilee Handbook, T A Edwards, who was a founder member of the Club and whom we shall frequently meet later, wrote an article called *Genesis* which contains material not to be found anywhere else. His opening paragraph runs:

'In the early years of this century the country was swept by a 'walking craze'. Nearly every city and town and many villages and hamlets organised walking contests, usually foot races from scratch which might extend from point to point or over a circular course. The London Stock Exchange walk to Brighton and the Manchester to Southport walk organised by the later founders of the Manchester Pedestrian Club were typical examples.'

The walking race from Manchester to Southport, held in May 1903, caused a tremendous stir in the North and attracted 139 prospective entries. Of these 107 started from Manchester, among them two women. This is the figure given in the *Manchester Guardian*, but the same article says that 100 finished and only four dropped out. The first two home averaged  $5\frac{1}{4}$  miles an hour for the whole journey, which seems astonishing when one reads the account of the walkers pushing their way through the shopping crowds on the outskirts of Manchester, in many cases hardly distinguishable from them in dress.

One of them at least must have been clearly distinguishable in the end. His costume is described as 'city dress', and when we think of city dress in 1903 it is clear that he was setting himself a fair handicap. But convention succumbed to comfort and speed. He first of all cast off his collar and tie and left them hanging in a hedge. His coat and waistcoat were later deposited in one of the accompanying cars. And finally he borrowed a pair of scissors and cut his trousers down to shorts. There is no mention of how he returned from Southport.

J O Ormrod took the lead from the start and was nine minutes in the lead at Blackrod, but towards the end H C Gow and J E Rankin began to overhaul him. Once in Southport Ormrod was given wrong information about his lead over Rankin and only discovered at the finishing post that Rankin was practically abreast of him. It seems likely that Rankin, who was only nineteen, might have won if he had not been obstructed by the crowd. Those who finished and later became leading members of the M.P.C were Ormrod 1st, Rankin 2nd,

Batty 21st, E D Torres 24th, Isherwood 32nd, Macmorran 52nd, Wellburn 56th, Brotherton 58th, Brundret 65th, Frankenburg 68th, (unlike the others he was not a founder member but joined in 1906), Bentham 74th, Teasdale 98th, and J Hislop 99th. The secretary of the organising committee was William King, later secretary of the M.P.C. It was presumably these who convened a meeting in the Memorial Hall, Albert Square in the following month.

This meeting was called for the purpose of canalising the energy generated by the Southport Walk into the formation of a walking club. And it is interesting that it was called for 3 pm on June 16th, interesting because June 16th was a Tuesday, and it seems therefore from its very conception that the scheme was aimed at one stratum of the population: those who had no compulsion to work at 3 pm on a Tuesday. It would be interesting to know what percentage of those taking part in the race this ruled out. The number present is nowhere stated but the club was inaugurated and officers were elected. These were J Hislop President, A W Bentham Vice President, F K Macmorran Treasurer and W King Secretary.

It seems that beyond the election of these officers not much time was spent on constitutional matters. Apparently the Secretary was to arrange the walks, an arrangement which did not stand the strain for long. But the mind of the meeting was above these sordid details and much of the time was spent on what Edwards calls 'very ambitious schemes'. What these were we only learn by implication when he goes on to talk about the Secretary.

Apparently King saw the contemporary sports fever as something to be exploited by anyone with acumen enough to see the way. He envisaged a commercialised club, housed in its own extensive premises and financed by a membership of up to a thousand. These members, we gather, were not necessarily going to be active participants but could be 'patrons', whatever that implied, in either sport or the arts, and their annual subscriptions would vary according to the activities they patronised. The premises - he seems to have already had his eye on a large house in Prestwich - were to offer billiards, tennis, bowls and 'all the indoor activities of a good club'. And an essential element in this scheme was the Secretary-Manager who would live at the club and be a paid official.

Whether all this sprang ready-armed from the head of Jove we do not know. So far as the records show there was no business meeting between the inaugural one in June 1903 and the first Annual General Meeting in December. At this

the officers were re-elected and a committee of five - Brundret, Henriques and Rankin from the original committee being joined by Edwards and Steele.

It was apparently anticipated that business was going to be brisk for the Committee was scheduled to meet in the first week of each month and 'at such other times as the interests of the Club may require'. At the first meeting on January 12th 1904 the President announced that the Secretary had tendered his resignation because of 'a recent private trouble'. He then went on to say that he had investigated the Secretary's behaviour and had found it 'exceptionally manly and honourable'. The Treasurer then supported these remarks and a vote of confidence in the Secretary was passed.

And when we have read all this, of course, we know exactly nothing. We have a situation which we are going to find again and again in trying to trace the history of the Club through the minutes. A vague reference is made to something which all present were familiar with, but sixty years later there is only mystery and frustration.

Here, for instance, it would seem that there must be a connection between King's 'private trouble' and his ambitious schemes for the future of the Club. But if so, why refer to the trouble as private? On the other hand if the trouble was really private why resign, why the solemn rehabilitation at a committee meeting? Our curiosity is also aroused by the use of the word 'manly'.

Edwards' article makes no reference to this incident although he must have been present. He only says 'his (King's) enthusiasm did not survive the failure of his projects, for which apathy was largely responsible but even more my criticism and opposing ideals.'

This criticism had been called forth before, during the six months in which the Club appears to have had no rules and no conventions. Edwards gives us a very vivid picture of the muddle which resulted both from this and from the clash of intentions and personalities. The Club had derived from the Southport Race and out of the nine walks planned to take place between the inauguration and the end of 1903, two were championships, a short distance one of ten miles and a long distance one of forty. But the other fixtures were treated as races too.

We get evidence of this in Edwards' account of the first walk. In his writing - and the Club minutes confirm this - he reveals himself as a man of great ability and powers of leadership, but a man who knows it. In this account we find a curiously coy pretence of modesty, but usually he has no qualms about

letting us know - what is absolutely true - how much the Club owed to him.

On July 11th 1903, walk No. 1 started from Hayfield and reached Castleton via Williams Clough, the Snake and Win Hill. Edwards says:

'Although I was not much good at speed on the highway beyond an occasional burst of six miles well inside the hour, a route like this was just what I liked and what I was fitted for. So along with Tom Fielding, for whom I waited, I arrived in Castleton a full quarter of an hour before the next best and long before the last arrival.'

The second walk he does not mention. This was from Hazelhead to Bamford via Langsett, Derwent Dale and Ashopton. But on August 8th they walked, according to Edwards, from Handforth to Plumley. The programme says Handforth to Little Peover.

'The distance was given as 18 miles and the start was from Handforth Station at 3 o'clock in the afternoon. There was no leader of course in those days . . . The route to be followed was clearly indicated as Prestbury - Broken Cross - Siddington - Old Withington (the programme says Windy Harbour - Blackden) - Goostrey. The Secretary who planned the route knew nothing about the country and after map-measuring I decided that there had been a clerical error of ten miles. I went off at a good pace and was soon alone. I kept to the route and finished in five hours, arriving for the meal at 8 pm. Some of the others were there but they confessed to a 'bee-line'. Some finished later in a farmer's trap and finally it was agreed that the whole affair had been a fiasco and that I was the only member who had followed the route and therefore the only one who had done the walk.'

August 22nd saw a walk of  $11\frac{1}{2}$  miles from Disley to Alderley to which ladies were invited. Apparently there were not only giants in those days but giantesses too - if any accepted the invitation. On September 5th the walk was from Edale to Bakewell - no route is given.

Edwards goes on to say that 'the first season culminated in the Club Championship'. Actually this was the short distance championship from Alderley Edge to Congleton, and according to the programme there were two more walks and a long distance championship still to come, so it is not very clear what he means by 'culminated'.

However, the race was won by Brotherton followed by Torres. Edwards 'wasn't dissatisfied' by being in third place seeing that he 'had crossed over from Paris by the night boat

. . . and only arrived home in time to change and get off to Alderley.'

But on the walk he saw the light and like Saul before him lost no time in spreading it.

'I came to the conclusion that walking for the sake of speed and speed alone was no game for a real lover of the countryside'.

At the dinner which followed, he was called upon to respond to the toast of the runners-up and he promptly told them what he thought

'about the way they arranged the walks and the kind of walks they arranged, the careless detailing of the route, the unreliable distances, the need of leadership and the lack of real sportsmanship and camaraderie.'

There was of course only one thing to be done about this rebel. They put him on the committee - as there was no constitution - there and then.

'From that moment I made it my task to bring about the reorganisation of the Club and in a year's time it was on the sure foundations which have endured to this day.'

This is absolutely true and we should recognise it whilst at the same time thinking it would have been better if somebody else had said it.

After this it appears that the remainder of the 1903 programme was scrapped and the two walks done in October were from Diggle to Crowden and from Macclesfield to Buxton. We are left to assume that the long distance championship never happened.

But before leaving the good old days of heel and toe and devil take the hindermost, we must not forget the note which appeared at the foot of the first duplicated programme. It informed members that arrangements had been made with Mr A J Osborne, Director of the Physical Culture School in Albert Square to train members at special classes to be held at 6 and 7 pm on Wednesdays for a fee of 7/6 a week. It is never mentioned again.

#### ORGANISED PLEASURE

'My first task was to draft a set of rules; some of which remain unaltered. I put forward the notion that an officer was needed apart from Secretary and Treasurer whose sole function would be to plan and organise walks and I invented the title of 'Walks Convener'. I had to take on the job myself. My next task was to alter the outlook of the Club, to cast out 'racing' as having no place in our philosophy.'

This re-creation presumably went on for the rest of 1903 until December 14 when the crown was put on the edifice in the shape of the official approval of the First Annual General Meeting. This was held in the Moseley Hotel. All officers were re-elected, including King as Secretary, so it would seem that Edwards' victory was not yet certain.

Twelve members attended and out of these Brundret, Edwards, Henriques, Rankin and Steele were elected to the Committee and at two subsequent Committee meetings Torres, Sorensen and Chorlton were co-opted.

The A.G.M. also elected a Sunday Walks Committee of Brundret, Edwards and Sorensen, but there is no mention of a Walks Convener. The February Committee meeting elected a Walks Sub-committee of Sorensen, Chorlton and Macmorran, but in the handbook Edwards' name is on this Committee and a note refers to him as convener of the Walks Committees. It is possible that in his article he has antedated the use of the term Walks Convener.

There appear to have been two separate booklets issued round about the end of 1903, one containing the Rules and Bye Laws, the second being a handbook proper with programme and Bye Laws.

Rule 2 defines the objects of the Club as:

a) The union of gentlemen in Manchester and District interested in amateur pedestrianism and the encouragement of healthy walking exercise by the organisation of periodical Country Walks and Tours for the Club members.

b) To encourage a high standard of pedestrianism amongst the members by the holding of occasional Championship Competitions on amateur lines.

The latter paragraph was removed before the rules appeared in their revised form in the 1905 handbook. This followed the sending of a circular to all members asking for suggestions for the long distance championship. The 1904 programme includes two championship walks, a long one from Manchester to Nantwich and a short one from Alderley to Congleton, but I doubt if these were ever held, for before they should have happened the Committee were given the answers to the circular. These could hardly be said to show pedestrian enthusiasm, being:

3 for  
13 against  
1 indifferent  
21 no reply.

As Edwards says most of the rules remain now as he framed them. There have been numerous changes over the years and even more numerous attempted changes, but it is true to say that most of them have been minor in comparison with the general body. What has gone is the somewhat subtle distinction between rules and bye laws.

In their original form the latter present a very odd picture of Club walks.

'Whereas it is optional for any member, on a Club walk, to go at any pace he pleases, provision will so far as possible be made for two packs, fast and slow, each in charge of a leader, whose directions as to route must be adhered to.'

I wonder if this really did anything to relieve the chaos we saw in the walk to Plumley. Judging by Bye law 2 it couldn't have done.

'At the commencement of a walk the gentlemen acting as leaders shall register the names of the members in their respective packs, and at the end of the Walk shall hand or send to the Hon. Secretary a list of the members who have completed the walk.'

It is impossible, I find, on reading this not to envisage the membership of the Club going down as those unfortunates who have not completed the walks lie abandoned somewhere on the King's Highway.

I rather suspect that Edwards worked his way into command of the walks via Sunday Walks which appear to have been organised by a Sub-Committee almost from the beginning. On the

first cyclostyled programme there is a not very clear note which reads:

'Accommodation will be arranged for any members desirous of continuing a walk on Sundays. Four clear days notice at least must be given to the Hon. Sec. by those who wish to avail themselves of this extension.'

But the first printed programme bears the names of the sub-committee members and there is no mention of Sunday walks being continuations, they stood by themselves, apart from the main fixtures. Nobody makes clear why this had to be done and it is therefore tempting to think that the Club was divided into the religious sheep and the irreligious goats who had to be responsible for their own sinful activities. In the 1904 programme there were 15 Saturday walks and 10 on Sundays, so the heathen were obviously flourishing.

And lastly, in this sketch of the reduction of the Club to order, we come to what we might call the incentives. These are not mentioned in the first set of rules but appear as a foot-note in the 1904 programme:

'Aggregate Medals will be presented to all who complete not less than fifteen walks in the season, the medals will be numbered consecutively according to the mileage covered.'

After this it seems somewhat odd that the Committee meeting before the 1904 A.G.M. should decide to purchase a mileage medal and present it to Edwards, unless this was foreshadowing the statement in the 1905 handbook:

'Aggregate Medals will be presented to the Two Members covering the greatest number of Miles in the Club Walks.'

In the meantime the subject had become somewhat confused by the introduction into the minutes of discussion on Members' badges and on medals for all-throughers on the Whit Walks starting with the walk to London. At this point there is talk of a die being made for Club medals and this comes up in meeting after meeting until Edwards of course produces a design.

But confusion becomes worst confounded in 1908 when the handbook contains the new Rule 16 which was passed at the 1907 A.G.M.:

'A cup and medal, both suitably engraved with the name and record of the winner, shall be presented at the Annual General Meeting to the Member who has during the season then ended, accomplished the largest aggregate mileage in Club Walks.'

On the bye-law page, however, we still find the legend already quoted about two aggregate medals. This disappears in 1909.

This period of organisation also saw some difficulties in the application of the rules so solemnly passed. Applications for membership were resolutely kept from being too haphazard and have generally been so kept throughout the existence of the Club. It has always hovered delicately between a desire to keep numbers up and a desire to keep them down, between making the Club an economic proposition and keeping it, for want of a better word, select.

Even in the early days, the Committee tended to get bogged down in a constant stream of applications and resignations, some of which must have been quite frustrating. On February 3 1904 for instance we find Nicholls and Ross elected to membership. On March 3 Nicholls' application was withdrawn but in 1905 we find him elected Secretary.

In April 1904 four new members were elected, but at the next meeting in May it was revealed that they had not been proposed and seconded by Edwards and Brundret as stated. Then the President decided that Rule 8 called for the Committee to be unanimous in the election of members. On June 14th this was contested and the four members were elected and in July the President asked for his ruling to be rescinded.

But sometimes it was the applicants who made trouble. On March 22nd 1906 a Mr Le Peton was elected. On April 27th the Committee were informed that the gentleman had resigned because he had joined a golf club.

A gentleman by the name of Smithard was elected in July 1905. In April 1907 he resigned, but with incredible rashness the Committee elected him an honorary member. But even this he would not accept until he had been assured that the acceptance carried no obligation. And after all this he was invited as a guest to the 1907 Annual Dinner. It is difficult not to smell some commercial old-boyery around.

In July 1908 Mr C Simon had written for information about the Club. In reply to the information he regretted that the walks were too long. 'There was', say the minutes, 'much sympathy with this point of view.' Apparently our founder members were beginning to grow up.

In November 1907 the minutes positively bristle when it is reported that 'a Mr Harold Brown' - note the 'a'. This is often used to denote someone so far in the outer darkness that no member of the Committee knew him - had asked if he could accompany the Club on its 'rambles'.

In these early days it was often as well that the influx and outflow of members was fairly brisk, because the Committee was under the obligation by the rules to meet every

month. This they kept up reasonably well, apart from March 3 1904 when there was no quorum, but they appear to have gone ahead and transacted the business anyhow, until 1906 when the meetings in January, May, June, September and November produced no quorums. But in spite of this the October meeting discussed the possibility of mid-week meetings of the Club, and did in fact arrange for them every Thursday at the Geisha Cafe' in Cross Street. We are probably justified in thinking this a failure for we hear no more of it.

February 1907 probably gives us the clue to these monthly Committee meetings. The minutes end with the note: 'The Committee then remained to indulge in a friendly chat.'

There must have been many friendly chats for at some meetings the only solid business that was done was the election of new members or the acceptance of resignations. In fact in the minutes of the meeting on June 29th 1909 the secretary goes out of his way to give the duration of the meeting as from 7.00 - 9.00 - the business: the election of W H Coomber. If ever there was an omen, this was it, for Coomber turned out to be worth two hours labour - he won the Cup six times.

It was not until 1911 that the monthly meetings were dropped in favour of quarterly ones. But as we shall see, there came to be in the quarterly meetings benefits more material than a 'friendly chat'.



## MAD

'I put forward the argument that to win a race proves nothing as to the stamina of a walker, that the real test of a good walker is to be able to walk with reasonable spells for rest and refreshment, from daylight to dusk, day after day, for days on end, the days being spent not in a competition, but in a spirit of comradeship and in pleasant intercourse and even, if called for, self-effacing help.'

Thus Edwards on his new policy for the Club in 1904, some of which could have been put forward in a letter which he wrote to the Committee as a reply to the circular about championship races. Anyway, by April 18th we find his plans for a walk from Manchester to London and for a letter in the City Times announcing this being passed by the Committee. A sub-committee was formed to organise the walk and the date fixed for Whit Saturday May 21st.

At the May Committee meeting this sub-committee reported the offer of a Bovril Motor-car. This I find surprising, I hadn't realised that advertising by car dated so far back. However, after serious discussion it was finally resolved 'that as a matter of policy the Club should not at any time accept the offer of a motor-car or other conveyance when such assistance is offered as a means to advertisement.'

Thus the last nail was smartly driven into the coffin of any suspicion of professionalism.

And so, on the London Walk all taking part carried their all on their backs - a fact which was heavily underlined by all press reports.

The 1953 Jubilee handbook contains an account of this walk written from notes supplied by Edmund Ogden. In addition to this I have been privileged to have Edwards' complete collection of press-cuttings which have been presented to the Club by his daughter. The most notable feature of these cuttings is that they follow the walkers down the country, although some of the more southerly ones are content to reproduce verbatim from either the Manchester Guardian or the Daily Dispatch.

Both these papers in fact had a correspondent on the walk, the Guardian one being E W Record. It has been stated that he joined the Club after having taken part in this walk, but the minutes show that he was elected in March 1904, two months before the walk and before it had been publicised, as Edwards' plans were only approved by the Committee in April and the article announcing the walk only appeared in the Guardian on May 6th. He certainly remained a member for quite some years afterwards. He was elected a Vice-President in 1905, but refused to be re-elected in 1908. In 1911 he appeared to resign along with three others, but wrote to the following Committee meeting to say that resignation had not been his intention. In the 1914-18 war it seems to have been a letter from him which started off a regular correspondence with members serving in the forces. From then on he seems to disappear until in 1933 he writes to the Secretary, being then Editor of the Birmingham Times (Edward says Post).

His accounts of the London Walk were full - astonishingly so by the journalistic standards of today - and vivid. Typical of their time, they contained detailed descriptions of nature, but his were comparatively lean and economic and never ran to purple passages written for their own sake. With the trials of the pedestrians he dealt humorously and as a pedestrian himself.

I cannot find how far Record himself actually walked. Throughout his reports he talks as if he were with the walkers all the time, but his name is not among the six all-throughers. (It is claimed incidentally that Record invented this word which in the M.P.C. has two meanings: either a walker who covers all a Festival Walk or who has a hundred per cent attendance at any stage of the year's walks.)

Of the 20 walkers who left St Ann's Square at 1 pm on May 21st, not all intended to walk to London. Estimates vary as to how many did so intend. Edwards himself says 16, but the press is unanimous that it was 11.

It is not easy to envisage the conditions under which they then walked:

'This second half of today's walk the twelve miles from Wilmslow to Congleton, has been a progress of perpetual delight. The cyclists and the motor-cars who annoyed us with dust clouds on the first half of the journey seemed to come no further than Alderley, and we had practically a monopoly of a long stretch of well conditioned highway.'

And it is not only the road conditions which are alien to us. Somehow, even in those days of less immediate communications, the news of the walkers' approach had preceded them and all along the route and particularly at their over-night stopping places the locals met them and even accompanied them. Admittedly they seem to have turned out under a misapprehension, believing that what they were going to see was a race, and, as is not uncommon with spectators, their information was wildly inaccurate:

'They're walking to London for £100,' was the remark we heard at a wayside inn near Trentham. A quaint idea also existed that the walkers were handicapped by weight-carrying like a race horse. 'He has to carry forty pounds in his knapsack,' one interested spectator seriously observed to another as the leading man went past.'

Their first surprise in this respect came as they approached Congleton at the end of the first day and were met by a fair proportion of the population,

'and the small boys of the town constituted themselves a very noisy escort as they clattered in their clogs over the pavements making determined efforts to show that they could walk quite as fast as these Manchester men who were going to London.'

The next morning their surprise was even greater when a band struck up beneath their windows at 6 o'clock. But it was not a serenade, only the local Whitsuntide festivities getting under way.

Congleton to Stone for lunch is quite a step and to Rugeley for the night makes more than a good day's walk, but they were seldom alone:

'Really I think the outstanding feature of the walk today was the friendly interest taken in it by 35 miles of countryside in Cheshire and Staffordshire.'

In Newcastle-under-Lyme they were used as an example to the younger generation. A Sunday School teacher leading her children said, 'Look at them, they pick their feet up; you don't.' And Record was obviously walking this stretch for he adds feelingly:

'That was early in the day. Later we learnt that the chief consideration in long-distance walking is not so much how to pick your feet up as how to put them down.'

Feet became from now on a recurring topic, especially among the fast pack who were determined to average 5 miles an hour.

'One man stitched worsted through his blisters, another painted his with a preparation which formed a protective film over the tender part, a third pledged all his faith on the use as an embrocation of some alcoholic spirit, whisky preferred, and another was keen about the use of 'sea salt' in the foot bath, another favoured soda and another alum.'

But as always happens the blisters won, except in the case of Brundret who triumphantly arrived in Hyde Park with feet unscathed. We are not told which preventive he preferred - probably none.

After Rugeley the party began to splinter, in some cases intentionally, in others through the weakness - but only comparative - of the flesh. Two philosophies were walking to London, one which thought that a fast burst then a heavy lunch and rest, followed by another fast burst would get you there fit, and the other which believed in longer hours of slower walking. Some of the latter formed a party on their own after the first day, and led by Hislop, the President, intended to reach London by the following Monday. They then cease to be interesting to journalists and disappear from our view.

Others disappear gradually as legs and feet give way and presumably common sense prevails. Twelve sat down to lunch in Stone, but only ten reached Rugeley. These were reduced to nine by the following evening when they arrived in Coventry. By St Albans, the last night before their arrival in London, the party was seven allthroughers. Four of these constituted the fast pack, philosophy one, of whom Record says

'After a rest they set out to count off the milestones at the rate of one every thirteen minutes, and if they find that the time is being exceeded they sing quick-time songs to improve their pace.'

Not only tigers in fact, but musical ones.

The day which began in Coventry and ended in Stoney Stratford was the heaviest of a heavy tour - 39 miles. But the fast pack finished the last eight miles in an hour and forty minutes.

'The slow walkers were much later in finishing their long day. Two indeed who had started out from Coventry at 8 o'clock in the morning were on the road till half-past eleven at night. These were two who had suffered much from the strain of the earlier journey and the wonder of their colleagues is that they are still going. But this walk has shown much of the fine pluck with which men will carry through a self-imposed athletic undertaking even when they cannot greatly enjoy it.'

The 31 miles on the following day to St Albans were in some cases the last straw. Half way through the day one walker summed the situation up: 'This would have been a perfect holiday if only we had walked not more than twenty-five miles a day.' Record depicts the end of the day:

'The evening mists were clouding the meadows when the fast pack got in, and night was far advanced before our party was complete. At midnight three travellers were still unaccounted for, and some of the least footsore of the earlier arrivals went out to look for them. We retraced some of our steps along the Dunstable road and found beyond the gaslights and the houses an enchanted lane where there was moonlight above, a veil of mist below and a choir of nightingales singing in the hedges 'with full-throated ease'. But our three stragglers, when they came along at last, were far too exhausted to take delight in these pleasures of the night. The thirteen miles from Dunstable had nearly beaten them. One of the trio had been caught sleeping as he walked and his two tired companions had further tired themselves in helping him along.'

It was probably this last circumstance which led to one of the many rumours which grew around the walk. This was dealt with in the Manchester Evening Chronicle:

'We have been asked to contradict the absurd report in a London paper that in the later stages of the Manchester Pedestrians' walk to London, the Vice President, Mr A W Bentham carried one of the members of the party on his back. The true facts are that Wednesday night, Batty, on coming into St Albans assisted Connelly, who was much exhausted by the day's walk. The same assistance was rendered to Connelly yesterday morning by Mr Bentham. It was no more than taking his arm - certainly there was no carrying. A like service had also to be rendered in the last part of the walk to Batty.'

The end of the adventure is related in rollicking manner by the representative of the Manchester Evening Chronicle, C Allin Green. His story begins with his search in 'a remote Middlesex village', Edgware, for the pedestrians by asking "every respectable pedestrian I met, 'Have you walked from Manchester?'" Meeting with no success he changes the question to 'Have you walked from St Albans?' He now gets the answer 'Yes' only to find that the man in question has only walked from St Albans and is looking for work.

He then gives us a living description of rural Edgware, culminating in a conversation on the imminent bringing of trams to the village, his informant ending with the thought, 'I suppose

we'll all be the smarter and 'ave ter wear pot 'ats.'

In despair he embarks upon a steak, sitting at a window overlooking the road. And at the moment the steak was ready for his attack

'The leading pair of men came into sight. I was torn between love (of lunch) and duty and as the couple strode nearer to me I thought it most unkind, most unthinking of them to make a dead heat of it with my steak. These two men were utterly different in appearance: one was a huge, loose-limbed young man who took giant strides and swung his thick stick as though life was very much to his liking; The other was a much smaller man, though he found no trouble in keeping pace with his long companion, and his bare head was thrown back in a sort of conquering hero style.'

Incidentally, one of the things most commented on both by the press and by spectators on the road was the walkers' bare heads. 'The hatless brigade' only made its appearance about 1908 and only grew to significant proportions in the 1920s.

And so Rankin, tall, and Torres, small, joined Green at his meal

'and played havoc with every kind of food within reach, but when it came to jam for dessert I opened my eyes. 'Oh, grand thing, jam,' said Torres cutting another slice of bread, and he told a story of some jam-eating soldiers who marched some non-jam-eating comrades off their legs.'

In the meantime the rest of the party had passed, having eaten at Elstree. So Green toiled behind the two pedestrians until the rest greeted them from an upper window of the Welsh Harp in Hendon. They waited for Batty and on his arrival with Bentham set out upon the last stage, that between the great lake at Hendon and the Marble Arch. Green went by train.

Connolly was compelled to drop out after Hendon and so of the party who reached Marble Arch six were allthoroughs. And two or three others had come very near it.

And the title of this chapter? Somewhere in the Midlands, a farmer driving in the opposite direction took one look at the hatless berucksacked pedestrians and uttered the one word 'Mad'. But farmers can be wrong.

One thing that must be remembered about this walk is the age of the walkers. We latter-day pedestrians are used to a Club whose average age is probably on the wrong side of fifty. But the London walkers were of a different age. Edwards died in 1959 at the age of 89, and as we have seen Rankin was only nineteen at the time of the Manchester to

Southport walk. In 1904 therefore it is likely that most of them were at just about an ideal age for a feat like this. These young men stretched themselves and that was a good thing. Some found themselves stretched to cracking point. We, at our more advanced ages stretch ourselves too. The wise pedestrian is the one who knows and is never ashamed of his stretching point. Not to know it, or to know it and be ashamed of it, is adolescence - and adolescence in the fifties is a loathsome thing, God wot.



#### THE WEEKLY TREAD

The walk to London, with all its attendant publicity, was only the cream on the solid body of day and half-day walks which went on throughout the year.

In 1904, for some reason which does not appear in the minutes, week-end walking did not begin until March 12th. This may have been caused by the apparent change in the method of planning walks. A sub-committee was elected on February 3rd which presumably took over what had been the duty of the Secretary. And if the first two months of the year were taken up by polishing the organisation, the results have been worth it.

At this time it seems that routes of walks were decided by the sub-committee, sometimes on suggestions from members and were then allocated to leaders by the committee. In practice I imagine that walks must often have been led by those who suggested them - it would after all only be sense - but the change over to each leader deciding his own walk seems to have come about much later.

When we look at the first four walks, however, it seems that some local knowledge was at work, for they practically circumscribe what we might call M.P.C. country: Hallowell to Horwich in the north, a circular round Macclesfield in the south - twenty miles of it - Altringham to Plumley in the west and Diggle to Crowden in the east. In more than sixty-five years, at ordinary week-ends, we have strayed very little beyond these horizons and generations of walkers have found there both variety and familiarity. Twenty years later, in the first Retrospect to be written, Robert Smalley said:

For the rest our feet have been led to revisit most of the beauty spots of Cheshire and Derbyshire; the bleak and breezy hills of the Peak, the wooded vallies of the Derwent and the Wye, the nearer foothills of the Cheshire uplands and the richer pastoral country of the plain with the woodlands of Delamere; the moors and hills of our own Lancashire and the glories of the Ribble valley; all these have kindled anew the gladness of their first acquaintance.'

The later walks of 1904 ventured a little further afield: from Hazelhead to Bamford, Littleborough to Todmorden, a circular of Bakewell and another of what was to become almost the M.P.C.'s spiritual home, Chinley, from Ashbourne to Parsley Hay and half a dozen others beside, including a week-end tour of Snowdon.

In June, after eleven walks had been held, Edwards began another tradition: Convener's statistics. These, compared to some of the mathematical ju-jitsu which has occurred since, were comparatively simple. What they showed was that out of 27 members, all had done at least one walk and the average attendance per walk had been 11, which would make some later conveners glow green with envy. But at the September Executive meeting he complained about the low attendance as against the cost of notification and the meeting resolved that in future members should notify the convener if attending.

Once again we are left with a mystery, because this resolution is never mentioned again, never rescinded, and yet what it could possibly mean is far from clear. Unless, as a result of this decision, members were not sent circulars until they signified their intention of walking, there seems to be no point in it. And unless M.P.C. members were very different then from now - and the very existence of the resolution suggests that they were not - I would think it joined that vast number of committee resolutions which were never heard of again and of which the minute books are a veritable limbo.

The handbook at this time gave a rough route as well as a name for the walk. This at least provides some illumination on some of the names. In some cases where the latter gives, for instance, Chapel-Chinley but the distance as 17 miles we need a route which includes Rushup Edge, Edale Cross and Chinley Churn to remind us that this was quite a walk.

In going through the walks for the first twenty years or more of the life of the Club, one needs to remember two things: first, that the regular means of getting to the start of the walk and away from the finish was by train, and this is the reason why so many walks start from Chinley or Macclesfield or Hope; and second that it was not yet considered a leader's greatest crime to include some road in his route - partly of course because the roads, especially in the earlier years as we saw in the account of the London Walk, were comparatively empty and as rural as some of the bridle paths we now use.

The use of the railway made it easier than it usually is nowadays to do walks in length. It was possible to leave the train at one station and to return from another, even on a

different line. Presumably it made to some extent at any rate for tighter schedules, although Club rumour has it that the early Pedestrians tended to be in no hurry to get home and were very liable to prolong their final rest while train after train departed and they continued the treatment of what would now be called their dehydration problem.

This was made easier by the co-operation of the various railway companies, who not only issued special walkers' tickets, but also booklets of walks which even the M.P.C. did not scorn to use. On November 30th 1907 they followed route No 64 from the book issued by the London and North Western and Great Central Railways from Marsden to Penistone and on May 2nd of the following year tour No 23 of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway from Laneshaw Bridge to Hebden Bridge. Other walks could also have come from the same sources without the writers of reports in the City News admitting it. But we hear of trains caught by the skin of the leader's teeth, of trains missed, or of long walks being cut short so that they might be caught. And, rather mysteriously we hear of there being no time for a meal because of the time-table. Whether this means that landlords were more accommodating in those days than they are now, or that the meal could be ordered when the party arrived, I don't know.

Much of our information about these regular walks comes from the reports contributed by various members to the Manchester City News, a weekly newspaper which published reports of the activities of all kinds of societies. Those of the walking clubs began about 1908 to be collected under the heading of The Open Road, the regular contributing clubs being the The Wilmott Walking Club, which later became the Manchester Rambling Club, and the Ancoats Brotherhood who rather strangely were a mixed club. Over the initials J.M. the former club published its reports most regularly over a good number of years. The M.P.C. was not so regular. From 1907 the accounts were written by J Whalley, the current Walks Convener. Fourteen walks were reported from May to December 1907, 21 in 1908 and 6 up to April 17th 1909. Then there is a complete blank until February 19th 1910 with the exception of a report of the annual Dinner in December 1909 to which the City News had been invited.

This gap coincides apparently with the disappearance of the Walks Convener from public view. In the minutes of a Committee meeting for July 27th 1909 the secretary was empowered to write to Whalley the Walks Convener expressing the hope that his absence was not due to ill-health. At that

very moment Whalley appeared and explained that he had been moving into a new house and hoped to invite the Club to it as soon as possible. At the end of the year, however, he resigned from his office.

The new Convener was W Frost and he apparently started his labours by inciting the members to turn out for walks as training for Whit week when Edwards was to lead from Dieppe to Paris. It seems from the press report by Isherwood that the Convener was obeyed to the letter. We are told that ages on the walk from Whaley Bridge to Macclesfield on February 12th ranged from '25 to 60 odd years - several being over 60', but

'down the steep hill-side to Jenkin Chapel the 'boys' sped along at four miles an hour, opening their lungs for the pure air and ozone.'

The Committee meeting on February 22nd resolved that leaders should send reports of their walks to the Convener for publication in the City News. This was not unnecessary because up to then in 1910 only two walks had been reported out of seven. But neither was it effectual because the next press report was Sington's account of the Whit Walk which appeared on June 11th. For this he was justifiably thanked by the Committee on June 28th and asked to write others. This, as we shall see was quite a boomerang of a request. But he certainly conveyed the spirit of the Dieppe-Paris outing. There is something very M.P.C. about this incident:

'The air of Normandy has a most exhilarating effect, more especially on the mind; we realise that when we see a stern and dignified Manchester merchant, possibly a prominent figure on the Exchange, a vigorous 'bull' of calico and grey cloth here, and a great 'bear' of the same goods abroad, gallantly approach a peasant woman and with a most courtly "Permettez-moi, Madame", relieve her of her wheelbarrow and trundle it and her cabbages for miles, finishing up down the main street of the nearest town to the surprise and bewilderment of the natives.'

Perhaps the greatest lack in our archives of the Club are the weekly - or in times of economy fortnightly or three-weekly circulars. We have the programmes in the handbooks, but even the comparatively rare newspaper reports show that these were not necessarily adhered to. A walk reported on July 2nd from Marsden could perhaps be a variant of a walk in the programme for the same date - and incidentally in the account the Ram's Head, Denshaw is referred to as The Tup's Head, and permission had to be obtained to walk on the Roman

Road over Blackstone Edge. But a Chester Circuit (we now call them circulars) turns out to have been a walk from Beeston Castle via Peckforton to Ecclestone Ferry and a steamer trip from there to Chester. And Hayfield to Buxton becomes Glossop to Edale, with a rather charming bit of what-it-would-have-been-better-if-somebody-else-had-said- from Isherwood who was very addicted to inverted commas:

'Talk about the "new doctrines" for "perpetual youth" and "living for ever" now being preached - especially by cute Americans - it (sic) cannot beat this club's panacea; for proof its members are living examples.'

No more living example do we find in this history than one on a walk from Chinley to Bakewell on October 22nd 1910.

'One determined member, who has been tramping this earth about half a century, tried for the earlier train but professional duties prevented, and as he would not miss the opportunity offered, left Manchester for Chinley at 1 pm, nearly three hours after the main body, arriving at Bakewell at 5.38, having "legged" it from Chinley smartly.'

I think we can even forgive the inverted commas this time.

As I have said, in its early years the Club was dependent on the railways and to a certain extent on special rail tickets. Nowadays we are dependent on the car and whereas this tends to make for circular walks, it also makes it possible to start from more remote spots and to avoid the long walk out of and into a town. The following figures show a comparison between the starting places for the first 176 walks in the Club history and the same number in the late fifties:

Hazelhead	6	0
Disley	3	1
Edale	2	4
Macclesfield	14	10 (but almost all starting from the Setter Dog 3 miles out)
Diggle	4	0
Littleborough	3	0
Chinley	14	1
Whaley Bridge	7	3
Glossop	6	3 (but starting from Old Glossop)
Marple	3	5
Bollington	2	4 (from Pott Shrigley)
New Mills	3	0

Hebden Bridge	3	6
Saddleworth	2	23
Marsden	3	7
Buxton	7	1
Hayfield	3	8
Todmorden	1	6

Obviously, as in the case of Saddleworth, something depends on the places where members live, and in this case as well as in those of Edale and Hayfield on the access to moorlands.

This is a question which loomed large for many years. As early as June 1907, in reporting a walk from Marple to Edale, Whalley says:

'We made for Nab Brow across the moors, but keeping well to the path, for, all round, the moors are sacred to Saint Grouse. The public rights consist of a passage across and nothing more.'

The following month, walk No. 18, a Hayfield circular, mentions that Mr Watts of Abney Hall, Cheadle, had granted the Club permission to pass through his grounds at Hayfield, and a week later, walking from Chinley to Edale

'there was no dread or fear of the keepers among the pedestrians, for the convener, who was in possession of a pass, readily produced it for third time to these guardians of St Grouse.'

In December of 1907 they walked through Taxal Woods by permission of F C Toler Esq., and trespassed with permission over Colonel Cotton Jodrell's grounds.

The Club found its approval of private property tempered by its desire to walk over some of it. In a sense the Peak District and Northern Counties Footpaths Preservation Society was made for them (in future it will be referred to as the Footpaths Society). It existed to maintain established rights of way, and the Club became an affiliated member in 1907. On renewing the subscription in 1908 the Treasurer was asked by the Committee to draw the attention of the Society to the closing of footpaths on the Edge at Alderley and on Eccles Pike. The former had to be reported again in 1920.

In the same year a letter from Mr J R Corbett was read to the Committee asking for support for the Access To Mountains Bill. It was agreed that members of the Committee should canvas signatures from other members and the Secretary reminded them that he had issued in a circular for March a summary of a newspaper article entitled "Mountains For The People".

But through the influence of some of its members, the Club was nevertheless in a different position from most of its fellow walking clubs, and this was brought out very clearly in a peculiar series of events in 1910.

The City News for June 4th reported a Manchester Rambling Club walk on which the party had trespassed on the Doctor's Gate footpath - in fact originally a bridle path - leading from Old Glossop to the Snake Pass. This appears to have been a comparatively friendly affair in which the game-keeper pointed out that the path was private property and the leader of the party announced their intention of following it and gave his name and address.

On October 15th there appeared another report of trespass in the same place by the same club. This time they had more difficulty, barriers having been put across the stream and the gate having been padlocked. But very properly the walkers negotiated the obstacles without damage and the leader again supplied his particulars.

In the issue for November 12th - four weeks later that is - Sington wrote a letter to the Editor castigating these and other similar trespasses. In it he announced himself as a member of the M.P.C. and asserted that action such as this was only calculated to incite gentlemen such as Mr Watts to cease allowing that club to cross their land. All this was expressed in a manner which was abusive to the walkers - hooligans, they were, among other things - and rather unnecessarily subservient to the gentlemen.

And naturally the sky fell on him and presented the City News with two field-days. On November 19th and 26th it carried two half-pages of letters, for the most part more reasonable than Sington's and in the second batch there was an official one from the Footpaths Society.

Most of them took him to task for the tone of his letter and several pointed out that however obliging Mr Watts might be to the M.P.C., inquiries from other clubs did not even raise a reply. But the most interesting came from people who obviously knew their subject and who pointed out that any attempt to walk Doctor's Gate was only a reclaiming of ancient rights, as it was through that this bridle road was the original main road over the Pennines.

Three days after the last batch of replies, the Committee of the M.P.C. met by appointment Messrs Hughes and Holland of the Footpaths Society. Their object was to ask the Club to send representatives to that body. By numbers it was entitled to eight. Rather significantly Mr Holland said, 'he was particularly anxious to protect Doctor's Gate as being a most important path for it opened up a large tract of country

for pedestrians.' The Chairman announced that this was a matter for the A.G.M., and indeed in December the meeting elected two representatives. Thus the Club answered the hope of one correspondent that Sington did not represent its opinion.

But it had to go further. At the same Committee meeting the secretary

'laid before the Committee the grievance which Mr Sington had against the City News in reference to a letter which was published in the first person instead of the third person (as written by Mr Sington) thereby causing Mr Sington annoyance because he considered that the letter being published in the form that it was made the writer out to be vulgar.'

I am not quite sure what this was supposed to mean. How the use of the third person could have prevented epithets like 'hooligans' and 'guttersnipes' being vulgar, I would willingly learn. It was then revealed that Mr Sington had already sued the City News and so the Committee wisely decided not to interfere, as this was a personal matter.

This was also presumably the reason why no reply from Sington appeared in the paper, and also why the correspondence only lasted two editions.

But the Club still seemed to feel the necessity to rehabilitate itself with the rest of the walking fraternity. In a report on December 3rd of a walk from Greenfield to Hadfield via the Chew Valley and Crowden, the final paragraph expressed gratitude to the Footpaths Society for making this possible. And on February 11th, there was a reference to that Society's maps:

'No.2 depicts Doctor's Gate, William Clough etc. This should be seen by all earnest pedestrians who desire to encourage and support the opening and keeping open of Doctor's Gate and other public rights of way.'

The same report ended with an invitation to members to attend a trespass at Doctor's Gate.

On April 2nd 1911 the Club walked from Miller's Dale to Bakewell via Lathkill Dale and the reporter called attention to another attempt at what we might call privateering:

'This footpath through Lathkill Dale is evidently an ancient road from Bakewell to Monyash and it is most important to the general public that its ancient rights should not be infringed by the action of persons desiring to establish a proprietary right by custom of levying a toll on Easter Thursday.'

If I have given the impression, helped by the list of starting places, that the weekly trudge was monotonous, all members of the M.P.C. will know that this is not so. The same walk never has quite the same effect, even if only because of our

weather. Some things, however, seem to be unchanging: we are not surprised at all to discover that on July 6th 1907 Pendle was enveloped in cloud. When wasn't it? On October 5th the rain at Littleborough deterred six members from setting out, but four completed the walk. On November 17th when the programme says Hope to Buxton, the actual walk was from Chinley to Castleton on a 'dark and dreary day'. A week later they marched from Marsden to Penistone in hail and snow, accompanied by a visitor, Mr Brown, whose physical condition and state of mind crop up time after time in the report, until finally he:

'was so sleepy that no sooner was he in the train than he stretched his fatigued limbs on the soft cushions and thanked the gods that the day's tramp was finished.'

January 26th 1909 certainly appears to have been different. The programme says Chinley to Hope, the report says South Head to Win Hill, but it seems to have been one of those days when place meant little. The leader was our friend Sington, but the reporter was Whalley and the combination presents a nice irony which has often been noticeable in M.P.C. scribes.

'This was a heavy continuous mountain walk and the leader was anxious that members should make an effort to work through it and push on, as he proposed to complete the walk and hoped that all would join him.'

A familiar form of leadership, this, which the Club has often suffered under and, thank goodness, laughed at.

'But the best-laid schemes do not always succeed. Owing to the haziness of the atmosphere many landmarks were blotted out of view and before reaching the summit of Brown Knoll compass and map were brought forth to assist our knowledge of location. Immediately the correct line of route was struck the leader forged ahead and doubtless he alone completed what must have been not 25 but considerably over 30 miles, but sad or otherwise to relate he was just too late for his train at Hayfield and was obliged to seek the comfort and courtesy of the host of the Royal Hotel and return to business the following morning.'

Presumably as he got to Hayfield the walk was to Win Hill and back. The exact route, under the property laws then in force is difficult to envisage, but by any standards and by any route it was a pretty mad project for January 26th. Where the rest of the party either got to or finished, we are not told.

'Other experiences of the day will not be so soon obliterated from the minds of those who set out with full

'determination and purpose true of doing this magnificent tramp along the skyline. The member who finds himself all

alone on the moors in a silence only tempered by the calling; of unseen birds and lost to everything but a ghost of a sun as an intruder, will in future better appreciate the sound of harsh crunching footsteps in the snow.'

We are left to presume that they all got home.

A week later, and rather lower down, between Alderley Edge and Macclesfield in fact, the same conditions produced a quite different result:

'We had been continually on the move for six hours, quite snug and warm despite the prevailing snow, sleet and rain and over all there was a sleepy sense of something accomplished, if only a distance of eighteen miles.'

The walk from Disley to Alderley bears the heading On Cheshire Moors in a Blizzard. But in the end

'when one of our party, who was chiefly clothed in garments hurriedly obtained from the village hosiery and the hotel hostess, sat down at table, the steam of hot-pot and the steam of drying raiment were blissfully commingled.'

At other times the Club provided the variety by the walks they planned. On October 13th 1906 they walked round Liverpool Docks before striking up the coast towards Southport. And the following year, having done a Saturday walk from Macclesfield to Whaley Bridge and having there enjoyed the hospitality of the Treasurer they

'shouldered their rucksacks and tramped by Withen Lache and White Hall to the Crescent Hotel, Buxton, arriving there before 9.00. At the invitation of one of the Vice-Presidents supper was partaken of in the fine old ballroom of the hotel. Nine of the more determined members of the Club then packed up and set out on the 'All Night Tramp' soon after 11.00. Leaving the hotel, they found the night very dark and the air keen and frosty. Snow could be seen on Axe Edge as they made their way through Burnage (sic. should be Burbage) along the high road for Leek at a good 4-5 miles an hour. . . . Milestone after milestone was passed until Leek was reached about 2.30 in the morning where splendid arrangements had been made by the Convener for their comfort.'

The walk finally ended in Macclesfield at 7.30 am with a distance, including the afternoon of something like fifty miles.

But for sheer horror it is difficult to imagine anything to beat the walk for September 1st 1907, described - and with pitiless accuracy for once - as Manchester Circuit. Starting from Corporation Street, they took a tram to Heaton Park. From there the route was Prestwich - Kersal - Barton - Urmston - Chorlton cum Hardy. Here they lunched at a member's

house. Then Levenshulme - Belle Vue - Gorton - Clayton - Beswick - Blackley - Prestwich Park where they spent the evening at the President's home.

Whalley gives us a deeply felt picture of what Isherwood was to call 'the Club's panacea':

'Footsore and weary and depressed, with the air made foul with the numerous fish and chip potato shops, we hastened on as best we could over the hard flagstones, passing row after row of dreary cottages and mile after mile through narrow streets with scarcely anything to relieve the dreary dullness and dismal monotony.'

It is curious, I think, that in a circuit such as that, in 1907, the only thing he noticed making the air foul was fish shops.

Another walk which, on the surface, in spite of its coy title, sounds almost as attractive, is the Stockport Ceinture Walk, done in 1909, but not reported.

To sum it up in the words of Whalley, with a delightful gallic clanger either overlooked or perpetrated by the City News:

'the motion, exercise and health-giving breezes into the lungs is indeed the pedestrian's ideal of the 'joie de verve.'

## MEMBERS, MEETINGS AND MOTIONS

The history of the M.P.C. shows a pretty high incidence of peculiar characters. This is probably only to be expected. The normal man does not go scouring the countryside in all weathers, does not travel by train or car a distance of anything up to ten times as far as he is going to walk. And a man who is abnormal to that extent can well be abnormal in other respects too.

We have already seen some evidence of this abnormality. Edwards, certainly one of the, if not the, most valuable member the Club has had was in his own way self-satisfied and dogmatic. If he had not been, there is a good chance that the M.P.C. would have remained nothing but a transitory phenomenon in the pedestrian mania of the early century. Its first secretary was a man of visions; they just did not happen to coincide with those of the rest of the Club. And throughout the transactions of the Club we gain revealing and fascinating glimpses of personal peculiarities.

At first glance it might seem odd that some members through the years revealed in particular a financial peculiarity. As the Club has always reinforced its membership by personal recommendation, it has followed that its members have been above a certain minimum financial standing. But this has not prevented sudden revelations of unwillingness to spend for the Club. At the same time the opposite has happened too and one of the recurring subjects in Committee meetings has been excessive 'treating'. It is to the credit of the Club that this has always been frowned upon, and though rules have been avoided, disapproval has always where necessary been made obvious.

The question of expenses incurred in the service of the Club has not always found consistent treatment. Fairly early on it was suggested that leaders should be paid expenses for prospecting walks, but this found no favour. It would indeed have proved an expensive item if extended to include Festival walks. Maps, however, have at times been a more real bone

of contention. Whereas some leaders presented the maps they had bought for Festival Walks to the Club, others demanded that maps should be paid for. As early as 1906 Torres agreed to lead a Whit walk for the following year in Brittany if the maps were provided. This the Committee felt unable to pass and an extraordinary general meeting was called.

It cannot surely have been an accident that before this Whit walk was discussed at this meeting, Edwards asked leave to present to the Club the money he had received for his Guardian reports of the previous Whit walk, and 'this graceful gift on the part of Mr Edwards was very much appreciated by the meeting.'

It seems equally unlikely that when the coming Whit walk was brought up, Sorensen's suggestion that it be in England was accidental either. Whether it was or not, it successfully stopped the very question for which the meeting had been called from being discussed.

It was twenty-one years later that - so far as I can discover - the map question reared its head for the last time. Discussion was started as to whether the leaders of the Easter and Lakes walks should bear the cost of maps. Bowen, leader at Easter, was not present, but Hitchon and Rimington were, who were to lead in the Lakes. There would appear to be no reason why Hitchon should raise the Easter walk and not the Whit one, except that he had discussed the matter with Bowen. And such discussion is not surprising, if we consider these two gentlemen as they appear in the annals of the Club.

Hitchon took over as Convener from Whalley in 1919 and, rather surprisingly was presented with a gold watch at the A.G.M. at the end of that year. This presentation was not discussed at any previous Committee meeting and in the minutes for the A.G.M. it describes the watch as 'subscribed for by his admirers in the Club'. Similar presentations have been known in subsequent years, and one can only wonder why.

Hitchon continued as convener for the next ten years and appears to have been a very efficient one, but when he moved from Denton to Burnley he asked for travelling expenses and when in 1929 he joined the post of secretary to that of convener he carefully stipulated typing and travelling expenses. This was at the last Committee meeting of the year, but for some reason this was agreed again at the first of 1930.

In the A.G.M. at the end of that year there was a discussion on the cost of meals at the Reform Club where, with one or other member as host, most of the Committee meetings were held. Then through one of those waves of madness to which

M.P.C. meetings appear to have always been prone, there grew out of this a resolution that any expenditure over 3/- on meals at Committee meetings should be defrayed by the Club.

This was only three months or so before the discussion on maps with which we started. But before we come back to this, a diversion. At the next Committee meeting, Kronig, who was a very shrewd character, announced that as so few members of the Committee had written to say they were coming, he hadn't bothered to order a meal. So far as I know, the defraying of Committee meals out of Club funds was killed dead at that very moment.

Bowen, the other half of the map request, had quite a Club history behind him before this happened. In 1923 he was on the side of the angels and brought up the question of treating which many members thought had got out of hand. But a year later he was reprimanded by the Committee for having offered extra mileage to members who climbed Pendle perpendicularly rather than circuitously.

In 1925 he had quite a field year. In July it was reported that members had been receiving circulars from a wine merchant who had obtained addresses from him. 'Not,' it was said, 'the first time that this practice had been followed by the people named'. And at the last committee meeting of the year attention was drawn to the circular for Walk 900. On this the leader, Bowen, had asked each member attending to bring a prospective new member. And as a result it was decreed that any remarks not connected with the walk should not appear on a circular without the authorisation of the Committee. Walks Conveners please note.

At the end of the year, Bowen was runner up in the mileage - for the third time. As such he was supposed to receive a walking-stick. But the minutes of the next Committee meeting say:

'He (the Treasurer) also presented a bill submitted to him for the half cost of a pair of gold studs chosen by the runner-up for 1925, A E Bowen, as his souvenir of the occasion, and sought the ruling of the Committee whether any restriction was, or ought to be placed upon the choice of such a runner-up.

No decision was forthcoming, although the suggestion of E Mumford to stick to sticks for such souvenirs was generally approved.'

We then come back to the Great Map Row. When the question was raised, a motion and an amendment followed, and I suggest that the proposers and seconders are as important as the contents.

'It was moved by the President and seconded by Witte that such cost be limited to 25/-. An amendment was moved by Causer and seconded by Kronig that A E Bowen, as leader of the Easter Walk 1931 be paid, as an act of grace, for the cost of maps on that walk the sum of 36/-. The amendment was carried.'

The following meeting brought a protest on Bowen's behalf especially against the words 'as an act of grace', and Heywood

'fervently appealed for more sympathy between members on all occasions, both on walks and in business matters.'

It is only fair to add that in November Bowen and Greaves reported that on behalf of the Footpaths Society they had surveyed footpaths in an area of 25 square miles of Cheshire, a task which had occupied six days and 80 miles of walking, 29 of them on footpaths, crossing 184 stiles.

Bowen was President in 1935 and this year presents us with the biggest Bowen mystery of all. The minutes of the first Committee Meeting are hand-written and signed A E Bowen, President. Apart from the names of those present, they read:

'The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed. It was moved by E B Jones and seconded by W H Coomber that Mr J E Kewell, Architect of 290 Oxford Road, Manchester, be and is hereby duly elected a member of the Club and that he be notified accordingly, this resolution was passed unanimously.'

The next page bears the hand-written minutes of the next meeting, but stuck to the margin is a typewritten sheet headed 'Notes on meeting held of the Committee and Past Presidents and Officers of the Club, at the Old Rectory Club on Friday January 25th 1935' - the same meeting as already noted. But the text is very different:

'The President opened the meeting with an apology for an oversight at our last meeting, and he was most anxious to remedy same and forthwith put the matter in order to the satisfaction of all members present.

The election of a new member was duly performed after which the President excelled himself by the many and various ideas of the most excellent order that he has for further improving the standard of the Manchester Pedestrian Club, a long and interesting discussion on these ideas following, interspersed by suitable refreshments in such a form as to promote good fellowship and cordiality all round.

The President reported he had made arrangements for his evening on February 8th 1935 which seemed to be satisfactory and he hoped for a very happy time for all and welcomed everybody present.

Coomber reported he had selected a suitable cup which was now awaiting an inscription, he suggested Smalley be approached to assist with his inimitable ability.

The action of Coomber was endorsed by all present.

Regret was expressed by all at the absence of Smalley due to his wife's illness, the secretary was instructed to write a suitable letter to him herewith appended (it isn't). The meeting closed by thanking the President for his Hospitality and all agreed that had spent (sic) a most pleasant and convivial evening entirely due to his desire to further the best interests of the Club.'

This somewhat rococco piece of work, which sounds as though it had been written under the influence of the 'suitable refreshments', is not signed nor do the minutes of the next meeting mention it at all. The mystery remains.

Another of our personalities was without any doubt T Sington. We have already come across his letter to the City News on the subject of trespassing, and his walk over Kinder and back which he appears to have led in every comic sense of the word, not only by being in front but by ignoring everybody else and triumphantly being the only one to finish.

He played a somewhat minor part in 1908 in one of the mysteries of the minutes, the solution to which I found in the files of the Guardian. At a Committee meeting on October 27th doubt was expressed as to whether the Annual Dinner should be held, or, if held, whether the ladies should be invited 'in view of an unfortunate event which had just happened'. This unfortunate event was that the President of the Club had appeared before the magistrates the previous day on a charge of fraudulently converting money to his own use in his position as manager of the Piccadilly branch of the Manchester and County Bank. This was one of those tragic, almost incredible cases for which there seems to be no possible explanation. A W Bentham was not only a leading member of the Club, both as an official and as a pedestrian, he was also one of the most prominent men in Manchester, being treasurer of numerous organisations and charities. Unfortunately it was from some of these that he had misappropriated funds, partly by forgery, and after being remanded in custody for the Assizes, he served a term of imprisonment.

As a postscript to this unhappy affair, it is interesting to find that at a Committee on September 25th 1924 - 16 years after the event - it was mentioned that Bentham was still receiving help from some members. This one of those things which make the recording of the history of the Club a pleasing task.

Sington came into this matter by writing a letter protesting against a Committee decision to continue with the dinner, and resigning. He appears, however, to have thought better of it on receiving the Secretary's explanation.

Among his multifarious contributions to the Club story, he won the cup twice, but there were also two occasions when walks he had arranged privately had to be declared non-official and the mileage not allowed.

At the A.G.M. of 1910 he proposed a motion which was as much of a sermon as a suggestion:

'In order to justify the name of the Manchester Pedestrian Club and to prevent the Club from degenerating to the level of a mere Saturday afternoon rambling club, of which there are a large and increasing number in the City and Suburbs and to differentiate the M.P.C. from such minor organisations and to place it on an entirely different and higher level:- the minimum mileage of each year's programme shall be one thousand miles. Candidates for membership to have their attention specially drawn to this rule and are not to be encouraged to apply unless they are reasonably able to put in a very considerable mileage per annum, failing which any ordinary rambling club would be more suitable for them.'

The 1000 miles to be made up as follows -

25 Saturday morning walks at twelve miles	300
Not less than 25 Saturday afternoon walks at 13 miles	325
Whitsuntide, not less than	160
Lakes, not less than	45
10 Sunday walks, not less than	180
	1010

It seems almost a pity that, after such a triumph of enthusiasm and arithmetic over grammar, the motion should have been lost.

His last bow was in keeping with all the rest. He always seems to have been carried to extremes by his enthusiasm and without any regard for caution, or even sometimes sense. The war was too much of an opportunity for him to miss. He wrote several articles and sent them to the American magazine

'Textile World Record'. They were never published. This was the sort of irony which seemed to dog Sington. The Editor first of all argued with him by letter and then apparently sent the articles to the British authorities. As a result, Sington was accused of sedition and sentenced to six months imprisonment. The fact that he was of German extraction, had been born in Broughton but partly educated in Germany, didn't help.

He was struck off the roll of M.P.C. members. In the same year two other members, Myrans and Vickers, were struck off for being in arrears with their subscriptions. And now comes another Club mystery, a vintage one. In the list for 1915 three names are crossed out in red ink. And beside two of them, Myran and Vickers, someone has written 'rotter'. But not beside Sington's. One is tempted to draw the conclusion that for the 'Manchester Merchant' (Sington's own words) sedition is a less serious sin than non-payment of debts.

It is interesting too to find the word 'rotter' was actually used outside the pages of the Magnet.

At the 1924 Committee meeting already quoted, Sington was said to be 'stricken in health and position'.

One of the commonest bones of contention in the Club history has been mileage. In fact, it is surprising that the assessing of miles has not been abandoned long ago. But there has always been an amusing dichotomy in the Manchester Pedestrians' attitude to mileage, even on the part of those who have no hope at all of winning the cup. They pretend that the miles don't matter, that the cup is a joke, but there have grown out of this joke many angry moments, many manoeuvres of doubtful morality and many silences between those who had been friends. It is frequently said that the mileage competition is childish, and certainly those who take it most seriously are the ones whose behaviour becomes most childish under its influence.

In 1909 Torres wrote to the leader of the Whit Walk from Lancaster to Edinburgh that for business reasons he could not start the walk until Wednesday, but that he would do the whole walk in three days of forced marches. Solemnly - and rather stuffily - the Committee resolved that if he did so he could not be considered an allthorougher, and that he had better join them by train.

Some years later the Committee was dead against any mileage being given for uncompleted walks, but the subsequent A.G.M. gave leaders permission to give mileage as they thought fit.

In 1910 an apparently very valuable member of the Club, Isherwood, was lost because of a disagreement between him and the Walks Convener as to his mileage for the year - in spite of the fact that, on either count, he had won the cup.

Sington was not the only member to have his privately arranged walks disqualified. Over the years it has frequently occurred. In 1950, as we shall see later there was a motion in favour of counting no walks unless due notice had been given by circular and unless the mileage was no more than that for any walks taking place simultaneously. And in 1968 the whole thing came up again.

For years the name of Hilaire Belloc appeared in the handbook as an honorary member. Many people thought it was a joke, some suspected that it was a striving for status - and as his name remained on the list for many years, who can blame them? In a sense both schools of thought were right. The connection between him and the Club began in November 1906 when he, as M.P. for Salford, was invited to the Annual Dinner. Apparently he was hardly known even to all the Committee, for the Secretary spelled his name 'Bellow'. In January 1907 he had apparently agreed to be elected an honorary member and a Club badge was sent to him. Presumably in answer to this, he wrote hoping to join in the walks.

In 1909 he suggested that he should lead a walk in the Pyrenees, and he was invited to talk on the subject to members of the Club. He had incidentally given a lecture on the same subject to the Rucksack Club in 1905. His talk to the M.P.C. was given on October 25th 1909 and met with considerable enthusiasm, but the project never came to fruition. In December 1913 it was decided not to send him any more circulars. Nothing more is heard of him until 1945 when he was apparently written to and replied that he was still interested in the Club's activities in spite of advancing old age. He died in 1953. The minutes ignore him and so does Retrospect.

Another mysterious member to those of later years was Lt Colonel H M Stephenson. For many years the handbooks gave his date of election as 1906, revealed that he was an honorary member and were silent on the subject of his mileage. Not much more information can be gleaned from the records. He was elected to membership on August 2nd 1906. In January 1910 he was co-opted on to the Committee, a very odd action in view of his apparent non-existence for four years, an action, however, which was repeated in 1911. On April 15th 1911 the leader of a walk from Hazel Grove to Alderley Edge was reported in the City News to be Capt H F Stephenson. I think

we must assume that this is he - his only active record.

During the 1914-18 War he was one of the serving members with whom the Committee kept in touch and special congratulations were sent in November 1916 on his promotion to Lt Colonel. In 1920 he proffered his resignation, but the Committee suggested his election to honorary membership - because of his services to the country during the war - and the A.G.M. obligingly confirmed it. And for over forty years he remained on the roll of members without anyone even knowing if he was still alive.

Members, like other people, can have greatness thrust upon them. Suddenly in the minutes of a Committee meeting in May 1919 there appears the paragraph:

'In the matter of Mr Teasdale, the Treasurer was requested to try and ascertain as to his whereabouts.'

In June:

'In Mr Sorensen's absence we were still without news of Mr Teasdale officially, although one member spoke of having seen him.'

Mr Teasdale was obviously becoming light relief in the serious business of the Committee. In October:

'questions were asked about Teasdale, and Mr Hitchon, Walks Convener, explained, circulars addressed to this inarticulate member, not being returned, he assumed that the same must reach the member in question, and the Hon. Treasurer also added to the information by saying that Mr Teasdale had duly remitted his subscription.'

Apparently all was well, but our Mr Teasdale had one more trick up his sleeve. At the A.G.M. of 1919 the secretary reported one new member and one resignation but this was

'corrected, as Teasdale, who was the offending party had not yet reached the stage of a fait accompli of a resigned member as his resignation was under consideration.'

He was asked to withdraw his resignation, but as he here disappears from the minutes, we must assume that he refused.

It all sounds as though nobody knew Teasdale. But even in 1919 this could hardly have been possible. He was, as we have seen 98th in the Manchester-Southport Walk, was certainly an all-thorougher from Manchester to London, from Dieppe to Paris and from Boulogne to Paris. So, elusive as he might have been in 1919, he had done his share.

In the Club's view, probably the most peculiar members have been those who were never elected. At a Committee meeting in November 1910.

'a letter was read from Miss Rachel Ainsworth applying

for membership of the Club on behalf of herself and her sister. After due discussion it was decided that the Hon. Sec. should write her and point out that according to the rules the admission of lady members to the Club could not be entertained.'

This decision must not have been implemented for in the following month the Secretary read the letter again at the A.G.M. and the Chairman asked for views.

'Mr Frankenburg speaking in favour of it was opposed by Mr Edwards who said that inasmuch as the matter was an important one it should not be discussed without proper notice being given. Mr Isherwood considered the idea a very practical one.'

Quite what he meant by practical will never be known. The matter was finally referred to the Committee - and along with so many other things which have been referred to the M.P.C. Committee, Miss Ainsworth and her sister disappear from the sight of man.

But they were not the last to storm the barricades. Seventeen Misses between 1910 and 1927 when for some reason the siege was abandoned, vainly tried to become - somebody would have been bound to perpetrate it - pedestriennes.

One of them, tactfully or otherwise, applied in collaboration with a man. She was turned down as usual, her friend was informed how he could pursue membership. But, strangely enough, nothing more was heard from either.

As the years went by the Committee began to find these repeated applications a little sunshine in the endless gloom of elections, resignations and mileages. The last two ladies produced the following comments in the minutes:

'The report was received by the members of the Committee with that never-failing interest which such announcements invariably evoke.'

'The meeting heard the report with its usual interest in such matters, possibly influenced by the knowledge of their secure masculine stronghold in a world increasingly feminist.'

It is perhaps fitting to end this chapter with a member who is peculiar in being unknown - but perhaps not entirely unguessable at. All we are supposed to know about him is contained in a somewhat circumlocutory and not terribly lucid minute of March 23rd 1911.

'In view of objections having been made in consequence of the issue of a postcard advertisement by a leader of a walk, it was resolved to convey to the sender of the said postcard that the Committee hope that such personal action should not occur again. Also that no member should make use of the name of the Club in any press communication of a personal character.'

## ANCIENT FESTIVALS

One of the things in the Club which seem to match perfectly the word 'pedestrian' is the word 'festival'. Like myself, I suppose, many members of the Club have allowed these archaisms to flow over them like, as Aldous Huxley said, a spiritual shampoo. It could therefore be unkind to intrude with the truth, but that is what we are pursuing. So let us catch it up as speedily as possible.

Walks in the Whitsuntide week have been tradition in the Club since the Manchester-London walk in 1904, but had to be abandoned in 1917, 1918, 1919, 1921, 1940 and 1942. The Lakes Walk was initiated by Sorensen 1908 and has only been missed in 1914, 1940 and 1941. The Easter Walk began, as it were, by being abandoned. In 1912 the programme promised a walk round the Isle of Man for Easter. It was not held, but appears to have taken place in 1913. The Isle of Man seems to be a jinx region for the Club as walks arranged for Easter 1915 and Whit 1919 never took place.

Even with these cancellations there remains a quite remarkable list of traditional walks, walks which have criss-crossed the British Isles, literally from Lands End to John O'Groats and from Sussex to Sutherland, and Europe from Normandy to the Harz and from Boulogne to the Alps.

It is disappointing in the midst of all this tradition to discover that the wonderful name Festival Walks was not used until 1940. The Anglican flavour of this appellation, seems to point to A F Rountree as the author - one of the many things that the Club owes to him, including numerous stories which will go on being recounted with pleasure in his character and completely without rancour. His anglicanism, if it ever could have been in doubt, was doubly affirmed when coming across several pedestrians relieving themselves against a country church-yard wall, he first of all cried Blasphemy, but then retracted the charge when he found it was a Methodist church.

The Club early went abroad for Whitsun. Led by Edwards, they marched - it is difficult not to feel that many of these

early walks resembled marches - from Boulogne to Paris. They also must have resembled the ten little niggers, for we are told that 16 pedestrians left Boulogne, 12 out of 13 completed the third day and those twelve finished as all-throughers. As usual in the accounts of these walks we are never told what happened to the drop-outs.

The account of this walk was again the work of E W Record and bears his stamp. He admits having cycled on the Tuesday, but this appears to have been made necessary by protocol. The party had been greeted on arrival in Boulogne by a written welcome from the Mayor, and it was decided that the Guardian correspondent should attend at the Mairie on the Tuesday to return the compliment.

Meanwhile the party were meeting and surmounting their own problems. On the Monday night at Mampent they found nine tiny beds ready to accommodate 16 people, but undaunted they occupied themselves until midnight arranging mättresses on tables and the floor, whilst the landlord and his family slept in the hayloft.

Apparently the old Adam of 1903 still slumbered in some members. We are told that at the end of each day one or two finished with a sprint. And all along the road they roused the same interest as the previous year in England. Record, cycling after them on the Tuesday, found that everybody on the route had seen messieurs les anglais. At one place they were presented with roses, and when they asked for water they were given cider and all payment was refused. Who said it was Edward VII who established the entente cordiale?

On the last night at Meru they once again had bed trouble and finally divided themselves between two hotels.

Their final day was beautifully typical. For the last 20 miles they had the Eiffel Tower in view, and they rounded the tour off with a triumphant march down the Champs Elysees to the Place de la Concorde. It doesn't say they walked down the middle of the road, but I bet they did.

And then they celebrated. And whenever the Club celebrated at this period one feature was essential: speeches. We shall have more to say about this trait later. For the moment, let Record say it:

'Each all-througher was called upon to show, not so much that he could make a speech, but that he could stand on his feet.'

The all-throughers were many: Hislop, the President, and his son, Isherwood, Edwards, Torres, Rankin, Batty, Andrews, Gunston, Teasdale, Wellburn and Smithard.

And one other typical touch. When on the third day some went out to meet two stragglers, they heard them coming, vying with the nightingales - in a rendering of The Village Blacksmith.

In June 1906 accounts by Edwards appeared in the *Guardian* describing, inevitably less vividly, the Whit walk from Dieppe to Coutances.

One of the most worrying features of this walk seems to have been the juxtaposition, as it were, of heat and main roads. On the first day a sigh of relief was breathed when they were able to leave the road at Trouville, but we are not told whether the relief continued through a subsequent downpour.

When our predecessors went for a day's walk, it certainly lasted a day. On the first day of this tour, partly owing to the rain, they arrived in St Victor L'Abbaye after the whole town had retired, and for some unexplained reason they had to knock up half a street before they were directed to the hotel. Once found, its landlord too had to be knocked up, he and his wife having decided that their expected guests were not coming. So, at whatever hour it was, the party proceeded to demolish cold the dinner which had waited so long for them. One thing is lacking in these accounts and that is the reactions to this peculiar behaviour of those who were quite likely thought of as natives.

Nor do we get any real insight into the quality of the Club's French. We are told that on this tour conversation lessons went on en route, so apparently someone thought his linguistic pearls worthy to be passed on. There are no prizes for guessing who.

Road trouble returned later in the week when they again met a trunk road, and the description reminds us again that we are dealing with another age:

'Every few minutes a motor-car dashed past, leaving behind it for fully a quarter of a mile an atmosphere of dust and petrol which was almost unbearable.'

This compares interestingly with Record's statement the previous year that on the day he cycled on the road to Paris there were not a dozen cars in the day.

In 1906, two of the party took to the train to avoid this road. And on the Wednesday, oppressed by their other enemy, heat, some rested by the roadside until 6 pm and then set off on the remaining 18 miles.

After Caen this main road was left and life became more rural. At Coulombs a thatched cafe produced cider, wine, pot-au-feu, cream, boiled eggs and camembert. But, of course,

even in the face of this richness, the English had to ask for tea. They got it - 'cassis', brewed from black-currant leaves.

At another cafe in the Forest of Cerisy they were regaled with a loaf of bread, butter, cold boiled bacon and boiled eggs to be washed down with cider and syrup and water. They seem to have learnt their lesson - nobody asked for tea.

We are not told the size of the party. But there were only four all-throughers: Hislop, Edwards, Torres and Batty.

The Whit walk for 1907, which would have been in Brittany if the Club had bought Torres a map, finally became a cross-country tour from Manchester to Bristol. Three newspaper photographs remain of this walk, but I have been unable to find a newspaper account. The photographs show the party on the steps of the Midland Hotel at midday on Saturday May 18th, walking towards the camera on a Cheshire lane and away from it on the bank of the Mersey.

In the Central Library, Manchester, however, there is an opus entitled 'The World Forgetting' by J Darrah jnr printed in 1908 (for private circulation only) by Junior & Son, 73, Bridge Street, Manchester. The fly-leaf bears an inscription to W B Cookson, a member of the Club, by the author.

This Jerome-like work conveys more atmosphere than fact, but walks resemble countries in being happy when they have no history and so long as the atmosphere grows out of the story, it is fair enough. There is, it is true, some doubt as to the legitimacy of a disquisition on Darwin and Napoleon arising simply out of that fact that Darwin was born in Shrewsbury where the walkers rested on the third night. But even this can be forgiven when we come across such delightfully period passages as

'Napoleon! Darwin! Who think ye shall loom the larger before thinking man as the ages come?'

We return to a familiar theme between Lymm and Frodsham:

'The motor may be the last word in mechanical engineering, but to the walker it is an abomination . . . the perfume of the petrol, the clouds of dust left in the rear, the nervous strain induced by skipping to the roadside to avoid the approaching horn-announced monster, fill with righteous rage the man for whom the roads were made.'

But there is another side to the picture:

'On the third day of our walk, the Printer's Devil, having come to the end (temporarily) of his own powers was happy to avail himself of a ten-mile 'lift' in a passing car.'

The Printer's Devil was one of the names given to the party by the author. The rest were Alexander (the leader),

the Astute Solicitor, the Legal Luminary, Bayard, the Man of Gold, the Alleged Poet, the Independent Gent, the Learner and the Toreador. There is little hope now, I suppose, of ascribing these to the party to whom the book was dedicated: Edwards, Harte, Hislop, J and Hislop C H, Isherwood, Sorensen, Teasdale, Torres and Whalley. The Alleged Poet is later described as 'one of the heroes of the Southport Walk.' The first finisher at Southport of this party was Torres, he was 24th. The Toreador was apparently an enthusiastic dresser:

'A remarkable green in colour, it was decorated with a still more remarkable stripe . . . It caught the eye anything up to five miles, it held the gaze to the exclusion of all else and left its victims to marvel and to mourn. We saw hundreds, thousands of simple peasants, coming along heedless of their doom, whistling and singing from sheer joy in existence, suddenly catch sight of this never-to-be-forgotten costume, stop dead in their tracks, their breath come and go, their eyes bulge until . . . they fall panting and sobbing in the ditch.'

In Shrewsbury they were overcome by history:

'Our own conversations largely touched upon the Ironsides, the Henrys and the Edwards.'

But after dinner at the George and a few hours of paying 'our devotions to Bacchus and the Goddess Nicotine'

"Absent wives and sweethearts" was our concluding toast, as it was each evening, and was always honoured with its due enthusiasm.'

The chapter on the walk from Shrewsbury to Ludlow could almost be written of any M.P.C. walk. After 27½ miles the Printer's Devil developed foot trouble and finished in a farmer's cart. But apart from this accident the mood became more and more buoyant, story followed story, the Learner discoursed 'on such trifles as permutations, the co-efficient of the differential, the fourth dimension and so on', in which chat the Independent Gent bore his part. It becomes even more typical when in the afternoon 'we were drenched through and through again.' And so to the Feathers.

But there was one blemish on the day. They had been led to expect much from Church Stretton, but 'to put it mildly Church Stretton and All Stretton are just two ordinary humdrum commonplace English hamlets.' And this leads to a page and a quarter of diatribe against Thomas Carlyle - the connection has to be followed with Darrah himself.

Conversely, however, they had been told grim stories of Dinmore Hill, but found it such a natural delight that the climb was forgotten. They were 'with bold Robin in Sherwood, with

Hearne the Hunter in Windsor, or (and for preference) with fair Rosalind in Arden.'

The author leaves Dinmore with a truth known to all pedestrians:

'We discovered Dinmore to be 7009 miles high on the side we ascended, and about 500 feet on the other.'

And in Hereford he thinks back to the legends of Dinmore as compared with the reality and we are presented with three-quarters of a page of similar examples including 'the Edison storage battery' and 'the mathematical school who postulate parallel lines meeting somewhere.'

From Hereford they walked to Ross and having lunched, went via Whitchurch to Symonds Yat and reached Monmouth at 8 pm. It rained.

There was little to say about the walk, but the evening was in a real sense vintage M.P.C. A telegram was delivered from a vice-president who was staying in Bristol and proposed to join them for dinner next day. As the party was to stay at a temperance hotel, he asked them to wire him what beverages he should bring for them:

'One gently insinuated that hock was an essential for an evening's banquet; another drew special attention to the wines of Burgundy; some favoured claret; others discoursed eloquently on the claims of the productions of our old friends the Messrs Mumm, Moet, the relict of the lamented M'sieur Cliquot; the Sherries, the Ports, the Moselles, the wines of Perth and of the Cognac district all came in for honorable mention, and at last the fateful wire was drawn up and despatched. It read as follows: To Vice-President, Colston Hotel, Bristol. Many thanks. One dozen small Bass. President.'

The following day they tunneled through almost solid rain to Tintern Abbey, and here, on the strength of Newton having spent his holidays in Tintern, we have almost two pages of astronomy, lamenting that

'the vast majority of our kind is still in the same mental darkness as its brethren were in Tintern Abbey's most prosperous days.'

And so with their feet on the wet ground and their heads, as the M.P.C.'s have always been, ranging from the Cotton Exchange to the Empyrean, they walked from Manchester to Bristol in 1907.

When the question of 1908 was raised, Sorensen, who had not figured in the previous Whit walks, suggested that the daily distances should be no more than 25 miles. This was done and the result seems to have been appreciated by the party who went to the Ardennes. They all finished.

The *Guardian* report bears the attribution 'by our Special Correspondent' which I am reasonably sure means E W Record. And if the tone of his reports means anything, he enjoyed himself.

The venture did not start well. The boat was late docking in Antwerp, with the result that they missed the train in Brussels.

Between Namur and Dinant they left the road and followed the pathway on the banks of the Meuse. But this - a contrast to today's ideas - they found hard going. In other words they still felt uneasy if they were not more or less heeling and toeing it on a road.

When they were on a road next day, however, they found themselves regularly driven into the ditch by passing cars. The fact that the nightingales were singing all day seems to have been little consolation.

Heat was again one of their main problems. At Huy they bathed in the river and - apparently the same day - a farmer was persuaded to let them have a tub of cold water in his barn. If only we knew what the farmer thought.

The inner man had his complaints too. Tea was unobtainable and Belgian beer was, rather oddly, 'thin and muddy'. But the Manchester man rejoiced because, however thin and muddy, it only cost a penny, and an omelette made from three eggs only cost sixpence - the price, we are told, of one boiled egg in a Manchester cafe. And, peak of delight, 'a Manchester cigarette was on sale everywhere.'

And for the rest, Record's description of Friday breathes the spirit of touring whether on foot or not, the spirit which makes the heelers and toers sound so impoverished.

'But of wild boars the walkers saw none, and therein lay the sole disappointment of the day. What they did see, however, will provide them the pleasantest memories. They saw the Belgian peasants working on the land with hoe and sickle; they talked with woodmen peeling the bark from slaughtered oaks in the forests; they called at wayside schools and exchanged greetings with the curé acting as teacher and with the children busy with their lessons; they photographed bullock teams drawing hay loads from the meadows; they noted the tender devotion that keeps fresh flowers in the wayside shrines; they saw how cottagers tether sheep and goats in the lanes so that the rich herbage may not be wasted; they waved greetings to women washing clothes in the swift running rivers; they gathered wild strawberries from sun-warmed banks; they saw anglers taking trout from the streams; they stalked

nightingales in many a bush, not to disturb the melody, but merely to see the wonderful little bird that here, in every bush 'sings of summer with full-throated ease.'

And, back at Namur, their minds stored with such variety, they rounded off the tour - with speeches.

When Sorensen suggested an autumn week-end walk in the Lake District, he can not have seen himself as the author of the Club's most cherished festival, and one whose popularity has continually grown.

This first visit was a tour in the real sense of the term, but unfortunately the *City News* reports little but the route. They took the train to Windermere and the ferry to Bowness, and then walked via Sawrey, Hawkshead and Tarn Hows to their first night's lodging at Dungeon Ghyll. Saturday and Sunday nights were spent in Borrowdale and Buttermere and on Monday they walked via the Newlands Valley to Keswick.

This brief account summarises the difference between our Lakes and theirs. No cars which enable us to spend all the nights in one spot and yet walk over a wide area; even later when they began to spend the week-end in one hotel - this seems to have been in 1911 at the Old Dungeon Ghyll - they still had to walk on Friday from the nearest station and back to it on Monday.

The 1909 route is not reported, but 1910 covered quite a bit of ground. Friday's walk was from Ambleside and included Kirkstone Pass, Fairfield and Grisedale Tarn. The second day included Langdale, Stickle Tarn, Easedale Tarn, Grasmere to Rathay Bridge, and the third ended in Hawkshead.

In general it seems at first to have been the practice to send accounts of the Festival Walks to the *Guardian* and those of the one day walks to the *City News*. But, either because they were not considered news, or because the Club did not consider them interesting enough to write, Festival Walks in Britain are less reported than the ones abroad.

This may be a good point to consider press reports of walks. As we have already seen, those written by Record were lively, interesting accounts of human beings walking. He, of course, was a professional. And most of the others who subscribed both Festival and day walk reports were not. Isherwood had a nice eye for the interesting and at times quite a telling turn of phrase. Smalley and later Witte both succeeded in salting the almost inevitable monotony of their reports with humanity and observation. Edmund Ogden was a scholar, and as such he wrote what he thought people ought to be interested in. We never pass a house without considering its architecture

and its family's history, and no human beings obtrude on this scholarship. But without humanity and without scholarship, some of the stories can be a route card disguised as prose.

Running ahead somewhat, we find this style severely commented on in the City News for September 30th 1922.

'Corunna sends us the following note on the literary style which is adopted by several writers of rambling notes . . . Thus "we boarded the Oldham car". Presumably they entered the car. One boards a ship. "Leaving our car at Grains Bar." This indicates that the car was left at Grains Bar. "We stepped out briskly." Now what on earth interest is it to anyone that they "stepped out briskly"? If they had tumbled out of the car or been thrown out, there would have been cause for remark.

"We alighted to meet the fresh wind from the Yorkshire Moors." Not the wind, be it noted, but "Yorkshire wind". This wind was already "dispersing the past week's accumulated cobwebs."

They continued their ramble "pausing" a while to "admire the architecture of a country church near Oldham".

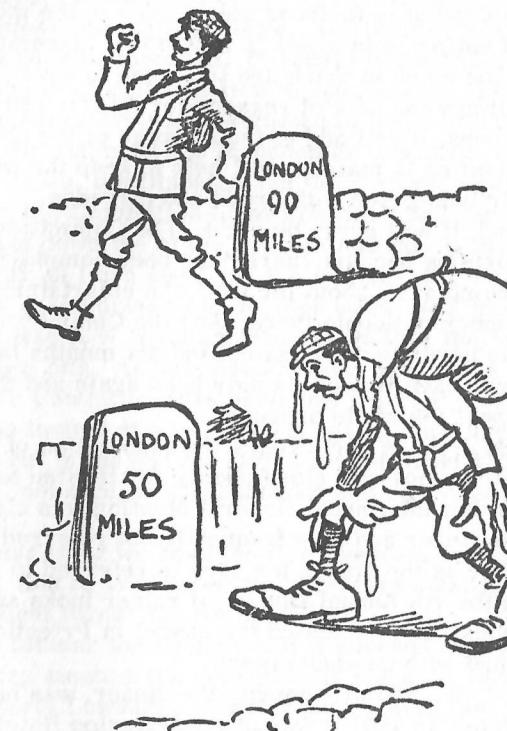
Corunna is himself a bit of a pedant, but he has a point. And apparently the point went home for no more Week-end Rambles columns appeared in the City News until June 9th 1923.

The only other Festival Walk of which we have any record before the outbreak of the war in 1914 is that from Lancaster to Edinburgh in 1909. The record is a fairly brief newspaper report stuck on to the same piece of paper as the photographs of the Manchester-Bristol Walk. The paper is unspecified but as it begins by explaining what the M.P.C. is, it was presumably not one of the Manchester papers. It starts by saying that two members completed the 161 miles from Lancaster to Edinburgh, but then, after giving the various stages, lists five gentlemen who finished the walk: Harte, Hislop, Marshall, Sington and Teasdale. Torres had only joined them at Hawick. Harte, the leader, is quoted as saying rather grimly, that these walks were a triumph of will-power over body.

It may be said, I think, that this remark is typical of the attitude of the Club during the first stage of its existence, up to 1914. Its members were very conscious of being something new, of indulging in physical activity without the excuse of 'games to play out whether earnest or fun.' Because there was no winning or losing - except, as we have seen, when the troublesome old Adam occasionally raised his egotistical old head as he still does - they felt that some apologia was necessary, that they had to justify themselves. But as the years go

on the apology begins to disappear from the apologia, and we find Stevenson at the Annual Dinner after the Edinburgh walk becoming much more positive:

' . . . if it was madness to improve their appreciation of Nature, to take pleasure in strenuous labour, to reach some of the beauty spots of the beautiful world, to consider the physical condition of the body, to brighten the intellect and to feel how delightful it was (sic) to be healthy and strong, then let them remain mad.'



## DINING AND WHINING

Whatever the practical reasons for a club's existence, there always comes a point when somebody thinks it ought to organise a dinner. There is always a stratum of the membership whose highest social aspiration is to dress themselves in the most uncomfortable of uniforms in order to add to that discomfort too much to eat, too much to drink and too much to pay.

There are always the best of reasons for this: it will attract new members, it will add to the prestige of the club and, if the organisation is male, it will help to keep the wives quiet, to win their indulgence with bread and circuses.

And in the end, it will never be right. The Committee will hold post mortems because there have been complaints about the hotel, complaints about the food, the entertainment, the price, the number of people there. And the Committee will wisely decide never to do it again. And six months later the social urge will have reared its ugly head again and they will solemnly repeat the whole process.

Even in the M.P.C.'s early years the association of meals with its regular activities was close enough for it often to be taken for granted that the Annual General Meeting was also accompanied by a dinner and it is frequently not referred to in the minutes. But as the dinner for 1909 is referred to in the City News as the 7th Annual Dinner, it rather looks as though the Club must have emulated the chapel in Priestley's play which 'oppened with an anniversary.'

The 1903 A.G.M., and presumably the dinner, was held in the Moseley Hotel, in 1904 it was at the Waterloo Hotel, Piccadilly and in 1905 at the Midland. Here they seem to have remained until 1909 when, in September, a letter having been received from the hotel asking if the ball-room should be reserved as usual, Chorlton criticised the 1908 function and the Committee decided to move to the Albion where many executive meetings had been held. This of course was objected to and on November 11th an extraordinary general meeting was called to decide on the venue for the dinner - which had already been decided on. (This boiling of cabbages twice is

so common in M.P.C. minutes as to be almost standard practice, the result of having a large committee of irregular attenders, so that on any particular issue a committee may be packed or may indeed quite accidentally consist of different personnel.)

At this meeting, Hislop and Edwards fought but failed to change the previous decision.

In 1910, however, it was decided to hold the dinner at the Midland and, presumably as a sop to the opposition, a hot pot supper was arranged at the Albion for January.

By now the dinners were spreading their wings. The first mention of guests is in 1906 when invitations were sent to the Lord Mayor, to Hilaire Belloc, M.P. for Salford (Bellow in the minutes) and the City News. And in later years the number of press guests increased. In 1909, for instance, Edwards fought successfully against a motion to reduce such visitors and eventually the secretary was instructed to issue 'the usual invitations to the Proprietors of the Manchester Guardian, the Courier, the City News, the Dispatch and the Evening News.' In 1913, however, the Committee turned on itself and for no apparent reason cut down the press representatives to one.

So far as I can see from the minutes, the first reference to ladies at the dinner was in 1908 when, by a most unfortunate irony, it was A W Bentham who raised it at the meeting on September 29th. As has already been mentioned, by the following month the Committee was seriously worried as to whether ladies should be invited at all, Bentham having been arrested the day before. But in the end the ladies were invited and, no doubt as a special penance, it was resolved that speeches should be abridged.

A year later we have the first mention of two 'musical artists'. And in 1910 three members are appointed to arrange the 'musical turns' and the toast list.

The former were apparently a success and at the next Committee meeting the secretary is asked to send thanks to Mrs Hesketh Lenwade, Alderley Edge, Miss Isherwood, c/o her father, and Mr E C K Walter.

When dinners were resumed after the 1914-18 War, enthusiasm seems to have run riot. It was proposed that 'members should come in evening dress and that it be open to them to bring gentlemen and lady friends as guests of the evening and that it be left to them (Heywood and Mumford) to make such arrangements as would assure to the occasion a thoroughly enjoyable and sociable programme.' At a subsequent meeting Heywood announced a booking of 40 members

and guests and said that a note on the walks circular would bring more. Mr Mumford reported that he had booked Mr Foden Williams for a fee of £5-5-0 which was only half of the gentleman's usual charge. This was agreed.

And then the euphoria was shattered. At a meeting on January 15th 1920 it was revealed that expenditure had exceeded income. The expenditure of £8 in connection with the coming dinner was frowned upon. Edwards, quoting his own experience, not having been present at the previous meeting, said that the price should have been raised to include the expenditure. And whilst the gloom predominated they resolved not to make any 'distribution of charities now or in future'. By April 22nd it is quite obvious that the subject had undergone much gossip as the miles were covered and now Stevenson was arraigned as having paid a guinea for the services of a pianist without the sanction of the organisers or the Committee and, in his absence, it was agreed that he should refund it. And then in a burst of generosity the Committee agreed to reimburse the organisers for the tips they had paid out.

The following year all gloom was forgotten. The dinner made a profit of £4-6-0 and thus became respectable again. So much so that the menu for the 1921 dinner is included in the minutes and the programme promises items by Miss M Taylor, Mrs A B Mallinson and, again, Mr Foden Williams. One looks in vain for repercussions in subsequent meetings, but they do not come. Tickets cost 17/6.

Trouble, however, was just around the corner. When the Guest Night for 1925 was being discussed, J Harcourt Willson suggested with disarming simplicity that

'the attention of members be drawn to the date of the Annual Dinner and their presence at the same pressed for.'

The secretary adds a footnote that this was decided on to prevent a repetition of last year when the guests outnumbered the members by 49 to 17. It would not be exact to say that the members responded, unless one devoted one sacrificed his wife. The numbers for 1925 were 48 guests and 17 members. This out of a current membership of 52.

For the following year it was decided that both the A.G.M. and the Annual Dinner should be held at the Reform Club by courtesy of those who were members. The President said

'The Grill Room would hold 65 diners, for more than this the large dining room would be necessary . . . that the cuisine of the Club was equal to any such occasion and that the Wine Cellar was exceptionally well-stocked.'

As for entertainment, the Committee knew what it didn't want. J Harcourt Willson's suggestion 'that this take the form of a Dance' not awaking any enthusiasm.

At a later meeting Sorensen asked whether the Reform Club would present 'the same freedom of action in the obtaining of refreshments'. He was assured, rather peculiarly 'that full provision for the supply of perennial or occasional refreshments could be ensured by the use of chits'. I must confess that the term 'perennial refreshments' eludes me.

The resulting attendance of 53 guests and 21 members together with a financial deficit of £3-5-2 obviously called for a post mortem. And when this Club goes in for a post mortem, De Mortuis . . . goes by the board.

'Some criticism of the arrangements and the after dinner proceedings were offered, Harcourt Willson considering that the Ladies preferred an hotel as the scene of the Dinner. Franks thinking the entertainment provided was lacking in talent, spirit and fire. Other opinions negatived these strictures.'

The opinion also came out

'that the Reform Club was cold and that the after dinner proceedings contained too many speeches and those not attractive to the Lady Guests. All were agreed on the necessity for warmth but the contrary opinion was held with regard to the speeches.'

In October 1927:

'Discussion upon the usual lines took place as to what might be done to make this Annual Dinner brighter and more attractive, Dancing and Whist being suggested by J H Willson as means to this end. Edwards expressed the opinion that the Dinner was in the nature of a family gathering to which only Members, their families and interested friends were expected or desired and that it was not the object of the Club to arrange a Dance or Whist Drive to attract large numbers of people not connected with or interested in the Club. Emphasis was laid upon the obtaining of good Artistes with full opportunity of displaying their talent.'

By now Smalley was Secretary and the next bit is obviously his:

'the matter was left in the hands of Mr J Harcourt Willson with the pious hope that his great experience and social gifts would enable him to guide this varied team to a happy and successful issue.'

The 'successful issue' was 56 guests, 23 members - and a deficit of 1/9.

The climax in illogicality and M.P.C. Committeedom was reached in 1929. The guest Night of 1928 having resulted in a deficit, it was decided to send out a questionnaire to ascertain the real feeling of the Club. By April 11th 17 replies had been received of which 6 were in favour, 2 didn't care, 7 were against, 1 suggested a Dinner Dance and 1 wanted whist after the A.G.M. It was therefore decided to send out a circular urging members to reply.

By July 38 had replied: 14 in favour, 4 neutral and 20 against. Democracy therefore having been satisfied, the Committee decided - to carry on with the arrangements for a Guest Night.

In passing we may note a real social dilemma which rocked the Club in 1928. The Easter Walk was to be at Church Stretton and the centre was the Long Mynd Hotel.

'The President then broached a matter of high import suggested to him by the leader, Bowen, viz. whether evening dress should be taken and worn by the members? The argument as stated by the President was to the effect that the Long Mynd Hotel was an exceedingly high class establishment, with a clientele in accordance, to whom dressing for dinner was a natural and usual proceeding. Also there would probably be dancing in the evening. Mingling with this elegant assembly, would not members of the M.P.C. conform to these polite usages and in Rome do as the Romans do? Entwined in the argument there appeared to be also a coy desire to take an active part in the expected dancing for which evening dress would be 'de rigueur'. In the discussion that followed there was a certain spirit of levity, as in the suggestion of Doyle that the President and the Leader only should be the wearers of Evening Dress, the name of Franks afterwards being added to this glad company. To the proposition, Doyle, Kronig, Seares and Coomber gave a refusal, preferring the comfort of lounge suits and of relaxation in the Smoke Room after the Exercise of the Day.'

So far as I can discover, this question has never reappeared.

In later years the Guest Night has been transformed into the President's Evening, sometimes called the Ladies' Evening and this personalisation of the function has tended to drive criticism away from the committee room and into the hills, where whispers pass in the wind and arrangements are made which should perhaps be described as sub heather.

Into this maelstrom modern science has introduced a new current: the colour slide. And around this uncertain centre there has built up a tangle of opinions. Some like slides being shown so long as they are theirs, some like them being shown so long as theirs are among them, some like them so long as they are chosen for quality and obviously theirs will be among them, and some just hate the damned things as a desperate waste of drinking time.

And further into this tangle I shall not venture.



## TWO WARS

It is some tribute to both the members and the spirit of the Club that it should not only have survived two world wars, but should have gone on functioning, however abnormally, during them.

Our records are more revealing for the second war than for 1914-18, because by then *Retrospect* was firmly established. For the former years we can only rely on minutes of meetings and these are not only few but somewhat confused. Only twelve Executive meetings were held between September 1914 and September 1918, and at one point the secretary seems to have become completely disoriented. We have consecutive meetings on the following dates:

Committee November 1915  
Committee May 18th 1916  
A.G.M. December 11th 1916  
Committee November 1916  
A.G.M. December 9th 1916

The explanation might be that several minutes were written up together in disorder. When gone into, the A.G.M. for December 11th 1916 turns out to be for 1915.

At the A.G.M. for 1914 it was reported that there were five members serving. The subscription lists for the years 1915-18 show eight men in the forces throughout. It would appear therefore that none was killed. In September 1915 a resolution was passed that messages of greeting should be sent to those serving. This seems to have been carried on by E D Torres after he became secretary in 1916.

It is not clear how many walks were actually carried out during these years. The Lakes Walk for 1914 was cancelled and the minutes of the same meeting at which this was done state the Club's intention to make the programme for 1915 as normal as possible. And indeed, as published, with 40 day walks it looks very normal. The Easter walk in the Isle of Man was cancelled, but it would appear that the Whit Walk

from Bristol to London and the Lakes Walk at Buttermere were held. There was a suggestion that the Whit walk in Mid-Wales in 1917 be cancelled, but it seems to have been defeated. The programme for 1917 had only one Sunday walk and nothing at Whit and in September 1918 it was decided that in 1919 there should be no Sunday walks but walks every Saturday except August Bank Holiday. This was the first step towards the present regime when there are no one-day walks on Sunday.

Two similar lines of action were taken in both wars. In 1914 an attempt was made to persuade the railways to continue their concessions for walkers' tickets. This failed. In 1941, when signposts disappeared and any male in the country was likely to be regarded as a parachutist, Harrison and Platt were deputed to write to the M.P.s for Manchester and Salford asking them to ensure that, so far as possible, the liberty and facilities for walking should not be curtailed.

The programme in the second war was much more disturbed than before, although there appear to have been fewer members in the forces, the only two mentioned being Gray and Halstead.

No walks were possible in September 1939 and the Lakes Walk had to be cancelled. The handbook for 1940 contained the dates and numbers of the walks but no promises as to where they would be. The final walks in 1939 had to be in the neighbourhood of Manchester, but, although the Walks Convener could only promise a limited programme, 39 walks were carried out during 1940.

For 1941 and 1942 too only blank programmes could be published, but 1941 produced 44 walks and whereas in the previous year no Festival walks were held, Easter, Whitsun and October 1941 were, as it were, celebrated, the first two in Keswick and the last in Edale, Wyon leading the Lakeland walks and hence winning the cup.

Greatly daring, the programme for 1943 published leaders' names as well as dates, but no routes. And *Retrospect* reports an Easter Walk and a 'real' Lakes Walk. It also perhaps gives a clue to the tenacity of the Club:

'Our 'BM' (Causer) with whom the Club look forward to celebrating his 90th birthday, has been able to turn out fairly regularly and to do his bit in leading a walk . . . Our founder-member E D Torres has been turning out again . . . Two other members of the 75-85 age group (Uncle Alf and Coomber) have only been able to partake of our walks in spirit.'

The year was also noticeable for innovation 'The discovery and participation in substantial 'afternoon teas' A high standard was set by the Admiral who, as usual led the opening walk of

the season in the Prestbury district. Persistent rain, however, drove the members off the road to study indoor life; and at 3.30 we were invited to sit down to afternoon tea consisting of soup, roast turkey and plum pudding etc washed down with beer and coffee.'

I have found it difficult to discover the development of the eating habits of the Club. Earlier there was mention of afternoon tea followed sometimes by dinner, but the paragraph above seems to suggest that this had ceased to be a habit. At the same time it seems odd that an eating habit should have started in this period of rationing.

1943 - described in Retrospect as the Club's 42nd season, when in fact it was the 41st - did not begin till February because of the early black-out in January, but in the end the possible mileage exceeded 1942 by 400. This included two days in Hebden Bridge at Easter, a Whit Walk at Alsop en le Dale, and a Lakes walk at Haweswater, a very wet one.

Retrospect helps us considerably to set the mood of those times. The first war-time edition says:

' . . . we did not anticipate the storm of war, which shattered our programme in the autumn of the year, 'which seems to reveal a high degree of insulation on somebody's part. I thought only the Daily Express, which had its own reasons, managed to get so deep in the sand as that.'

It also foretells a year of curtailed activities in 1940: ' . . . there are so many added responsibilities, and there is so much of national importance to be done.'

And looking back on 1940 the next edition:

'Necessary restrictions have made touring impossible at any distance from our homes, and we have had to make the best of the country in the immediate neighborhood of our city.'

Retrospect for 1941, however, starts on a brighter note:

'Last year there were fewer alarms and disturbances. We had 44 walks and only one arrangement had to be cancelled. It is true that in 1941 only twenty members were able to take an active part in our proceedings, eight fewer than those who turned out in the previous year.'

In contrast to this brightness, the report of the year is the shortest ever. And the true picture can be seen in the account of the Festival walks. At Easter Wyon led with three companions. At Whit Wyon led with one companion.

At the A.G.M. in 1941 all the Officers and Committee for 1941 were re-elected en bloc for 1942, the rules being temporarily rescinded for the purpose. And so J Chadwick

became the only President apart from the first, Hislop, to serve more than one year.

In 1942

'We look forward in faith and hope to a great revival not only in the walking sphere but also in the social gatherings which the catering restrictions and 'black-out' of the last three years have perforce curtailed.'

This allusion to social gatherings hides a story of difficulty in arranging meals, of their sometimes scanty nature, in which the 'afternoon tea' I quoted above was but a break in the clouds. I suppose only those who led walks in those difficult days could really recount all the problems which arose. But when they are recalled now, it is, as usual with this Club, only the humorous incidents which come to light. Such is the story of the member who, having quickly counted the cakes on the table, announced that he would eat his cake first before the main course. And in a subsequent chapter we shall hear how the Club opened not only its heart to an unrestricted Ireland soon after the war.

One of the things which must be said about the second war, is that however restricted the Club's activities were, it was, like a plant in winter, building up some powerful roots. During the war new members included Bowman, Burnett, Eldon, Harrison, Tennant, Williamson, Wood and Wyon. And there are few if any periods of five years which have produced such a team of Club stalwarts.

Many of them distinguished themselves on the Lakes Walk for 1944 to which Retrospect devotes four pages. I can only take as an example the legendary dowsing of Harrison. He and Burnett were unwise enough to join Wyon in one of his typical excursions: a direct descent from Pillar Rock. Fate saw them down without a grimace. But the Liza was a torrent and bridge there was none. Two were across and Harrison half way when he was inspired to sit on a slippery rock in midstream to remove his boots with the intention of wading. But his rucksack gave him a centre of gravity he wasn't used to and he slipped backwards into four or five feet of water. There have been many dippings in the motley history of the Club - Driver and Meadows have valiantly striven for the record - but this was probably the most thorough. The account says that Rountree's rum supply later worked wonders on the half-drowned, but leaves the wonders untold. We will do likewise, it is a story for weary men in comfortable lounges and not for unfeeling print.

Very few years go by without losses in membership, members whose names have made Club history. 1945 saw the deaths of Bowen and Coomber who have both been mentioned already. The latter had won the Cup six times, a record up to them, but one which has since been surpassed by Wyon and Trevor. Bowen's tricks we have already seen, his services to the Club were still very real.

As though by intent, the Club soared into the daylight of peace under the leadership of one whose services to the Club are incalculable: Rountree. Retrospect welcomed him in genuine fashion:

'and we promise in advance not to do those things which we ought not to do on Club occasions, e.g. appear late at breakfast while the leader chafes, smoke in church or cut the planned path by ways unmapped. We are sure under his presidency of seasoned guidance and careful foreplanning, and his hard-working preparations for our visit to Ireland next year, including the transformation of the Government's customs and the confusion of the Home Office are an augury of things to come.'

This year's walks of course were half in war and although the difference was hardly noticeable, we notice a certain bravado about using cars to get to the Lakes.

At the end of the year, Kronig ceased to be Walks Convener after seven years. Which leads us very smoothly into the next chapter.



## THE TWENTIES AND THIRTIES

The period between the wars was in some ways the most fruitful in the Club's life. And without disrespect to anyone else it may be said that much of the quality was a product of the enthusiasm of two men, Kronig and Witte. The former joined the Club in 1923 and Witte a year later. Each only won the Cup once although Witte holds the record for runner-upships. And the year Witte won it, he did so because Kronig turned up for the last walk and did it the wrong way round on his own, therefore not qualifying for mileage. I cannot help but quote Retrospect for 1932 on this subject. Seldom have fellow members been praised so sincerely or so sensibly.

'The Cup Winner for the year is Kronig with a total mileage of 704 miles out of a possible 727 and to him our acclamations are given. This is but one of his activities for he has been so zealous in the service of the Club that this account might well be styled 'The Chronicles of Kronig' Congratulations well-deserved are due to Witte in again being the Runner-up . . . In the association of these two members there is a certain suggestion of David and Jonathan; they are both mighty men of valour in the matter of walking and great slayers of the Philistines in the matter of conventions.'

Like King Charles' Head in David Copperfield their names come up again and again, this time as joint leaders of the Easter Walk with headquarters at Settle. For some incalculable reason no other members found themselves able to take part in this outing, but the leaders rallied their relatives around them and carried out their programme.

Whitsuntide found the Club trekking in the neighborhood of Hadrian's Wall . . . It seems almost superfluous to add that Kronig was the leader . . .

Disley provided the scene for the gentler activities of the Ladies' Walk when a party of 20 under the guidance of Kronig enjoyed an afternoon in which exercise and entertainment were happily blended.

The severe illness of our President A D Seares, followed by a prolonged period of recovery has deprived us of his presence during his year of office . . . The burden of the Presidentship therefore fell upon our SVP, Kronig, and magnificently has he carried it through. Possessed of more leisure than falls to the lot of many of us, he has given instinctively of his time and effort for the welfare of the Club.'

The middle twenties were significant for the Club in two ways; the beginnings of car transport to walks and of Retrospect in the Handbook.

In January 1924 we are given a picture of the chaos caused by 'the use of other than the usual means of transport' during the Railway Strike. It apparently

'had the unfortunate effect of delaying the time of meeting and starting of walks and bringing together lunchless walkers and a leader impatient for immediate departure.'

We are reminded here of a Famous Saying from a later Retrospect. Tennant is supposed to have said, as the leader was ready to start, 'I will go and have some lunch now.'

Two years later we find opposition to the use of cars still rampant. The General Strike and the longer lasting Coal Strike curtailed railway services, but it is grudgingly admitted

'Some mitigation of this inconvenience has been obtained by the use of motor cars of helpful and generous members, and it may be permitted here to remark on the growing use of motor cars in the service of the Club. In no ungracious spirit and speaking from a purely pedestrian point of view, one would rather deprecate the use of motors, lest it sap the strenuous effort and desire of the walking spirit.'

Exactly how it was going to do that is left unexplained. The most surprising part of this whole problem is how long it took most of the members to realise that by cutting out the often uninteresting tramp from a station, the walk itself could be made more interesting and even lengthened. Admittedly cars have tended to produce circular walks, but this can be avoided by a little organisation and surely the only objection to circular walks is a purist one. The chief innovator in this direction was T Hope who planned a Trough of Bowland walk using cars to transport members to and from each end of the walk. This was in 1931 and the account is still apologetic. 'A use of such vehicles,' it says, 'to which even the most die-hard pedestrian could not object.' I take this to mean that there were die-hard pedestrians who did object.

A similar break with tradition was made by Hope in a walk in North Wales, but it is not until 1937 that we find a party going to the Lakes by cars lent by Noton, Seares and Rountree. Then a year later Hope is at last ungrudgingly thanked for his use of cars, walks over Bleasdale Moor and in the Manifold Valley being specially mentioned.

I suppose it is arguable that if cars had been more used in the Thirties, the Club would not have survived the years 1939-45 as well.

Hired transport seems not to have been so vigorously objected to. At Easter 1925 we find the Club at the Wilsons Arms, Grassington invoking 'the aid of a motor-car to get to Kettlewell and the following day 'requisitioning' it to Skirfare Bridge. A photograph in the many albums we have inherited from Max Witte through the kindness of Miss Witte, shows the motor-car to be an aboriginal charabanc, open and perhaps even with solid tyres.

Throughout the twenties and the early thirties, these photographs give us graphic and, in some cases, candid glimpses of the Club in action. Apart from knee-breeches worn by some members they could well have been on a Sunday morning stroll. Trilbies are as numerous as caps, only rarely do we see a bare head which has not been uncovered specially for the photograph, overcoats and raincoats are common, and the waistcoat appears to be de rigeur. When the heat becomes extreme, jackets are removed and carried while waistcoats remain on. At some point of complete surrender the waistcoat might be unbuttoned, but, except for those iconoclasts Witte and Seares, never the collar. They, greatly daring, sport open 'cricket shirts'.

But in this get-up, they walked. Easter 1925 in Wharfedale produced mileages of 23, 23, 21 and 12. Whit took them to Normandy again, but we have no account. The account of the Wharfedale walk was obviously written by one of the doves:

'In a Pedestrian Club, the main interest might appear to be mileage, but the Club being now in its 22nd year, the first enthusiasm has somewhat abated.'

If only he knew how perennial was the supply of 'hawks' - or, as they seem to prefer it, tigers - even in this 67th year.

In the 20s and the 30s the moorlands came even more into the news. Firstly with a tragedy. James Evans, aged 24, was walking with six other members of the Manchester Ramblers' Club from Marsden to Edale. It was January and there was snow on the ground. Evans appears to have dropped behind crossing Bleaklow and Featherbed Moss but - I gather when they were approaching Kinder Downfall and he was on Ashop

Head - they saw him wave. As he had said something about wanting to get home early, they took the wave to be a signal that he was turning off and was all right. (I have often thought that there is a real need for a code of waves among walkers. I discovered myself, having straggled in the Lakes owing to asthma, that a wave from me was interpreted as an invitation to press on as I was all right, when in fact it was only a sociable reply to a wave from them - an action which they had forgotten.)

Anyway it was presumed that Evans had turned into Williams Clough, making for Hayfield. He was not known to be missing until Monday and he was not found until January 10, the weekend, by a party organised by the Rucksack Club.

At the next M.P.C. Committee meeting members asked whether they should have gone on with their regular programme that day when search parties were out. Whether as conscience money or not, £5 was sent to the fund which had been opened for Evans' widowed mother and which reached £360. The same minutes record:

'The lesson of the tragedy was emphasised by several members as applicable to our own walks, viz. that no man should be left by himself at the rear and that those thus in the rear should be kept in sight.'

And 45 years later we still haven't learnt.

We find this advice, however, being applied in reverse two years later. On walk No. 990, Bowen, Coomber, Franks and Pond, having separated from the leader, were given no mileage. The minutes regret that

'there was much conflict of statements as to permission, direct or understood, having been given for this divergence.'

And conclude:

'Further opinions were expressed by the majority of the Committee, a growing tendency on the part of some members to break away from the main body being noted and deprecated and it was suggested to the President-Elect that he might advantageously include in his remarks at the following A.G.M. a warning and an appeal against this disruptive practice.'

It is not possible from the minutes and Retrospects of these years to gain anything like a full picture of the struggle which was going on for the mountains and the moorlands. As I mentioned earlier the M.P.C. suffered in this matter from an innate dichotomy. By its very nature it didn't know whether it was a have or a have-not, it felt, I think, averse to the demonstrations and mass trespasses that were going on, but at the same time realised that they were going on for its good. And so it fell back on supporting the movement with donations.

The only mention of the battle occurs in reports to the Committee from its representatives on the Footpaths Society and the Ramblers' Federation. Whether those representatives were active in the campaign is not stated.

In 1925 a footpath was stopped near Grindleford and there was talk of the Doctor's Gate path being acquired by the National Trust. Later in the year, the Federation asked walkers to challenge both this path and the one through the Winnats in the prohibited months of April, May and August.

The following year a rally was held in the Winnats in August, and a call was sent out for members to walk a disputed path in Bents Lane, Hyde.

In 1927 donations were sent to an appeal to purchase Glencoin Wood, and later in the year the Footpaths Society reported negotiations about paths at Benfield, Froggat Edge, Surprise View, Doctor's Gate and Bretton Clough.

The Club was apparently split on the Longshaw Estate appeal, which presumably included Froggat Edge. Some members of the Committee, Mancunians to their boots, stoutly maintained that this was a Sheffield affair, so let them get on with it. But Alderley Edge was their business and so they reported footpaths which had been closed. And in 1930, when the Footpaths Society was at law with the Cement Co in Hope Valley they sent ten buineas. This must have been a good year for the Club also donated a signpost on Strines Moor.

From 1924 onwards our knowledge of the Club no longer comes only from minutes of meetings but from what has long been known as Retrospect - it started as the Review of the Year. Whoever suggested it, the author for the first ten years was Robert Smalley. The debt which the Club owes him for setting the tone for this innovation is very great. But that is not all. He applied for membership in July 1911, but for some reason his election was deferred until October. He was on the Committee from 1915-1936, Walks Convener in the difficult years 1915-18, on the Walks Sub-committee from 1920-24 and Secretary from 1922-26.

The next Retrospect after his death, written by Ogden, pays tribute to him as a man and as a writer (Did he write elsewhere? I have failed to find the answer.) but stresses what all his Retrospects reveal:

'Smalley's genial nature caused him to be always pleading for the maintenance of the rites of good fellowship, particularly that of the convivial meal as the proper end of the day's proceedings.'

We have already noted some of his pleas. His last had been only two years before:

' . . . to me, the good fellowship and pleasant company which has gathered round the dinner-table has been by no means the least pleasure of the outing, and has made our association together a Club in the fullest sense of the word. Latterly these dinners have often been in abeyance, members going off home immediately after the conclusion of the walk.'

He ends with an adaptation of Goldsmith which could well be used as a grace at every Club meal:

'I'll fares the Club,  
To hastening ills a prey,  
Where miles accumulate  
And hearts decay.'

It was fitting that he should be so worthily enshrined by Ogden because he had himself paid many tributes to both living and dying members. When Sorensen died only about a year before himself he wrote:

'As Treasurer it is almost impossible to speak too highly of his qualities; his methodical handling of our finances, his careful oversight and nursing of our funds and his keen scrutiny of expenditure have largely been the means of which the present handsome reserve has been built up, which is in itself a monument to his memory. As a walker he was possessed of great energy and spirit and was at his best in the hill country, the Lakes week-ends being due to his inspiration and being occasions when his enjoyment was the fullest.'

In 1929 he wrote:

'Of our President, James, one may say without irreverence, that since the day he joined the Club, swathed in the habits of city conventionalism, we have watched with interest and admiration his gradual emancipation and his attainment of his present sporting freedom.'

And of a Ladies' Walk:

'The Ladies' Walk was in the nature of a water party, an enjoyable trip in launches up the River Dee from Chester taking the place of the usual short walk of the occasion. No undue fatigue was experienced by those taking part and the route, though winding, was followed without mishap. Also there were no stragglers.'

There were many deaths to record in these years. Reading through the minutes, I get an impression that they came more frequently than usual. And so often before the coming of Retrospect, they are almost, as it were, recorded by omission. When Marshall died in 1920, we know because the Secretary

read the letter he had written to the widow. In 1921 the death of Hislop, the Club's first and only long serving President, is recorded at the same time as a letter written by him reporting a Footpaths Society's meeting. Other deaths recorded are Snow (1922), Kilminster (1923) - it was later recorded that a letter from his wife said that he had slept in Room 13 on the previous Lakes Walk - Frost (1923), E J Bowen (1925), S Whigham (1925), J F Thomson (1926), I Chorlton (1928), J B Crawshaw (1930), McAdam and CcChlery killed in accidents and Rostron died (1930), W P James (1931), W Mackay (1931), F Brewer (1932), - reported in a letter from Mrs Brewer - Sorensen (1935) - only mentioned in the minutes because the Secretary asked what was to be done with the maps in care of Mrs Sorensen - R Smalley (1937), A W Dennis (1938), C D Doyle (1938). In the minutes for June 22nd 1939 it is baldly reported that three members had died. It is only thanks to Retrospect that we discover they were Hitchon, Mallinson and Rimington.

The deaths which hit hardest at the Club here - though Hitchon had been Convener for 18 years and Secretary for a while - were those of Dennis and Rimington. The Club were staying at the White Horse Hotel, Dorking for the Whit Walk and on the Sunday morning as the party was climbing Box Hill he had a heart attack and died almost immediately. Ogden ends his tribute:

'Still, though we grieve over the tragedy of his passing, his end was in keeping with his life. He died in the sunshine by the side of the open road that he loved with so great devotion, and a few minutes before his death he had expressed his keen appreciation of one of the fairest prospects in Southern England.'

Rimington almost died in harness too. He was taken ill towards the end of the Whit Walk in the Vosges in 1939 and had to go into hospital. Apparently no special anxiety was felt, the rest of the party came home except for T Hope who stayed to help the invalid. After affairs had been cleared up, the Club thanked a local man, Henri Weber (according to his letter. The minutes say Webber) by making him an honorary member.

The day walks during this period carried on in their apparently monotonous way - monotonous for anyone simply reading through the programmes and seeing Chinley, Macclesfield, Altringham time after time. Those of us who have been to Greenfield and Bollington and Hayfield and Edale time after time know the variety and richness which this repetition can offer. As the twenties become the thirties there seems to have been a slight tendency to widen the area. Kronig and Witte ventured respectively as far as Rushton and Alton. Somebody

led a Crewe Circular and the Pennines were crossed as far as Todmorden and Hebden Bridge, but not yet to Haworth. Actually an astonishing extension was mooted in 1925 by G P Brown who wrote to the Secretary

'from Jerusalem, greeting the Committee and submitting an alternative walk in Palestine from that which he should have led around Disley; the letter was much appreciated, the graphic description of the route, with the doubtful possibilities of conveyance and the yet more doubtful hotel conditions arousing in the minds of the adventurous an itch for travel and in the imaginations of the fastidious another itch equally pronounced.'

One of the attractive things about the M. P. C. - or so it seems to me - is that it has brought sentiment without apology from an age of sentiment into an age which fears it. And on this basis alone, the most significant expedition between the wars was the anniversary walk to London.

Twenty-five years after that first, fine careless rapture, they again walked from Manchester to London. It was a conscious act of homage to the twelve who had started from Manchester Town Hall on Whit Saturday 1904, made all the more moving because one of the 1929 eight had been one of those twelve. In fact the 1929 number would have been nine and the veterans would have been two, had not Edwards been involved in an election. To make up for his absence he lent the party his car and chauffeur to relieve the walkers of their rucksacks and to ferry them from the finishing points in the country each day to the town and city hotels where they stayed.

The City News account was written by the veteran, E D Torres. He opens with a contrast between the walk he had just done and the memory of 1904.

'Then half their number reached the goal; this time all eight accomplished the feat. In 1904 the distance was one of 188 miles, and had to be covered in five and a half days. This year it measured 205, occupied eight full and parts of two days . . . The older attempt was one of the road-slogging kind - over hard macadam, traffic and dust-swept, burdened with a rucksack containing a week's accoutrement in clothes. The recent one minus these impedimenta, was over pastures green and along country lanes, efficiently led and engineered by a leader who was the youngest man of the happy crew. Much help was also afforded by an old stalwart nearer seventy than sixty who yet was to be seen always in front and never behind.'

The spiritual presence was of course T A Edwards and he and Witte had planned the route. And a beautiful bit of

planning it must have been, as one would expect from Max Witte of whom legend said - and not without justification - that you could put him down anywhere in the British Isles and in wide areas of the continent and he would look around and say, 'Yes, now just around this corner there should be a path going off to the left.'

His planning of the London anniversary walk was not only brilliant, it was also prophetic. If you mark his route on a modern road map you find that from Leicester onwards it seldom gets far from the course of the M1.

The walk started with an evening stroll from Parrs Wood, Didsbury, to Poynton. Then everybody went home and met again in Poynton at 9.30 the following morning. The first full day took them through the Goyt Valley, over Axe Edge to Longnor; the next down the whole length of the Dove Valley from its sweeping majesty at Crowdecote through its gradual wild containment and out into the open beyond Thorpe Cloud and as far as Shirley.

The route as given in the newspaper account is puzzling at first until you remember that Edwards' loan of car and chauffeur was not only for the transport of luggage. On the Tuesday for instance, they were met at Broughton at the end of the day, but slept in Leicester, some five miles away. And the Wednesday walk began again from Broughton. For a Club which still despised the automobile for its weekly walks, this was the height of moral laxity. But like most of Witte's ideas it worked.

Beyond Leicester the following of footpaths had its drawback in that stone walls gave place to fences, many of which were high and awkward. And Torres who was small finds himself envying Kronig who seemed to be able to step over them.

Food during the day became a problem and we remember that they were doing this walk between the heyday of the bicycle and that of the motor-car, a period in which English road traffic which needed food had declined. It was difficult to get a simple lunch of bread and cheese in most inns - remembering too that they were walking away from main roads - but there was usually a way out.

'At another place the landlady who dispensed at the bar, referred us to the village grocer for these commodities. Our good-humoured and jolly companion, his face almost blackened by the sun and always bright and merry, took the hint and soon came to us loaded with the necessary victuals, including pickled onions, his favourite supplementary fare, while the tall com-

panion came along with a loaf of bread for which he paid 4½d, receiving a farthing change. We consumed these on the village green, using our pocket knives for digging out the pickles and scooping out the butter.'

And so for eight days they saw and felt the middle of England as few others can ever have done.

'Stiles, fences, barbed wires, ditches, stiff hills bring their rewards in ways little dreamed of by the pleasure seeker of the stereotyped variety, for, where the line of least resistance lies, there must be monotony that palls.'

One other difference from 1904. In 1929, Manchester to London meant Parrs Wood to the Brent Bridge hotel, not Manchester Town Hall to the Marble Arch. One can almost hear Witte snort at the suggestion.

Three years later, Whit brought a very different walk, under the leadership of Kronig, which was partly an exploration of Hadrian's Wall from Brampton and Chollerford as centres and then what in the circumstances we can only call a foray from the Wall via Bowes and Tan Hill to Hawes. A very different account too, written by Ogden, from which you get an impression of a school party on a prolonged history lesson.

The twenties had started with Whit walks which could have belonged to the early days of the Club. In 1920 they walked from Dalwhinnie to John o'Groats and in 1922 from Bridlington to Morecambe, but no accounts exist. For some reason there was no Whit Walk in 1921. And this appears to have been decided at the 1920 A.G.M. which is more mysterious.

Continental walks were resumed after the end of the war with a tour from Liege to Brussels. This was, very suitably, a suggestion of Edwards and he led the walk, having first triumphed over a not untypical suggestion from Bowen that the party should go armed with letters of introduction from the Lord Mayor of Manchester to the mayors of Liege and Brussels. On July 13th he reported to the Committee.

'a most successful enterprise carried through without hindrance of any kind.'

After Wales in 1924, the Club returned to its old love, Normandy, for 1925. We have almost a whole album of photographs from Max Witte, but no newspaper account. We see the pedestrians sitting in cafes, walking on the sea-front, in city streets, mostly in collars and ties, trilbies and breeches which are rapidly changing into plus fours.

At the Committee meeting on July 23rd the leader presented a hand-written, almost illegible account which seems to be very factual. The Secretary in his minutes wrapped the facts in a little flesh and blood:

'words failed to convey the full pleasures of the outing with its romantic happenings on road and in forest, its rare vintages of beverages partaken of, the episode of the roses, the choice repasts, the motoring of one member in happiest company and other details which had enveloped the trip in an atmosphere of sentimental and luxurious reminiscence.'

How's that for making your mouth water with curiosity?

And so up to September 1939 the Club criss-crossed the British Isles and the continent. Easter in that year was spent in Rothbury, Whit in the Vosges. And all the Saturdays saw it tramping again and again the paths of the Pennines, paths which often climbed out of the unlikely clutter of the mills of Lancashire and Yorkshire. In a very real sense it was a natural growth from its own district, its pleasures spiced by the reality which could so often be seen below.



## THE ARTICULATE AGE

In December 1945, Rountree took on the Presidential Collar, Gray started a nouveau vague in secretaries, Wyon became Walks Convener and presumably from that day onwards Harrison started polishing the periods of his first Retrospect which was to be delivered a year later. The Club was practically bursting into song.

Whether the country without history is blessed or not, the country which has a history is only really blessed when there is somebody recording it as it passes. In forty-two years of existence the Club had, to a better or worse extent, had its history recorded. But how differently with the passing secretaries. Only Smalley had really shown the itch to, as it were, sing his minutes, to turn them into a saga of people, to point his reactions to the passing scene without distorting it as a record. We may guess that it was from this urge to embark on more sustained flight that he wrote his first record of the year which we now know as Retrospect.

It remains always a very arguable question, how far a secretary should comment whilst he is recording. In this Club, Platt was the only one between 1928 and 1935 who ventured beyond fact - not always happily, because, as we have seen, his enthusiasm tended to fly beyond meaning. Tennant, who followed Grey in 1948, was much more subtle and had the inestimable gift of knowing when to stop.

There was, I think, much to be said, once Retrospect had been established, for separating it from the recording of minutes, the first duty of which is to provide an accurate recording from which future Committee meetings can ascertain facts. The danger lies in poetry overcoming facts and getting too near the school magazine. Whereas in Retrospect imagination and poetry can leaven fact for its own purpose, which is entertainment.

This leavening has been carried further by Harrison than by either Smalley or any of his successors - and not only further, but further with more success. In fact there is no

question that the rest of this history could best be covered simply by reissuing Harrison's Retrospects.

There would be one problem: length. In the days when the writings of the Scribe were new to the members, when he himself was doing many of the walks and recording them first hand, Retrospect could cover as many as 34 pages of the handbook - by my calculation, something like 10,000 words. Apart from anything else, this must have involved something like an hour's reading at the A. G. M. - let us have no illusions, a man who can put across 10,000 words on a Saturday afternoon after a lunch and an A. G. M. and still delight his audience can both write and read.

But there were objections. 10,000 words not only take a lot of writing, they also take a lot of printing. And printing costs money. And not all members of the M. P. C. were delighted - or could we say that beyond a certain point their delight varied in inverse proportion to the cost.

The first breath of this objection began very early at the A. G. M. in 1945. There was a loss on the accounts of £11-15-1 and nothing sets the hosts of Manchester prowling sooner. The finger pointed at two items: the brochure, which had been compiled in order to attract more members and was never issued in case it should, and the new style of the Handbook. Harrison had not yet written Retrospect, in fact

'to avoid an almost inevitable monotony of style the Retrospect this year is a collective effort.'

He had been largely responsible for the new lay out of it. Retrospect was 11 pages long. The financial item under 'Handbook etc' was £24-9-4. Next year was Harrison's first solo effort: 19½ pages long and the 'Handbook etc' cost £35-1-3.

At the A. G. M. for 1946, the separate cost for the Handbook was demanded as well as the comparative costs for the last four years. The hunt was on. In 1947 Retrospect occupied 25½ pages, but the relevant item in the balance sheet says £16-18-6. Triumph, we think, until we notice a new item: 'Weekly Circulars', costing a total of £24-14-4. We are not surprised to find the subscription raised at the same meeting from £1 to 30s.

1948: 26 pages, £23-5-6.

1949: madness of a kind not unusual in the M. P. C., descended. Henshall moved a proposal

'that the yearly handbook of the Club should include accounts of major private walks carried out by members of the Club. These accounts should in no way interfere or form part of the Retrospect.'

One begins to wonder if this is the same club.

There is much discussion until Peacemaker Rountree

proposes that the words, 'provided that the extra cost of printing a record of private walks be borne by the contributors'. With this addendum the motion is passed - and is never heard of again. I suspect that Peacemaker Rountree was not surprised. At the end of the meeting, however, Harrison read a Retrospect of 35 pages.

At the next Committee meeting one of the suggestions for reducing the cost of the Handbook is the limiting of Retrospect to 10 or 12 pages. This was then forgotten and later in the year it was decided that the account read at the A.G.M. should be inviolable, but that a subcommittee should help Harrison to precis it for the Handbook. At the end of the year he seems to have done this for himself, but hardly by the 50% suggested.

It was at this meeting that Witte was inspired to produce a Treasurer's Report in verse and the lines relevant to our theme run:

'The Handbook cost 5.15 more  
Than it had done the year before;  
And that is why I hope to hear  
A shorter Retrospect this year.'

It is an ancient battle. It was waged between the Minnesanger and the lord whose love poems he wrote; between the eighteenth century poet and his patron; between the editor and his managing editor; between the film director and his executive producer. The TV world will recognise it best if we say between Soames Forsyte and Bosinney. If it is ever resolved, art will be dead, either by suicide or murder.

Rather sadly it seems to have resolved itself in the M.P.C., at least temporarily. Maurice Harrison in his retirement, has to compile his annual offering from the crumbs that leaders send him. He inflates very well, but many of us sigh for the days of his abundance. Few clubs have had such a happy compound of style, knowledge, humour, satire and vitality to record their doings.

It was Harrison who in the 1953 Handbook called this period the 'Oldham Period'. Wherever he went - and he went far - Rountree seemed to bring new members to the ranks until there was a time when it seemed that the footpaths around Oldham - far from disappearing as people are constantly telling us they are - seemed rather in danger of turning into hollow roads. The movements of members of the Club can be seen by the new members who join. Tennant moved from Oldham to Macclesfield, from there to Stoke and, if one may put it so, young pedestrians sprang up in his footsteps. There is a sign now, I think, of a shift from Oldham, through Mossley to Stalybridge and other such remote spots.

The inevitable result of this is a spreading of walks over new areas.

Perhaps the most interesting move in this connection is the recent increase of members in the London area. Eldon, who joined the Club in 1941 but had to move to London, also joined the Sussex Downsmen and from their walking section has now introduced two into the M.P.C., so that along with his son and Warren from Horsham the M.P.C. south-eastern section is positively flourishing. Jenkinson too has brought in three members from the Widnes area and we hope for results from Stephenson's move to Edinburgh. Harrison has retired to Gower, not far from Henshall and Burnett.

The results of this hiving off of members in all directions could well be interesting. Week-end walks apart from Easter and the Lakes walk, appear to have come into the programme about 1949 when Henshall led from Millersdale to Edale and back to Hayfield, and Wyon from Capel Curig. Since then Wales has become the favourite district for this type of walk, under the joint influence of Tanner and Henshall. An Easter walk was held in Sussex, partly at least under pressure from Eldon, and Nutter called his Ladies' Walk to Stratford, included a performance at the Memorial Theatre and overnight arrangements for those who required them.

The Ladies' Walk, now a very successful function, was revived in 1946 by Rountree, Retrospect calling attention to the gulf between members' normal Saturday garb and that in which they played hosts to the ladies. This sartorial elegance has for the most part continued and with it the actual walking seems to have diminished every year.

In 1946 the Club ventured outside what we presumably still call Great Britain by going to Eire at Whit. The chief pleasure of the walk, or at least what was considered most reportable, seems to have consisted in wallowing in the unaccustomed food and drink at unaccustomed prices:

'Breakfast on Sunday morning consisted in its second course of bacon and kidney and poached eggs. When a certain very high official of this Club asked for his second two rashers of bacon and his third egg we felt only joy in the abundance that surrounded us, when we saw him calmly dealing with his sixth egg, our joy turned to admiration for his gastronomic prowess. We warned him of the English disease which we had been told was commonly developed by hungry Englishmen visiting this land of plenty but our qualms were brushed aside with the pontifical announcement that one had to be careful of course in accustoming one's intestinal apparatus to heavy foods but that eggs didn't matter.'

And not only food and drink:

'In the early morning a rather shabbily dressed group of Englishmen might have been seen to emerge from Tara Street Station to mingle with the well-dressed Irish. By evening all trace of shabbiness had vanished . . . The group . . . had achieved a sartorial smartness foreign to our Club. White mackintoshes, immaculate yellow gloves, unspotted fairisle jumpers, resplendent silk ties, suede shoes of brightest tan adorned our colleagues.'

The following year they really went abroad, and even if their goings were somewhat scattered, they successfully converged on Pontresina, wives having been first of all left in St Moritz.

The interesting thing about the walk was the date: August 1st-16th. In other words it was a kind of supernumerary Festival Walk. But it did appear in the programme. Some two years later it would appear that somebody blundered, although at this distance of time, who can tell? What is factual and obvious is that two walks were done together, one of which appeared on the programme, the other did not. But in the subsequent cries for walkers' rights which were aired first at a special Committee meeting and then at the A.G.M., it becomes very clear who is claiming what. It would appear that some people thought that the mileage given for the Continental walk was too high and disguised this thought under the slogan 'Live and let live', meaning ostensibly that all walks walked should count. This was Rountree's first line of attack. He then offered a compromise - apparently disguised as a jingle: 'Where lady's foot trod, no miles should be; no miles for walkers fewer than three'.

The matter was finally thrashed out at the A.G.M., and the revising of the rules was left to Edwards. As so often with this Club, much the same argument arose in 1968 when members were taking part in long walks arranged by other bodies. This time Edwards' rule held the day.

I have called the period immediately after the war the Articulate Age. It could equally well be called the Age of Larks. Whether it was post war euphoria or simply the accidental juxtaposition of the right characters plus the right man to record them, you get an impression of high spirits which never comes through to the same extent in any other period of the Club's history. Lark or not, for instance - and one must subtract a percentage of the Handbook account as poetry rather than truth - the 'Affair of the Special Train' appears in this light. It was the year in which Russell Stanley achieved 100%

mileage, and intentionally or otherwise, Russell became the centre of the lark. Tennant was taking the Club to Hebden Bridge. The only train which arrived there at the right time did not stop. After long correspondence which included warnings of the important people in the Pedestrian Club and a threat to take his business elsewhere, he was granted a reserved compartment and an unscheduled stop. And on the day, Stanley was the only passenger. He was shepherded to his seat, the express was held up to await the arrival of all the other important pedestrians, but finally had to depart. When it arrived in Hebden Bridge, we are told, Tennant was peeping round the corner of the wall as officials flung open the door of the coach and Stanley descended. And another legend was made.

The years after this until the Club Jubilee saw visits to Scotland and Wales. With a certain amount of argument it was decided that the Jubilee year was to be 1953. The argument was perhaps never quite resolved because of our habit of talking in calendar years. Harrison's Jubilee Handbook carried on its flysheet the title 'Jubilee Year 1953', but the programme for that year is headed '51st season, 1953'. I suppose in effect they were both right. The Club's fiftieth year ended on June 15th 1953 and the remainder of that year was part of the 51st.

The important thing was not a matter of arithmetic but a matter of achievement. Harrison ends his historical account of the Club in that handbook with the quotation 'plus ca change, plus c'est la même chose'. And in Retrospect 1952 he says,

'This fiftieth year has been typical of the half century in that without outstanding adventure, exciting thrills or frills it has run its placid course giving friendly companionship, pleasant conversation, healthy exertion and agreeable reunions. These are the things which constitute contented living. Memorable high-lights and hair raising escapes from destruction, as when our colleagues suspend themselves (and/or others) over ravine or crevasse or submerge themselves (and/or others) in mountain torrents, may be the spice of life, but they are not the essence of living.'

Smalley could well have written this in the twenties, in fact, in other words, he did. And superficially it was true. In 1953 the Club was working to practically the same rules as Edwards had thought up in 1904 - and he remained to see it do so. The membership in 1953 was 52 and we remember the solemn discussions of the early years as to whether the membership should be limited to 60. And every Saturday

practically, members met usually somewhere in the Pennines, walked, and so on.

What had changed in those 50 years? Perhaps the most revolutionary change was in the Pennines themselves, not in configuration - although in large areas the moorland was receding before the advance of modern farming - but in accessibility. The Club no longer walked by permission of Mr A S Watts who wanted to use the land for a fortnight in August. Other clubs no longer had to either trespass or keep to very restricted paths. King Grouse had been deposed and strangely enough the invasion of his territory by a very minor percentage of the population does not seem to have made much difference to his family life. Shooting still goes on and by agreement the dates are fixed and walkers keep away. By error or accident it is still possible to meet a gamekeeper with his gun, as Wyon did some time ago when as usual ranging far ahead of the party. But in the bad old days I doubt if even Wyon would have asked him how many cartridges he had and when told ten, would have said there was no point in shooting because there were thirteen in the party.

So even if walks carry the same names, they are not necessarily the same walks and the development of walks like the Pennine Way has been made possible.

We have already mentioned the change in clothing and the use of cars for getting to the start of a walk. These two are, I think, connected. Walking rig can be changed more easily and changes of clothes carried more easily too. In fact the stuff that is transported to and from walks is more than surprising and on wet Saturdays cars at the finishing point with steamed-up windows indicate that the curious bedraggled sight who entered the car a few minutes before is about to emerge as a gentleman. Not that the M. P. C. is as uniform conscious as some walking clubs, and members can and do appear in somewhat conventional attire. But I think only one has done the Black Hill walk in town shoes and with a rolled umbrella.

The Jubilee was celebrated by a dinner at the Reform Club on Friday May 1st 1953. The toast of the Club and its founders was proposed by Patrick Monkhouse and T A Edwards responded. Mr Monkhouse repeated this service at a Ladies' Evening in 1970. Tenant proposed the Guests and Alderman F Lord replied. In the programme was an article by Henshall on the Founding of the Club and its development, based, as he says, on Edwards' article in the Jubilee handbook. Some of it, however, is very Henshall.

'Though rock climbing as such is still frowned upon, it is probable that a more tolerant view of this form of mountaineering will develop later . . . In conclusion it is reasonable to say that most walking clubs developed into mountaineering,

in its broadest sense more quickly than this club has done. Though it was left behind at the start in this respect, nobody could now say that it has not developed along the right lines.'

I feel myself that pretty well the whole of this statement is doubtful. Something depends upon his definition of 'mountaineering in its broadest sense'. But I should like to see the figures substantiating his claim about 'most walking clubs'. If the broadest sense includes walking over mountains, and if by mountains he means Wales, the Lake District and Scotland, then there is some truth in it, although the first Snowdon tour was 1904 and the Lakes Walk was regular from 1908 onwards. They had reached the Black Forest and the Vosges but not the Alps. But we must remember their conditions. Few of us who have to work Friday and Monday would care to do a week-end in Wales by train, and 'reccies' must have been very hard and prolonged work.

We cannot leave the Jubilee year without mentioning another innovation in the handbook. Harrison included in this some famous sayings, true remarks by club members which have become legendary. Only in the Diamond Jubilee Handbook - 1964 not 1963; the argument had gone the other way - did he publish others bringing the number to 23. Since then odd ones have been recorded every year, reaching No 35 in the 1970 handbook. These, when chosen with care, as they have been so far, achieve something which no press accounts or minutes can do. They give a quick living glance at the Club, a flash of enlightenment which, to members, brings up all the atmosphere of a walk.

## AND NOW

As I write this, the Club has just held its 68th Annual General Meeting. At this it was reported that it has 71 members of whom 58 had turned out during the year. The average attendance at walks has been 10.67 which is a record for a full year. So the meeting which was called on June 16th 1903 was not called in vain.

Let us remember again what we have. We have a club composed entirely of males - that in itself is no mean feat - who record an average attendance for walks, which mostly take place on Saturdays, of over 10. And most of these males are married. This means that somewhere there are some 60 women who either hate the sight of their husbands - or who are themselves in a very real way members of the Club.

The Saturday walks over this year have ranged from Pendle Hill and Longridge in the North to Alton in the South, from Hebden Bridge in the East to Southport in the West. Members have travelled to these walks from distances of up 70 miles, 70 miles there on Saturday morning, 70 miles back on Saturday evening in order, on many occasions, to get very wet in between. We could, I suppose, make out a case for being even madder than the farmer thought us on the London Walk in 1904.

And yet I think it is partly this travel, this madness, which is one of the secrets of the Club. From all points of the compass you know that men are homing in on a country pub, or maybe a pub which doesn't appear to be in the country until the leader strikes off from the main road. One by one they arrive, a motley collection of cars, a motley variety of costume, men who may have met every Saturday for weeks, or who may not have seen one another for months. But that seems to make no difference. Once you are an accepted member - and this does not take very long unless you put the barriers up yourself - you meet as fellow madmen. You change if possible, you cape up if necessary, the parties - if the walk is strenuous there may be a B party - collect and set off. This is the ritual, plus sometimes a liquid ritual before the 'off', which forms the

prelude to a few hours of what a German novelist called 'holiday from the ego'. The men you meet here are not really the managers, the accountants, the bankers they have been during the week. You become very conscious of this if you accidentally meet one of them going about his business. You see a dark suit, perhaps a bowler hat, coming towards you in a Manchester crowd and you wonder why he looks familiar. It takes a real heave of the imagination to convert him into the man who only days before led you ankle deep through a farm yard, turned to hold the barbed wire for you to straddle or, just as helpful, expressed himself and yourself tersely and feelingly as the top of a hill seemed to get farther away instead of nearer. Even his face looks different. Perhaps now he is thinking of money and not muck, but he is one of those who know that muck underfoot is a very good way of resting from money.

We are often told from a lofty height, 'I couldn't bear to have the countryside spoilt by walking in a crowd.' Whenever I hear this, I have a visual memory of a late afternoon in May some years ago. We had walked up Mastiles Lane on a sunny morning which turned into a thoroughly dirty afternoon. We had practically floated down into Arncliffe where the Falcon supplied hot tea. And now we were walking in wet sunlight over the top to Kettlewell. As the slope began to level off I raised my head - and there was the 'crowd' I was walking with. There were only a dozen or so of us at the most, but we must have covered five acres of hill-top. Here and there a pair, but mostwhere singles, measuredly striding, lit by a left-hand sun. On a photograph they would have looked like specks. That was the Pedestrian Club - gregarious types, you know.

Not that there is no conversation, but it knows its place. A wise man I used to know said, 'You always get more intelligent conversation from men smoking pipes. They have to stop talking to keep them alight and that gives them a chance to think.' Well, walking up a hill or across tussocks on a moor is a great strainer of conversation too. You tend only to say what must be said, and for my money that is a good definition of intelligent conversation.

Whether intelligent or not, M.P.C. conversation is both varied and variegated. Some of it is shop, business men talking shares in language incomprehensible to teachers who are discussing matters which seem to the business men of no importance whatever. But the dance-figure can change at a gate or a stile or a boot-lace, and a business man and a teacher can glide into a new subject - or into silence. A man who walks alone probably wants silence, and this can be easily granted in

a club, and is. He could be working away at something very important; he could be soaking himself in the lines of the hills and the colour of the trees; he could just be walking, just feeling one leg swing past the other, just slowly relaxing everything but the absolutely essential muscles, until he reaches that nirvana of action when he feels he could go on for ever and after which he can remember nothing but an infinity of peace.

Not, of course, always. There are times you resent, times you curse. Such instants can be conveyed best in some heartfelt Famous Sayings:

No 3: J W G (descending Rossett Ghyll in pouring rain)  
'Well, I needn't do this again.'

No 13: J L F (In pouring rain in Windy Gap) 'Here we are, eating our food in the middle of a bloody river and it all goes to pobs in your hand.'

No 19: S B (Soliloquising near Birker Fell in mist and rain)  
'This is the daftest bloody way of trying to enjoy myself that I've ever known.'

But these can be the moments you do remember and which in memory become less grim and more amusing. In memory you cease to be a squelching mess with clothes which resist every movement, glasses you can't see either with or without, and pockets you can't put your hands in because they are full of water too, and you become, I suppose, an adventurer. Not to boast about it in bars - although some do - but just to think to yourself as you used to at school after a hard game or an impossible evolution in the gym, 'Well, I did it.'

And then, if you are a member of the M. P. C., you spend an agonising ten minutes inside a car - I can recommend a Mini - trying to remove everything that is wet without wetting everything that is dry, trying to towel yourself before struggling a damp body into dry clothes - and the surprising part of all this is that when you emerge from the car after this herculean labour, you feel fine.

One philosophic member of the Club has defined Four Blissful Moments which occur at this point. The first is removing your first boot, the second is wriggling your toes. The third I can't remember - there are many candidates - and the last is the first sip - of tea.

For a very salutary and very necessary part of the M. P. C. ritual is the meal. As I have said earlier, the development of this ritual over the seventy years of the Club's history is not easy to trace. But over the last twenty years, it has remained pretty stable. A meal almost immediately following the walk, a meal which leans towards ham and eggs, in which even the

members watching their weight allow themselves chips. In summer a leader is forgiven, but not necessarily commended, for a salad. And there is a very distinct feeling of something missing if there is not a steady procession of pots of tea.

But the point of all this is not really the food. As Smalley recognised in the 20s, this is the welding power in the Club. Breath is no longer a problem, so talk can be careless, frivolous, personal. Leaders are thanked with a certain ceremony which is just right. Just right for the history and the nature of the Club, just right for dispatching the assembled members through 360 degrees of country.

This ritual has taken place in 1970 44 times, the majority of them in and about the Pennines. If we divide the mass of these hills which is reachable in a day into five natural sections, from Edale to the Snake, from there to Longdendale, to Delph, to the Calder Gap at Hebden Bridge, to the Aire Gap at Skipton, 31 walks fall within the area. The respective numbers per section are 11, 4, 6, 3, 7. In this I have not included that area where the Pennines run out into the softer lands, forming the Macclesfield Forest, the Derbyshire hills (many of them in Staffordshire) surrounding the valleys of the Churnet, the Manifold and the Dove and the Lower Peak. This has been visited nine times.

Dotted in the programme are also the week-end and Festival walks, five of them. These are, as it were, extended rituals. Added to the usual ones are the vital - one would think sometimes life-and-death - considerations which every leader of a week-end knows. The variety of reasons why members should have single rooms is boundless. All the worst horrors of TV advertising are confessed to in order to prove why one is unfit to associate with one's fellows. But fortunately most of these are just try-ons and seldom are grudges borne. The leader's next worry is to make sure that incompatibles are not housed together. This involves a deep knowledge of all the undercurrents in the Club. Fortunately there are few of these. Life would be made easier for the leader too if hotels were built with their rooms exactly alike. Even more unfortunately some have annexes, and there is a peculiar flavour attached to the word annex, and nobody has ever pretended that the members of the M. P. C. are more than human.

The leader of a Festival Walk has some worries which start earlier than this. He has to find the hotel, he has to decide whether to divide his party between two hotels or to put them all into one which may be inferior. Even earlier than this he has to find one which will accommodate his party.

He has to explain what kind of a walking club it is that thinks itself good enough to stay in their hotel. Not all leaders have the luck to meet an hotel such as I once approached. 'It isn't a cricket team, is it?' asked the landlord, 'anything but cricket teams.' I didn't even have to explain what a distinguished club this was.

Distinguished or not, the Club has numerous things about hotels. No hotel is too good, but every hotel, in one way or another, is not good enough. No hotel is cheap enough and every hotel is too dear. There is never enough bath-water in the hotel you are in - nothing like as much as in the hotel you used to be in - where there wasn't enough either when you were there.

I get an impression from stories I have heard, that the Club is a more sober organisation than it used to be. This could be because the stories are exaggerated; it could be the comparative ages of members then and now (the present age is perhaps rather high); it could also be that the present era is indeed more sober. Certainly the Greyfriars-like activities which older members recall seldom seem to happen now. At the most talk becomes easier to do but more difficult to control. A bubbling wit - the bubbles almost audible - may leaven the Saturday night members meeting in the Lakes. But most members, having walked all day, are content to drink their thirst full and, bearing the next day in mind, to beat a wise retreat. This does not, I think, detract from the week-end, it may even make the spirit more genuine.

In 1970 we have stayed away from home, as it were, five times. Easter in Arncliffe, Whit in Peebles, June in Llanwrtyd Wells, September on the Pennine Way and October in the Lakes. The final outing of the five has over the last few years become the climax of the year's programme. We can pretty well guarantee an attendance of 30+, who gathered this year from as far away as Edinburgh and Horsham.

In addition a party did most of the Lyke Wake Walk in North Yorkshire. I say 'most of' without apology because members of that party have on previous occasions done it all, and because it is a walker's privilege to walk just as far as he likes, and it is the opinion of the majority of this Club that he is all the better for being less arithmetical. Any walker who does not value the country he is walking through, whether on the Lyke Wake Walk or whatever, more than he values the miles, might just as well pile up the miles between Stockport and Manchester or, if he fancies himself as a mountaineer, between Rochdale and Bacup.

I have referred frequently to 'leaders' and no account of this Club is complete without explaining the term. In 1970, if we include the Ladies Walk, there have been 50 walks. Each of these had at least one leader. Forty-one different members have at least once accepted responsibility for a walk. This involves deciding on a route and a tea-place - or in many cases a tea-place and a route, for in spite of the talk of disappearing footpaths, they are still far more numerous than hotels or cafes which will put on a decent meal on Saturdays. The leader has to know the route well enough to guide his party over it without let or hindrance. If uttered in Club circles, that sentence would be greeted as sheer satire, because from time to time members have been known to express doubts as to whether the leader had passed this way before. These doubts were probably put most pithily by Rountree: 'Have you changed your mind, or have you lost your way?'

It is this principle of accepting responsibility for leadership which makes for the variety of district, of landscape, in which the Club walks. This, added to the willingness to travel makes a Club year the feast that it is. I will not repeat the breadth of our wanderings, but simply say that I know of no lone wanderer who covers a tenth of the area as a regular thing.

And at the end of all this there is - the Cup. Presented every year to the member who has covered most Club miles in that year, it is, I think, the most baffling thing about the Club. Obviously, to have walked more miles than anyone else is an achievement which nobody would scorn. And yet, at the same time, the mileage and its reward, the Cup, are a joke. Throughout the history of the Club, some leaders have been accused of multiplying their miles others of being skinny with them. But in the end it works out reasonably even for everybody. Club miles may be scornfully compared to statute miles, but when all are measured by the same standard, the man who finishes with the highest score has covered most ground.

There are, it is true, certain conventions which are occasionally abused. To give a man three miles for turning up for the tea, is a kind gesture. But when it gets to giving a man 40 miles for attending the Lakes Meet and never putting his foot to the ground, it has become a silliness we can do without. And grown men should not seriously huff and puff about their miles. Indeed very few do. Most regard it as a harmless joke and that is a measure of the health of the Club.

In January 1971 we shall do Walk No 3000. That will be the end of another cycle which will be duly celebrated as was

walk 1000 on February 25th 1928 and Walk 2000 on Easter Week-end 1950.

On July 11th 1903 Edwards led the way rather than the walk from Hayfield to Castleton. On April 15th 1950 Wyon, as President led Walk 2001, this time from Chinley to Castleton and Edwards met the party in the Winnats. On February 6th 1971, Williamson, the first President of the Club to be also the son of a member will lead from Hayfield to Castleton, and somewhere - and it is anybody's guess where - Wyon will meet the party.

Another era will have begun.

