

A post card from Arolla

I was woken abruptly by someone shaking my foot, glaring confused into the darkness I could see head torches flickering, there were whispers coming from the room as people rustled around sorting their gear for the day ahead. Suddenly I was brought to full consciousness

'HEY DOMI HAVE YOU GOT MY GUIDE BOOK?'

The whole dormitory stirred, Yes you've guest it - the booming voice of Neil Wolstencroft. Reality then struck, time to get up 0400hrs. I fumbled around for my head torch and a few bits and pieces then stumbled off down the stairs to the dining area. We had a quick breakfast then went outside to the balcony of the Dix hut to gear up. In the darkness we could see a silhouette of our objective peak dominating the Dix valley, Mount Blanc de Cheilon 3,869m and graded PD.

There were eight of us - Charles and Geoff, Neil, Phil, Domi, Johnny Barks, Ann Peden and myself. With head torches on we zigzagged down the scree trying to pick out the path, which is so obvious in daylight, towards the snow-covered glacier where we stopped to catch our breath and rope up. Looking back down the valley the Dix hut could be seen perched on its own little hill above the glacier, lights flickering on and off as more people started to wake. The sky was gradually turning from darkness to the royal blue of dawn and an orangey red glow started to appear towards the east.

Crunch! ----- Crunch! ----- Crunch!



Ann and Gary settle down for the night on the Col du Burtol

the only sound to be heard above our own breathing as the party walked up the steep snow field towards the Col De Cheilon. By the time the Col was reached it was almost daylight and ominous cloud was starting to develop to the east. From here we curved round to the right to avoid a small rock band onto a small snowfield before gaining an interesting rock ridge. We scrambled up the ridge to gain a hollow at the start of the main snow slopes. Neil and Phil Cherry could be seen a few hundred metres above traversing below a band of seracs. Cloud had started swirling around above us. I expressed

my concern to the others in the party, a decision was made to continue. Plodding slowly upward, pausing occasionally to catch breath, we eventually came to the serac band. The cloud had closed in and I again expressed concern. We decided to wait a few minutes and see if the cloud would clear, through the occasional break, we could see the silhouettes of Neil and Phil, a while later we could see them on the summit ridge, decision made! We had to go.

Continuing up the steep snow we arrived at a Col, from here we turned NE and onto the main summit ridge. We followed this precariously over cornices, scrambling over the occasional rocky step with cloud swirling round us then onto a final bulk of rock. From here a belay was set up for the final climb to the summit, down to a Col, over some slabs into a small chimney VD and finally to the summit. The cloud disappearing just long enough for a few quick photos.

Our steps were retraced down the ridge to the Col and finally back to the hut for lunch. We spent the afternoon sitting around and relaxing recounting the day's adventures.

Gary Bebb

Ed's little column

We are globetrotting this issue with articles from as far as Japan and South America and also some fine literary works from the Alps.

Unfortunately I had to drop out of the Alps trip due to an injury sustained playing cricket, of all things. There aren't too many climber/cricketers, but if you think about it there are similarities. It's a full day out in the fresh air rounded off in the evening with several beers recounting the highlights of the day. It's also scary playing cricket, facing a hard ball hurled at you at 80mph. So we wear helmets and use protection. Usually a plastic box to encase your tackle.

I digress. Thanks for the response for articles and pics. If you didn't get in this time see the Winter issue and keep those articles coming.

Reminder: Andrew Salter Lecture October 23rd at The Lytton Arms at 8.00pm.

Bill

Please send your articles to me at : dnades@globalnet.co.uk Save your files as text or rtf only. Photos or jpegs with captions of who and where.

