

97th Entry Expedition

by 687162 L/A.A. TONGE, J. J.

<i>Members:</i>	C/A.A. Heath	A.A. Clifton
	L/A.A. Tonge	A.A. Gosnell
	L/A.A. Hodges	A.A. Swash
	L/A.A. Peachey	A.A. Hughes
	L/A.A. Lee	A.A. Sussex
	L/A.A. Watling	A.A. Hazel

The expedition started at five o'clock on Friday 30th August. We were picked up from camp and transported by R.A.F. coach via Hereford to Brecon where we were dropped on the A.70, half-way between Brecon and Libanus. This was at approximately 2200 hrs. and we hiked on through Libanus to a little farm near Cymelyn, where we obtained the permission of a farmer to use his field for the night. Although it was extremely dark not much difficulty was found in pitching the tents cooking a meal and bedding down for the night.

The rain overnight was reasonably heavy.

The next morning we arose at 0600 hrs. and were on our way by 0700 after thanking the farmer. We struck out in approximately a S.S.W. direction for Pen-y-fan first encountering a fast-flowing stream called Glyn Tarell, the crossing was made by means of a bridge formed from two trees.

Immediately after this stream we climbed a steep wooded slope and broke out into the open with Pen Milan (1,822 ft.) straight in front of us. I heard someone singing a pop song entitled "I'll never get over you", and almost felt like agreeing.

However, after a climb through a fern "forest" which was wet with dew it didn't seem so bad and we gained height by walking up the side of the hill and after skirting Pen Milan reached an obelisk dedicated to a Peter Jones who had apparently lost his life up there.

We rested here for a while and had time to admire the view down in the valley to our right was a cym (Ilyn-cym-llwch) which didn't look particularly large until we saw the size of the sheep grazing beside it and realised that we had climbed a fair distance. This particular valley is one of the strangest I have seen. This can be explained by the fact that it was obviously a claciated valley.

Shortly after moving from the obelisk a mist descended on the hill tops. We continued to climb following narrow sheep tracks until they petered out. All this time a steep slope, more like a cliff, was at our left hand side and very soon another appeared to our right. The gradient began to get really steep. Eventually we reached a peak, which turned out to be Corn Du. To reach Pen-y-fan we had to rely completely on compasses. We climbed down a steep slope from Corn Du and then up again to Pen-y-fan. When we left Corn Du our visibility was cut down to 15 yards, so, naturally, our progress was slow and cautious.

A fierce, bitterly cold wind was blowing, and very soon it was raining. Pen-y-Pan was reached at 1030 hrs. To our surprise we discovered that we had climbed right through the clouds and brilliant sunshine was observed for a while.

Deciding to make for the valley as quickly as possible we headed slightly off our route and made for the Storey Arms, which was a youth hostel and obtain a cup of tea. We reached there at 1230 hrs. and a cup of hot tea was welcomed by all. We crossed over the road and on a slope of Fan Fawr we had dinner and an hour's rest.

Owing to the fact that we had to be in Merthyr by 1800 hrs. on the Sunday and we had taken 5 hours to cover 5 miles, we decided to by-pass Ystrafell and head out from the side of Fan Fawr and make for Cader Fawr to camp, but the much lower level and the comparatively flat ground allowed us to reach Merthyr Tydfil by 2100 hrs., passing behind Cader Fawr and continued walking most of the day. Such sights as the reservoirs in the valley and the newly-planted forests, made this journey all the more worthwhile.

We camped down in a field near Merthyr on Saturday and on Sunday morning we arose at 0630 hrs. and were on our way by 0800 hrs. We proceeded at a fairly slow pace at first to get back into our stride and headed for the cairn near Pleasant View and rested a while.

From here we could see Merthyr and Aberdare. We kept to the highest points and hiked on through to Cefn-pennew, where we had dinner. We headed in a south-westerly direction to a little colliery railway which led into a village called Aber-fan.

From Aber-fan we got to our arranged meeting point with the transport by 1600 hrs. We decided to go a little way up a hill to the east to have tea.

A good time was had by all although we all agreed that to do a decent hike in the Brecons one has to have good clear weather, otherwise it is rather dangerous. In our case (after Pen-y-fan) it would have been stupid and dangerous to stick to the original route. The weather did not clear up there, instead it got fouler. An expedition such as this should most definitely be made in fine weather.

One observation we made was that the natives were extremely friendly and helped us on our way as much as they could. It occurred to us after talking to one of them, with the help of A.A. Sussex (our translator) that they probably thought we were R.A.F. Mountain Rescue. How mistaken can they get! We looked nothing like them. They seemed to be most disappointed when they found out what we really were. Another "observation" is that the area is infested with sheep. I'll never touch mutton again!