

New Year meet at Low Sterne

Better weather this time - the rain didn't start until 11 o'clock on New Year's Eve. The downside is that everybody had set out by then, so we thought we might as well persist. Big mistake - the rain made up for lost time by getting a gale behind it and becoming torrential.

Alan and Gill, with Geoff, cannily kept the Pub Option open and retired to the Gamecock in Austwick after a brief flirtation with the Norber Erratics, which, surprisingly in this area, are rocks, and not caves as you might have thought. But a large party of hopelessly inexperienced ramblers stupidly set out for Hutton Roof, miles from any alcohol, and paid for their stupidity with a thorough soaking, and, in Tony's case, blisters. Hutton Roof is wonderful - a big block of limestone set apart from the Yorkshire Dales, with spectacular pavements and crags, but it loses its charm about the time the first water trickles down your neck.

Strangest of all, Tigger and Robin went caving, and took Dave to try to convert him to the delights of liquid mud. Canny bloke, he thought they were mad. They did the through trip from Calf Holes to Browgill Cave, which, to be fair, only rates about 5 out of 10 on the scale of cave nastiness, 'cos you come out washed clean, but I refuse to go into details. Club's going to the dogs.



Anyway, we all got back in plenty of time to get mildly sloshed over a superb meal, sober up with a quiz, and get sloshed again as Tony, blister and all, first-footed the hut.

The morning of New Year's Day probably followed, but it isn't something anybody would want to talk about. But eventually a few hardy souls turned out and headed off in the general direction of where Ingleborough might have been, or not. Most seem to have made it to Trowbarrow Gorge, a few to Gaping Ghyll, Tony to Little Ingleborough, where he was overcome by his blister and retreated, but only Dave made it to the actual summit. You can tell he's new; we'll soon reduce him to the general mediocrity. Me, I finally got started at 1.30 and did the round of the tops circling Easegill, though I had to rush a bit. The weather was cold and very SE windy, but dry. Stuart had the best day, returning early from Trowbarrow and meeting the hut custodian, who was overcome by his charm to the extent of opening up the YRC library. To anybody with any interest in mountaineering or caving history, this is Aladdin's Cave, and the evening passed in frenzied browsing, after another superb meal of last night's left-overs. Then we had another quiz - a draw, again.

Saturday everybody came home, except me, who spent a very unsatisfactory day running a very short distance in the sort of rain that can't quite make it to sleet but intends to try, and thereby missing the seven goals scored by Chesterfield in their best win for about forty years. Confirms my opinion that this mountaineering is a mug's game - and as for caving - - -