

Aspect of

Story and photos by Barry Steeves

Clayton's idea of England was of its maintained Victorian conservatism, heavily accentuated by that December's foggy rain. The afternoon's precipitation pelted softly through leafless trees, and hushed droplets were dampened by the wet grass. In the distance, Christmas carollers sang whispered songs, but everybody else had left for-home from Oxford. Across a field and beyond thick stands of trees loomed the grey college towers, the heart of the town which is the quintessence of England. Thus, the U of A student set out; in search of excitement, and to make discoveries, at that other great university.

This traveller looked like but a speck, silently moving closer, from the far end of the land. But as the rain's tempo hardened, and the young man neared, a uniform regularity set in. Clayton's feet were falling into confident infallible striding. Across the fields and into the trees he charged, oblivious of the rough ground as his boots crushed twigs. "When I'm in control, nothing can stop me!" he thought aloud adventurously; those bell-towers were the objective in mind. A knotty grin was what little one could see of his boyish face, and with high knee lifts, he continued on into the nightfall.

He jumped darkened obstacles spaced through sections of trees, first one fence and then another. He tossed his backpack over a tall picket fence, and a disturbed owl took flight, as his camping gear came crashing down. When he jumped the fence to join his pack, the rain had stopped falling, and everything fell contently still. Only the sound of crumpling plastic broke the peace, as Clayton's hands fumbled through his pack to yank out a pack of olives. Spitting pits all the way down the path he went along, he followed narrow waterways, crossed small bridges, and was being lead down deeper into the woodland.

He could see only trees and more trees, till they unveiled a towering stone wall. It stood across a waterfilled moat, over which the walkway's bridge crossed, as did the young man who was inquisitively searching. On the other side, ran an intersecting perpendicular pathway, following the wall in both directions. To the left was only darkness, but to the right, the path lead to a climbable gatehouse, adjoining the wall. The student, eager to accept any invitation, dropped his gear where he stood, and scrambled up the building, for the better position.



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Clayton was ready to reach fr sound of footfal anxiously as the Keys jangled on youth clung on houette against

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THE ICE PEDLAR

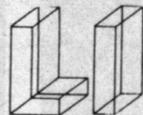
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