

according to YHA, 22 according to Ordnance Survey and 25 in reality due to our mistake). Walking 2 miles to the nearest pub was totally out of the question after dinner.

The last two days basically followed the Lyke Wake Walk route (the route from Osmotherley to Ravenscar by Robin Hood's Bay) not A.W.'s. Generally it was fairly boring on the high moorland only broken by the view of the "golf balls" of our early warning system at RAF Fylingdales. The view of Robin Hood's Bay was magic and the weather was very pleasant. The last four miles were spoilt by footpaths being blocked and notices up saying "No right of Way" having to be ignored whilst we obeyed the O.S. map. We finally reached Robin Hood's Bay in euphoric and relieved state and went down to the beach to wet our boots. Even Denis didn't go for a swim as the beach was dirty and disgusting. As a short cut to Boggle Hole Y.H. we took our boots off and paddled through the sea to the Y.H. Having dumped our gear and changed clothes we went in to Bay Town to celebrate in "The Dolphin" (the only pub open) with pints of Director's Bitter. This was followed with a bottle of wine with dinner at the hostel (in secret!), by which time sister Ann had arrived from Keswick to spend the evening with us and drive us back to Keswick the next day. We met many other people who had completed the walk. One large group had cheated and got buses from Reeth to Osmotherley! A good evening was had by all.

The final day Ann drove us back through Wensleydale (a look at Rievaulx Abbey on the way). I started to feel very tired indeed and aching all over, as well as having a sore swollen left foot (I thought my blisters were better). Before the Lakes were reached I had started to shake with a high temperature. On arrival in Keswick, Ann took me to the hospital where I received a large dose of injected penicillin and two other antibiotics. The next morning I had improved enough to drive home. The cause was probably an infection in my blisters picked up in the sea!

In summary, the walk was a great achievement (for us anyway), but proved to be much harder than anticipated. If I was to do it again I would preferably do it with 2 cars and a caravan, and take three weeks to do it instead of 12 days. Failing a caravan, I would have at least 4 rest days and carry as little in my pack as possible. It was a combination of heat, poor boots and a heavy pack as well as lack of recovery rest time that made the blisters the problem they became. It would be necessary therefore, to stay in more B&B's as well as Youth Hostels.

If any member is considering doing the walk don't hesitate to contact me if you want a chat first.

Ed., Denis and John were sponsored on their walk and raised £600 for a mission in Korr, Kenya.

## THE BRENVA SPUR 1991

Jim Cooper (With Tom Walkington)

"Tom I am not going to be your donkey" I said. "Of course" said Tom, "I would not expect any different". Little did he know that he would end up carrying for me.

The crux of this route isn't on the route at all. It is the ascent of the Fourche Bivouac on the Frontier Ridge where we spent the previous evening. At about 2 am. we followed a French pair down the glacier declining to glissade, as one of them did, down the last two hundred feet. We checked that his wounds were only superficial and continued on our way.

Things went well fumbling along at the end of a queue of head torches. The Col Moore was gained after a flat walk across the glacier and we set to work on the rocky base of the spur. After a few hundred feet it was clear that those in front had lost their way. Dodging rocks and retreating Brits we came across more Frenchmen this time one with his hand trapped by a large block that had moved.

However dawn soon came and the difficulties (being off route) eased. We climbed up over mixed ground up the main ridge to the snow arete. By now I was feeling the altitude and lack of fitness.

Up the snow/ice slope above roped up but moving together with me zig-zagging to make it easier and Tom taking a direct line - the rope alternatively slack or pulling Tom off. (I am 6 or 7 stones heavier than Tom). The Brenva Face of Mont Blanc is the most spectacular side with soaring rock ridges and buttresses and plunging snow and ice slopes above remote and complex glaciers hanging impossibly above Courmayeur. The weather was perfect with one able to see unending distances.

Slowly the summit seracs were pulled in. We were above the Col de la Brenva but it still took five long pitches to reach the summit slope.

A twenty five year old ambition realised. We descended to the Aiguille du Midi where we missed the telepherique by fifteen minutes, even though Tom had carried my sack on the uphill sections of the descent. Then the Midi officials kicked us out of the station. However, to bivvy in the ice cave outside the station was a relief compared to the descent down interminable slopes in the blazing sun.

## A RIDE IN THE DALES

Paul Cooney

We mounted the bicycles, all last minute checks complete - destination the Tan Hill Inn. The morning was grey and cold, the mist embossing the summits. It was an excited and high spirited group of nine ARCC members who had the same goal in mind, to cycle to the highest Inn in England. The groups' colourful clothing brightened the sombre light, bringing it to life on this November morning. Everyone settled into the steady relaxing pace to Wensleydale and Hawes soon behind. The rise to Swaledale was, however, anything but relaxing. The mist soon enveloped us as we began the climb, the flow of conversation soon became shorter as the road steepened. The talking stopped and the deep breathing began. Each one of us appeared locked and surrounded in our own positive thoughts; the thoughts required to overcome the physical and mental challenge of this climb. With a challenge comes the change, ours was a mystical parting of the cloud; the mist and cloud was below blanketing valleys like alpine glaciers; only blue sky and mountains in view; the farms and lowland blanched from view. Recuperation of lungs and legs gave time to savour the vista and inspect the Buttertubs potholes. Repleted with energy we cruised the descending hill to Swaledale. The last climb to the Inn started 1 in 4 but soon relented to a leisurely climb. Gradually, through mist appeared the Tan Hill Inn. At 1732 feet above sea level, the Inn is on the Pennine Watershed, where the rivers flow either East to the North Sea or West to the Irish Sea.

Inside the Inn the fire glowed and radiated its reviving warmth around the room. We had lunch in the 260 year old Inn and admired its fine architecture of low doorways, stone floors and small window frames which allowed the winter sun to penetrate the room with its precise shafts of light. After lunch we reluctantly left the warm drowsy atmosphere only a real fire can produce, and started the journey home to the Old School House by the Hill Inn, our home for the weekend.

The ride from the Inn was an exhilarating delight freewheeling the remote sheep trodden moor road for some 9 miles to Kirkby Stephen where we took the road down Mallerstang Common on the corner of the Howgill Fells. For peace and solitude with no paths or litter the fells of Wild Boar and Swarth offer the admirer a taste of the quintessence only a connoisseur could appreciate. In the fading light we passed these fells, minor in stature but major in riches. It was at Hawes - Peter, Bill and Arthur had bulb and light failures, they waited in a cafe for our return with transport, rather than risk the final twelve miles in darkness. So Alan, Clare, Dave, Stuart, Geoff and myself entered the dark silent world of white road markings and cats eyes, undeterred by the inky darkness, we covered the twelve miles in good time arriving at base for 5.30 p.m.

The weekends objective was complete, we relaxed and ate tea. John Hope and John Dixon told of their quest for adventure exploring the lanes, tracks and moors of the Dales. Everyone appeared fulfilled by the days stimulating offerings only a ride in the Dales can give.

## WHO WAS ACHILLE RATTI?

Fr. David Milburn

(It seems logical, in this the 50th year of the Achille Ratti Climbing Club, to explain who Achille Ratti was and why we named our club after him. So many new members have appeared on the scene in recent years and these two excellent articles will do much to enlighten them of the history surrounding the ARCC. I sincerely thank David Milburn for allowing me to publish them and feel sure that they will be gratefully received. Both articles are taken from bulletins issued in 1978. D.W.P.)

Who was Achille Ratti? What a question to ask! Yet to judge by recent comments in this bulletin, it is a question that needs to be answered; for it is clear that with the passing of years the memory of the gentleman after whom the club is named has slipped into oblivion.

Under the heading Abbe Achille Ratti, Frank Clarke has recently guessed that the Achille Ratti in question, might have been a climber of that name who was the first to sleep in the new refuge being built at the same time as Vallot's observatory, facing the snowfield between the Bosses du Dromedaire and the Dome du Gouter on Mont Blanc. On this point he was quite correct, as Joyce Foster noted. But his other two guesses, that he was one of Ricardo Cassin's team which made the first ascent of the N.E. face of the Piz Badile in 1937, and with the same climber he led a new route up the face of the Cima Oveste in the Dolomites in 1935, are undoubtedly very wide of the mark. We can be quite certain about this, on the grounds not of age, but documented history. As it happened, our Achille Ratti was the Pope in Rome at this time, and not even an enterprising Pope as Achille Ratti could have sneaked away from the Vatican for a few days in the mountains,

Et voila, as they say in Chamonix, we have established the identity of our Achille Ratti. He was quite a famous climber in his day, as we shall see, but even more famous as Pope Pius XI (1922-1939), in those troubled times before the second world war which saw the rise of Hitler and Mussolini. We could do worse than remind new members of the club of his true identity, by having a plaque erected in his honour.

He was born in 1857, the son of well-to-do parents, in the small town of Desio which looks up towards Monte Rosa. He was one of a family of seven; he had five brothers, one of whom, Carlo, was also a climber and for 17 years editor of the publication of the Italian Alpine Club. One of the grey granite peaks that look down on St. Moritz and Lake Como is named after him.

Achille Ratti went to school in his native Desio, but spent his holidays with a priest uncle at Asso, a little village hidden away on the Bellagio promontory. Here, he attracted the notice of the Archbishop of Milan (after Rome the most important see in

Italy), who sent him as a student for the priesthood, first to the seminary in Milan, then to Lombard College in Rome. Extremely gifted, Ratti obtained a triple doctorate at the Gregorian University in Rome, and at the age of twenty-two was ordained, and eventually returned to Milan to teach Theology in the seminary.

Much of Ratti's life was spent working with books, for after some years he was appointed as deputy director of the great Ambrosian Library in Milan, and there he remained until 1910, succeeding to the post of Chief Librarian in 1907. Of this period of his life our own English historian Cardinal Adrian Gasquet writes: "It would be impossible to speak in detail of the contributions to Italian literature and history which proceeded from the pen of Mgr. Ratti. He became known and honoured for the courteous and ever-ready welcome he gave to all students who consulted the famous library, and for the way he placed at their disposal his knowledge and advice".

In 1910, Achille Ratti was called from Milan to Rome to assist the Prefect of the even more renowned Vatican Library. Four years later he became its Chief Librarian. It indeed looked as though he would be surrounded with his beloved books until the end of his life. But his quick mind and will of steel had come to the notice of the most powerful man in the Vatican, Cardinal Gasparri, the Secretary of State to Pope Benedict XV. Without warning, he sent him as papal representative to the newly established state of Poland in 1918. He arrived in Warsaw just when Poland was being invaded by Soviet troops, and alone of the foreign representatives he refused to leave the city when it came under siege in August 1920.

As Papal Nuncio in Poland, his post included large parts of Eastern Europe, which gave him specialised knowledge of the new regime in Russia. He returned to Rome in 1921 convinced that atheism was the core of the Soviet system and that the USSR would try to impose it on the whole world; a view that he preached from that time until his dying day.

Back in Rome he was made Archbishop of Milan, and a cardinal. This was just a year before the reigning Pope Benedict XV died, so at the conclave which met to elect a new pope he was not well known. In the first ballot he received only two votes. Cardinal Gasparri, however, realising that the election of a strong pope with experience of international affairs was absolutely necessary, worked hard behind the scenes to win the other cardinals to Ratti's support; and eventually after fourteen (I think) ballots, our Achille Ratti was elected as pope at the age of sixty-five, with forty-two votes in his favour. He took the name Pius XI.

His pontificate, which lasted from 1922-1939, coincided with the great inter-war crises. Sympathetic at first to Mussolini, (Italy had 8,000,000 unemployed at the time) and also to Hitler, both of whom he saw as saviours of their countries, he soon set himself against them when they began to attack the Church. His encyclical letters against Fascism and Nazism are amongst some of the most outspoken letters of any of the popes. No-one has yet written an up-to-date history of his pontificate, but by way of

conclusion to this basic outline of Achille Ratti's public life, I quote from an article written in 1966, "Despite the external misfortunes of his pontificate, Pius XI appears as one of the most significant and most able of the popes of modern times."

With some truth we could say that also of Ratti's activity as a climber; and it is as a climber that we in the ARCC particularly revere his memory. Perhaps I'll be allowed to write about that side of his life (though less competently) in a later bulletin.

#### WHO WAS ACHILLE RATTI? (Part Two)

By the time this second part of the Achille Ratti story is printed we shall have had another pope elected. Achille Ratti was Pope Pius XI, and since then we have had Pius XII, John XXIII and Paul VI. I would like to say something in this article about Achille Ratti's climbing career. As a man of considerable talent, he wrote a good deal, and did not hesitate to commit to print his main climbing achievements, and soon after his election to the Papacy they were translated into English by JEC Heaton under the title *Abate Achille Ratti; Climbs on Alpine Peaks*. This is a small book Joyce Foster referred to some time ago, a copy of which used to be in the Langdale Hut. I can assure her that my copy is not the one from there.

Achille Ratti's main climbs were three in number; the ascent of Monte Rosa (Dufour Peak) from Macugnaga and the first traverse of the Zumsteinjoch; the ascent of the Matterhorn direct from Zermatt; and Mont Blanc, ascent by the Rocher route and descent by the Dome Glacier.

The ascent of the precipitous face of Monte Rosa above Macugnaga to the Dufour Peak was for years reckoned to be impossible. As early as 1867, Matthews and Morstead had the idea of tackling it, but the constant threat of stone-falls and avalanches put them off, and it was left to their compatriots Taylor and Pendlebury to do it in July 1872 but not without considerable danger. When the Austrian Lendenfeld made the ascent in 1880, Italian climbers began to think of doing it too, as it was regarded as an Italian peak. Damiano Marinelli of the Florence section of the C.A.I. tried it in the summer of 1881 in very unfavourable conditions. He was killed by an avalanche in the large couloir which bears his name. Italians featured in the first few traverses from Macugnaga to Zermatt, but until the end of the 1880s no Italians were among the continuing successful attempts on the Monte Rosa from the Italian side.

This situation roused Ratti's patriotism. Aware of the dangers, he persuaded himself after a prolonged study of the mountain that given good conditions he would be able to make the ascent without undue risk. In the event, the Italian party comprising himself and another priest, Luigi Grasselli and the two Courmayeur guides Guiseppe Gadin and Alessio Proment made the ascent in July 1889. Not only did it prove very difficult; it was also very strenuous. Starting from the new Marinelli hut, they took eighteen hours to cover the 1000 metres to the Ost Spitze 4,633m, owing to prolonged snow storms. By then it was 7.30pm., too late to traverse the narrow ridge to the Dufour Peak 4,638m., so the four passed the night on a narrow ledge in a high



wind and extremely cold conditions. Ratti commented that chocolate and kirsch managed to keep the party's spirits high. At dawn they straddled the ridge to the Dufour Peak, returned to the Ost Spitze, then forced the first passage of the Zumsteinjoch, finally descending by the Grenza Glacier and forced to spend another night in the open under the rocks of the Gornergrat. The great difficulties the party encountered were easily forgotten in their elation of knowing that they had certainly been the first to make a descent of the buttresses below the Dufour Peak and apparently the first to make the traverse of the Zumsteinjoch, perhaps the second highest pass in the Alps.

Within a week of this achievement, Ratti went on to climb the Matterhorn during the day from Zermatt. Accompanied by three guides, he was blessed with fine weather until time for return from the summit, when a drastic drop in the temperature forced the party to spend the night below the shoulder. The cold was so intense that they had to move about for most of the night. Ratti's wry comment was, "the weather was still perfect and we resigned ourselves to passing the night where we were, not only without regret, but, I venture to say, without considerable enjoyment."

The next year 1890, he turned his attention to Mont Blanc. He and his friend Grasselli wished to avenge themselves for their failure to make the ascent in 1888, and in order to make their revenge complete, they intended to attempt the descent to Courmayeur by the route used on the ascent by members of the Turin section of the C.A.I. the year before. They were again joined by their friends Gadin and Proment, together with another priest, Giovanni Bohin, a local man who proved to be a very useful guide. The clear weather of July 31st. allowed them to set out at 4 am. from the Sella hut. By noon they had reached the summit with the sky still fairly clear on the French side, though mist had built up on the Italian side. With no wind and a warm temperature they decided to spend the night at the nearly completed Vallot hut, being probably the first occupants of it. At 6 am. they left the hut to climb Dome du Gouter. From here, instead of following the route the Turin section had taken the year before, they turned away from the buttress of the Aiguille Grise, and descended the Glacier which lay between the Rocher du Mont Blanc on the left and the Aiguille Grise on the right. By 5 pm. they were back in Courmayeur, having affected an apparently partly new descent by the western branch of the Glacier du Dome and the Miage Glacier.

There then are the main though not exhaustive claims to Pius XI's fame as a climber. The details evidently not possible to mention in such a brief account as this, would show us a "kindly, humorous climber of considerable technical skill and judgment", certainly a mountaineer worthy enough to have our Club named after him.

D. Milburn

## THE ALTERNATIVE WAY HOME

Terry Kitching

After trekking for 32 days from Katmandu to and around Solo Kumbu it was time to walk out. The main party of Dot Wood, Tom Walkington, Dave Linney, Bernard and Elizabeth Swan and their friend Mike retraced their route in. Jim Cooper flew out from Lukia. Keith Foster and I chose an alternative route.

We left Namche Bazaar at about 10am on Monday 2nd December, passing the Gompa where fortunately I turned a few prayer wheels. The track up to Thami (as in ptarmigan), once it rises out of the village, is a picturesque path through the forest, with very little up or down. There are blue pheasants in the undergrowth and further up, above the trees, tahr, goat like creatures with long brown silken hair in ruffs around their shoulders. The path by the river bank had been washed away, and a replacement zig-zagged up the hillside to Thami, passing a helipad and a hydro electric station under construction. The dam and sluices are in the next valley by Thami. The workers were on their way up the hill to continue digging out the pipe trench by hand. I bet they have fun welding up the 1 metre lengths of pipe into the half mile needed.

Unexpectedly we came upon a police check post, and as Rolwaling Valley, where we were heading was closed to those without expensive permits, and the team of people that go with them, we were lucky to pass unseen. Tea and dahlbatt were provided by the lodge furthest from the cop shop, and we sat in a field in the sunshine to eat, as it was only just above freezing inside.

We carried on up onto the lateral moraine top and away past Gonda, a prosperous looking monastery, where there were apparently two recycled lamas. (There was also a nunnery somewhere about). There is no time for sight seeing today though, because we must get to the high camp for tomorrows pass. By dusk we made the deserted summer village of Thengpo with its stone walled pastures and potato fields. We camped in the furthest and flattest of the fields - pity it had been freshly mucked with yak dung, but as it's -10'C, it doesn't really matter.

There were three of us in Keith Foster's tent, a lad called Tim Murphy from Oregon was with us over the first pass. We were up to watch the dawn at 6am, but it took us 2 hours to get away. The track up the valley was easy to find, and the two Nepalis coming the other way were informed that our guides were following. The glacier at the pass had been in sight for some time, but the final slopes of loose scree up to it were a bit of a shock. There was a rock step between the cliffs of the almost 7000m peak of Tengi Kagi Tau and the ice, so with one foot on ice and one on rock we got up to the glacier to be greeted by the whirr and thud of stones falling from high above - close to the wall however seemed O.K. The way had been recently walked so we followed the tracks to the flags and chortens of the Trashi Labsta, on a rocky rib at 5800m. The way off the glacier, for

the likes of us, with no ropes or crampons, was down a steep gully to the right of the ice. Large rocks perched at the top of this gully looked like they would follow their smaller cousins, which were already bouncing down with no encouragement from us. We descended one at a time, with the others watching out for rocks, the plan being to try and outrun the big ones should it prove necessary. The icefall dropped onto the long flat Drolombo Glacier, flowing to the left. We followed the edge between the stoney moraine and the snow slopes of Parchoma. Every now and then one of us would fall flat on his back, as the snow, would you believe, was sometimes polished ice. With 30 minutes daylight left and no obvious camp site we came to the icefall. A climb down a rocky gully led precariously to a rocky spur at 5100m just below the seracs, and about 150m above the next glacier. There were some stone walled bivvy sites on the top of this knoll, and one was just big enough for our tent. Overnight there were some interesting sounding avalanches from the head of the valley, a few hundred metres away, and some odd noises from the seracs.

We were up at dawn, but it took three hours to get away, fortunately it was calm in this exposed camp, as it was -10°C again until the sun found us. The Trakarding Glacier below was very stoney, and lower down almost impassable due to melt holes. Tim went off on his own into this maze, to sneak successfully past the cops in Rolwaling Valley, whilst we climbed a gully in the lateral moraine above an enormous hole in the ice, which led into our side valley. The obvious pass at the head of the valley was glaciated with no sign of markers or tracks, so we decided it was the wrong one and retreated. Our map has a scale of 1:110,000 and contours every 500m! The lateral moraines of the main glacier had fallen away taking the old tracks with them and making progress slow. We had to descend the moraine again for water from the mostly frozen lake at the end of the glacier, then quickly reascend to the camp at dusk, as our chosen site by the lake was being bombed by boulders, some as big as cars.

We tried the Yalung La next day as our last escape route out or Rolwaling, and found a good track up this valley, but it seemed to go up for ever. Our lunch stop was a long one, as I had to mend the kerosene stove, which doesn't like Nepali kero. Next a boulder which nearly broke Keith's leg held us up while we waited for the blood to stop flowing. The pass at 5300m on the map was well marked with prayer flags and chortens, and fortunately also well marked with cairns on the somewhat airier but easier and quicker descent to the south west.

We found the first camp site just after dark, this time with running water almost under the tent. It was a lot warmer -3°C with no wind, and my fingers would even work the shirt buttons tonight.

Friday was another lovely day for a walk, pity about the noodles for breakfast, but we could see villages down the valley, the nearest being about 9km away, and we had a good track to some summer pastures on the moraine terraces. After about half an hour we couldn't puzzle out how the guy got his sheep up to them, and we made our way round some crags to the river below. We found footprints by the river and followed them into the snow

amongst the trees, but we decided later that the guy was either looking for lost sheep or hunting.

After four hours in the woods we couldn't find a path, and we were making very slow progress. The river was falling steeply with spectacular waterfalls. Our low point today was 3000m but we had to reascend to pass some crags, and eventually found a bivvy site between two large rocks on a ridge at dusk. Noodles again for supper! Keith had to save some of his dinner for tomorrow's breakfast. We had a real camp fire tonight as we were also short of fuel.

After the predictable noodles for breakfast, and because the ridge we slept on was too steep to pass, we climbed it almost to the top of the hill, about 4200m before we could get off it and descend again. The rock was good for climbing, and where it was too steep, the rhododendron trees made a good alternative - dwarf rhododendrons on the snow covered upper slopes made good if cold hand holds. We found a few bear tracks leading to a cave which we carefully avoided. Eventually we descended to some summer pastures with an abandoned summerhouse, cow prints and some people prints in the snow. I took the wrong path - there were only two - and we soon got lost in the trees again, which by now formed more of a jungle. Darkness caught us above some crags so we had a dry bivvy in a fortunate cave - fortunate because we found it and fortunate because there was no bear in it - but we had to wait until morning to find water to cook the last packet of Dot's quick rice and mashed potato, to make sherpa stew for breakfast. Keith had left Namche with four days food, I had three and a half days plus some odds and ends Dot gave me. I think Dot knows about these passes.

Today by unanimous decision Keith is in charge of navigation, and we soon got down to the river. Bamboos are good for abseiling down steep ground, but they make your fingers a bit sore. They are also a lot easier in daylight. A pleasant surprise waited at the bottom though. A polebridge and a path! Keith said he had seen the bridge from the summer pastures yesterday. The lad's got sharp eyes! Bamboo cutters had been working in the valley, and cut a path by the river, which by now was wider and not falling so steeply.

The first family we met were still living in their summer house, with their cows and chickens. They had seen us on the ridge yesterday, and gave us a good feed. We all sat on the floor around the fire, owner, wives, children and us, plus as many chickens as could sneak in. It was a full time job evicting the chickens, who would peck the dinner off our plates as soon as our eyes were turned. The cockerel however beat a hasty retreat as soon as the knife was waved at it.

The man of the house seemed to be pleased to have an excuse to get away from his women and kids, and guided us to his relative's village of Sikpasor, where we slept on the spare beds upstairs in the granary with the unthreshed millet. These people didn't want payment either for the bed or food, but we gave them some odds and ends out of the first aid kit.

At the next village we met a fellow who seemed to be waiting for us. He spoke good English and invited us home for lunch.

Everyone in the valley seemed to know we had come over the pass, but luckily there are no cops in this valley.

Our nights lodge in Biguti by the Bhote Kosi was the best room of the trip. The owner of the house moved his 15 year old daughter out for us, but now we are back on the main trail we payed for the room and the tea. We had another easy days walking downhill except for the last 1200m up to Charikot in time for Tuesday's last bus to Katmandu.

We found a better map in Katmandu, which showed the track from the Yalung la about where are map showed it, but we never saw it.



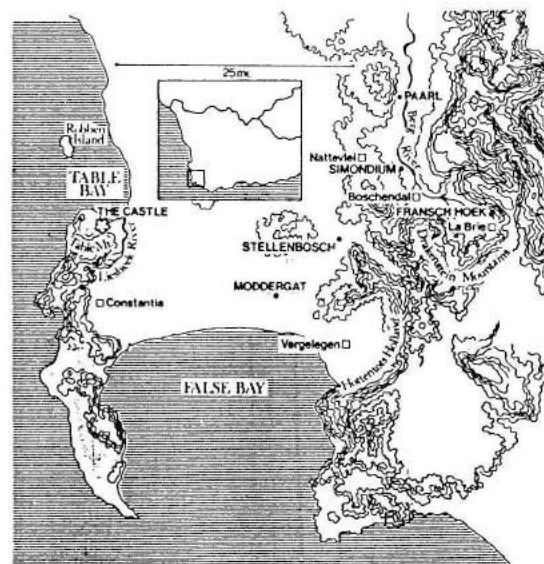
Unclimbed peaks in the Rolwaling Valley

## VISIT TO SOUTH AFRICA

Peter McHale

Capetown is one of the most beautiful places I have ever seen. It stands on the north western edge of a peninsula thrust out from the mainland into the Atlantic with Table Bay to the north and False Bay to the south. The town itself is clustered around the foot of Table Mountain, a three thousand foot, majestic massif, quite unique in my experience. The lower slopes of Table Mountain are green and wooded in places, while the upper reaches are bare and weathered. The summit is an elongated, perfectly flat plateau. It forms part of a larger range - other significant summits overlooking Capetown being Devils Peak, Lions Head and Signal Hill. The latter runs out to sea above Camps Bay. There are superb views to the north, south and west, while to the east and north-east, distant views of such grandeur, 'blue' mountain ranges can be seen clearly. The dominant range amongst these is the Drakenstein Mountains. Robben Island is set in Table Bay and clearly visible from any of the summits.

The peninsula extends many miles to the south running parallel with the south western edge of the mainland mass, and falling short by about twenty miles of the southernmost tip of the African continent. Some famous names are here which stimulate schoolboys (and girls) memories of history and geography lessons; Cape Point; Cape of Good Hope; Fish Hook and Simonstown.



The Cape peninsula



The climate is mediterranean and dominant colours are green and limpid blue. The main features are sea and mountains. The place is a gem!

All this is irrelevant of course to my purpose in visiting, but hopefully it has wetted your appetite to hear a little more about our trip.

In the 1980's, the Leeds Diocese, in which I live and work, formed a partnership - a bond of mutual trust and support, rooted in a common spirituality - with the Arch Diocese of Capetown. Several years ago we received visitors from Capetown while the late Bishop Naidu was still in office. Lawrence Henry has now replaced him and made clear his intention to continue the partnership by visiting Leeds in the summer of last year, and then receiving us, as visitors, to Capetown in October, 1991.

There were five of us drawn from different parts of the Diocesan working life. We were all lay people, two women and three men. I was invited to go and represent Leeds Catholic Welfare Society. We were to spend two full weeks in South Africa, almost all the time in Capetown, but the last few days in Johannesburg and Pretoria, plus about three days travelling.

A very full programme had been worked out for us in advance by Alan Barnes and colleagues at the Justice and Peace Office in Capetown. This enabled us to see at first hand, many aspects of South African life. Of course it is impossible to convey here the full impact of all that we saw and heard there. That is a society with a complex history and unique social order giving rise to extremes, polarizations and inherent contradictions. But it is a fascinating society of immense variety and richness. We spent some of our time actually visiting the townships around Capetown, most of them defy description, and the rest of the time meeting with people and organisations whose life work it is to try and improve conditions in those townships.

What will be of particular interest to ARCC members however, will be our visit to Johannesburg and in particular Soweto where a fellow ARCC member works - Dermot Mills. Dermot is a priest and has spent the best part of ten years running a parish in Soweto. Before that he was based at a parish in Liverpool and able to spend many happy days in our huts. From Capetown I contacted him by phone, and he was delighted to welcome us in Johannesburg. We hired a car and drove across the great Karoo, really a desert stretching for endless miles, and arrived in Johannesburg two days later. We were to be the guests of the Holy Family sisters, whose convent is just a stones throw from Dermot's home, so the visit, however brief, worked out perfectly from that point of view.

Inevitably, Dermot spent many nostalgic hours quizzing me about the club, about the huts and the people we both know, and relating some of his experiences in Langdale. Later on he spent some time relating some of his experiences in Soweto too, and I think I know which ones I would rather share with him. Soweto is one of the largest, most established South African townships. The home of Nelson Mandela, there is much organised social infra-structure and political activity, and Dermot has spent the last ten years or so right at the heart of it, taking part and

witnessing great social upheaval which culminated finally in the 'abolition' of apartheid. There is much still to be done because the abolition is a very theoretical affair at this moment, and Dermot has his work cut out for the foreseeable future. But still, great strides have also been made.

Dermot speaks Zulu fluently and is closely involved in the lives of the people he serves in his parish. As a priest, he addresses their plight at a very individual and personal level, while as a friend, as a 'white' friend, who identifies with their lot, he is able to wield great political power on their behalf. It is very clear from talking to some of them that he does this freely. There are times however, when they fear for his safety not only because of his numerous clashes with the authorities over the years, but because of the lawlessness currently prevailing in the townships themselves.

For someone in Dermot's position it is wise to keep records of one's activities for a number of reasons. Hence there are written first hand accounts of many of his activities over the years and he was kind enough to give me copies of many of these. If anyone would like to read through some of them, just let me know. He is a well known correspondent of the Johannesburg News Press!

Over the years, many people, lay and religious, working towards the same end, have developed a sophisticated strategy to apply pressure on the authorities to get them to improve conditions in Soweto. This strategy requires individuals to take up single issues which adversely affect the lives of ordinary people in the township, rather than try and attack the injustice of the system on a global level. Dermot has taken up the unglamorous, but literally vital issue of sewage in his own neighbourhood.

Soweto is densely populated - I don't know how many hundreds of thousands of people live there. The sewage system is primitive and totally inadequate to the task for which it was designed. The result can be imagined. We actually photographed raw sewage belching from what passed as a manhole. When there are adverse weather conditions however (there had been no rain in Johannesburg for seven months when we were there), the sewage flows freely from numerous sources, swilling into school playgrounds, domestic dwellings (even in Soweto many of these are still little more than shacks offering no protection from the weather or anything else), Dermot's own church yard and anywhere else the land allows it to run. Shoeless children regard it as a river and play in it. Infant mortality from disease is sky high. Dermot believes the whole township is living a hairs breadth from typhoid epidemic or some similar catastrophic disease.

As in other situation in earlier years, Dermot has documented many of his clashes with the authorities over this issue. Sometimes these clashes have led to physical confrontation with police and army, and he has to stand his ground relying mainly on his wits for his way out of tight spots, and on God to give him a push if he is not up to it.

I could go on, and if anyone wants me to I will, but somewhere else. Space in this journal is limited and I must end now.

Derek asked me to write this short article for the journal knowing that many of you know Dermot and would be interested to hear about him. In fact it was Derek who asked me to try and make contact with him before I went to South Africa.

Dermot was very keen to hear about all of you and I know he is equally keen to hear from you. His is a lonely task and a constant battle against impossible odds. The odd line from those who know him, even on a postcard (of Lakeland please), would be welcomed very much by him. Better still, if anyone ever has the time (and money) to visit him, he has promised some spectacular mountaineering in Lesotho. I certainly would be delighted to go there again, so I'll wait and see what offers come my way!

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Whilst typing out Peter's excellent article the thought struck me that members may be interested in contacting members living abroad. So for those who know them I have supplied all their names and addresses. DWP.

Rev.F.Barber, Colegio Ingles, Calle Don Sancho, Vallalolid 47005  
Spain.

Michael Black, 2244 Lola, URB,La Marina, E 03194, Alicante Spain.

Adrian Crook, Aalije Noordewierstr 63, 2551 SC, The Hague Holland

A.C. Fasnacht, 22 Tingira Road, Blackmans Way, Tasmania, 7152

Rev P.Kilgarriff, Ven.Collegio Inglese, Via de Monserrato,45  
00186 Roma

Rev.D.Mills, P.O.Box 77 Mamelodi 1010, South Africa.

Frank Pearson, Institute of Foreign Languages, P.R.China, 510421

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## CHAMONIX 1991 - A brief record of some of the activities.

### Dot Wood

Sunday	4th August.	Walked up Le Brevant. ( Dot and Chris Farrell).
Monday	5th "	Climbed Petit Verte. Chris and Dot, Paul Cooney and Derek Price, Mike and Jean Lomas
Tuesday	6th "	Walked up Aig. des Posettes, round to Col de Balme and across to the Albert Premier hut and down to Le Tour with Ann Wallace, Wilf Charnley, Bill Mitton and Arthur Daniels. Chris, Derek, John Hope, Paul Cooney, Peter McHale, Mike and Jean Lomas Mont Blanc du Tacul from Aig Du Midi.
Wednesday	7th "	Up to the Covercle Hut with Arthur and Chris. Big storm that night.
Thursday	8th "	Walked across the Talefre Glacier, descended Le Pierre a Berenger to the Leschaux Glacier and then down the Mer de Glace to Montenver and down to Chamonix. Very wet and stormy.
Friday	9th "	Walked up to the Tete Rouse hut with Chris.
Saturday	10th "	Did the Dome du Gouter, up to the Valot Hut on Mont Blanc and descended to Cham. via the Grand Montets Glacier.
Monday	12th "	Up to the Albert Premier Hut with Arthur Jim Cooper, Tom Walkington, Dave Linney, and Dave Armstrong.
Tuesday	13th "	Did the North and South summits of Aig. du Tour with the above group.
Wednesday	14th "	Climbed the Index with Jim Cooper and Roy Buffey.

Other climbs and walks achieved by other members in Chamonix are too numerous to record in detail.



## THE LONG WALK 1991

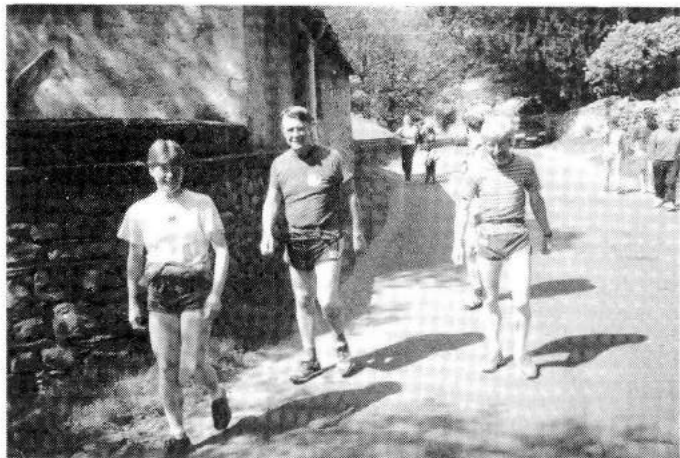
Alan Kenny

It has been traditional for a number of years for the Old County Tops to be the route for the Long Walk from Bishop's Scale. As the club now organises this as an annual event, for teams of two, each June, it was thought that perhaps an alternative route could be tried.

With this in mind the intention was to try and devise a route that was challenging, to both walkers and runners, and at the same time visiting some of the less frequented areas of the lakes. The result was an attempt to traverse all the fells in Wainwright's book of the Central Fells, starting and finishing at Bishop's Scale. The runners would visit all 27 tops, and the walkers 5 less with a corresponding reduction in distance.

By its very nature it was a somewhat contrived route; no more so than at the start where the gaining of Loughrigg, Helm Crag and Steel Fell involved a certain amount of step retracing up and down the ridges. The route became more logical after this and we were rewarded with reasonably good dry ground for the notoriously boggy area between Ullscarf and the A591. A very welcome "brewstop" was provided by Ted and Kath Southworth. Watendlath was our other refreshment stop manned by Roy and Dorothy Buffey, Gordon Cooney and Wilf Charnley. Those who continued past here will not easily forget the ascent of Eagle Crag from Greenup Gill. What it lacked in height it more than compensated for by its steepness.

As is usual on these events an excellent meal awaited us on our arrival back at Bishop's Scale. Many thanks to all who helped. The weather stayed fine throughout the day although without much sun. In retrospect, the route could probably have been improved upon, but most people seemed to enjoy themselves anyway.



## CLUB FELL RACE

Pos.	Name	Time	Handicap	Hand/Time	Coursetime	Out By
1	Dorothy Buffey	1.16.33	-47	30.27	30 min	27 sec
2	Leo Pollard	41.59	-11.30	30.29	"	29 sec
3	Neil Hodgkinson	42.09	-13	29.09	"	51 sec
4	Derek Price	42.53	-12	30.53	"	53 sec
5	Danny Hope	35.06	-6	29.06	"	54 sec
6	Roy Buffey	43.17	-15.30	27.47	"	2.13 sec
7	Arthur Daniels	38.55	12	26.55	"	3.55 sec
8	Dot Wood	1.05.33	-39	25.53	"	4.07 sec
9	Mike Lomas	47.01	12.05	34.04	"	4.56 sec
10	Bert Heyes	53.10	15	38.10	Injury	8.10 sec

## CLUB BIATHLON

Something to work up a thirst on the afternoon of the Club dinner. Most members seem to have a natural thirst as only 5 started.

The start was Bishop's Scale.

Competitors went off at 2 minute intervals cycling down towards Elterwater, past the Britannia towards Colwith, past the Three Shires and up to the car park at Blea Tarn. The bikes were parked here and kindly looked after by Alan Kenny. The running section was up the side of Blea Tarn and on to Blisco, then returning from the summit the same way. From Blea Tarn car park to Bishop's Scale. (Past both D.G.Hotels).

A good day out with a slight covering of snow on the tops and thirsts well quenched later in the evening.

## Positions:

John Hope	1.40 18
Peter Dowker	1.31 14
Bill Mitton	1.38 08
Clare Kenny	1.38 11
Paul Cooney	1.40 18

## ACHILLE RATTI FELLRUNNING CHAMPIONSHIP - 1991 - 1992

	VENUE	DISTANCE	DATE	ENTRY
1	Winter Hill	Medium	24th November 1991	Pre.
2	Wansfell	Short	27th December 1991	On day
3	Half Tour of Pendle	Medium	15th February 1992	8th Feb
4	Calder Valley	Long	29th February	" On Day
5	Ilkley Moor	Short	8th March	" "
6	Black Combe	Medium	15th March	" "
7	Gisborough Moor	Medium	29th March	" 2nd Mar
8	Coniston	Medium	2nd May	" 18th Apr
9	Fairfield	Medium	17th May	" On Day
10	Royal Dockray	Long	20th June	" "
11	Moel Siabod	Medium	18th July	" "
12	Borrowdale	Long	1st August	" "
13	Green Bell	Short	22nd August	" "
14	Cafod Grisedale	Long	5th September	" "
15	Three Shires	Long	19th September	" 12th Sep
16	Club Fell Race	Short	20th September	" On Day
17	Langdale	Long	10th October	" 30th Sep
18	Dunnerdale	Short	7th October	" On Day

Best three from each distance. Details from FRA fixture book.

Arthur Daniels chooses next years 1991-93 races, after which the races will be chosen by a committee of runners.

*This article was received after the rest had gone to press, hence it is not included in the contents on page 1. Page numbering is also changed.*

Tarka Kang Base Camp, 15,500ft.  
up the west bank of the west  
Annapurna Glacier.  
Cold as charity, with driving  
snow sliding down the tent.  
27th October, 1991.

Keith Foster.

As you can see from the address, I'm sat in my tent and I'm bored. The weather gets worse, daily. We are awaiting porters to carry our equipment out. They should be here in two days, by which time, if its still snowing like this, it will be rather exciting descending with avalanches thundering past us. Ho hum! It breaks my heart to say, that we didn't reach the summit of the mountain.

As we flew out from Heathrow, a reduced team of four, my main man and climbing partner was having his spleen removed. Poor Richard. Not to worry, we were still strong enough to do it.

We left Kathmandu and after a 226km, 20 hour bus journey on the worst mountain track of a main highway, we arrived in Nepal's second largest city, Pokhara. We met up with our 22 porters and they promptly went on strike, even before they had been signed up! This was not a good omen. One hour later, the dispute duly settled we set off. The porters had haggled a deal, nine days pay for a four day walk in, on a job and finish basis, getting 100rp (£1.20) per day, not a good rate even by Nepali standards, and they had to buy their own food out of this. A standard load for a porter is 25-30kg, but two of our porters took double loads and double pay, the heaviest load at 48kg being our high altitude food.

Our private bus sped out of Pokhara, laying smoke like a minesweeper. A newly built Chinese road, the Chinese engineer ranting and raving, still working on it, refused to let us pass. After seeing so much foreign aid squandered on the King's Palace, and poured into his own and his Ministers' bank accounts, China will now only supply labour and machinery, supervising any money spent, and retaining ownership of the dams and roads, etc., that they build. This particular road is a bit sinister, as along with other roads under construction, it will eventually reach up to the Tibetan border. India is not very happy about these developments, but is powerless. Nepal plays India off against China and vice-versa, extracting as much aid as possible from each. However, with the sterling help of our Liaison Officer, we got through.



We arrive at our trek start and it pours down. A tropical rainstorm if ever, so its into the motorway services, an adjacent roadside shack, for double mountains of egg-fried rice. The rain stops, so we waddle after the porters, bellies bursting; an auspicious start to the trek in. Up through steep-sided rain forests and out onto the lush, green rice terraces, steaming in the warm, fresh, after-rain air and sunshine. The first nights camp is in a grotty field, by a grotty house in a grotty village. Nothing is clean, apart from maybe the American Peace Corps workers, importantly saving the world, righteous in their US superiority. It pours down all night, the moat around the tent doesn't work, and everything is damp. EEK! I wake up in a hurry, to my great shock and horror, about twelve brown, black, white and red striped leeches, two or three inches long are puffing frantically and rapidly towards me. All sense of decorum having fled, I stand up and dress in one fast, fluid motion. The leeches are all along the trail, which alternates between villages, rice-terraces and jungle. An HGV porter with a massive load, forces an Aussie guy off the trail and into the jungle, but not me, no fear. The Aussie steps back onto the trail with a fat five inch leech on his leg, which he struggles to tear off. Yeuk! That is it, I've finally found me a phobia. I mince off, smack down the middle of the path, checking my trainers every few steps for unwanted boarders. My diligence pays off, by the time we leave leech country, its Keith 4 leeches nil. If it rains on the trek out, I'm hiring porters to carry me.

Our Liaison Officer is called Ghirimi, and soon earns himself the name of Grim. He is a mark 1, typical, universal, government bureaucrat and they can be found in any country. The trouble is that in most countries the Mark 1 was superceded in about 1950,

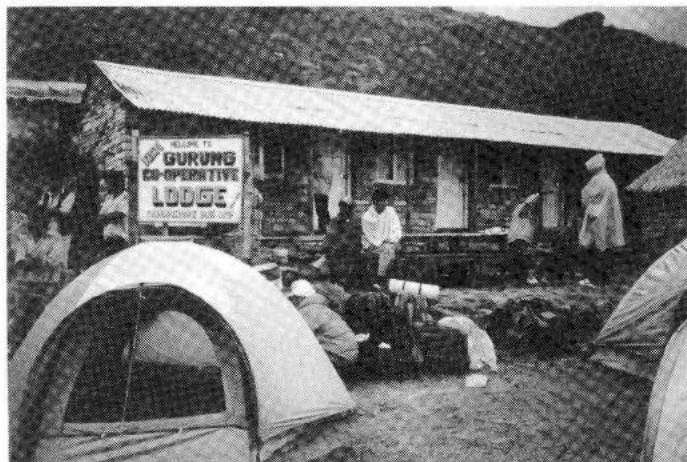
and some countries are up to the Mark 12 model. This makes Grim well obsolete, but he doesn't know it, which makes him a pain in the neck to us and the Nepalis alike. He is a walking rule book, and a greaseball to boot. As per regulations, he sees me as the man in charge, and himself as my adviser and confidant, dogging my every footstep, rambling on ceaselessly, a talking rule book which often repeats itself. As we walk along he casually mentions in broken English, that we are to pay him 500rp per day (£6), a fortune in Nepali terms. Having already paid the agent in Kathmandu several hundred American dollars for his wages and equipment allowance, I carefully blow my top. After a quick rant and rave, he becomes worried that his attempted scam has ruined our relationship. He turns on the grease promptly, I become like his own; his brother, his soulmate and he wants to show me the lights of Pokhara on our return, for my delight. "To see guut plaishees with enice, lovvverlie Nepali egirilies". His eyes are like saucers and he slavers while he tells me this; dribbling he draws female shapes in the air with his hands. In my very best Northern English accent I tell him "I don't do that sort of thing", and walk off leaving him bemused, wondering where he'd gone wrong and how we were to get back on good terms. Grim had already told me that he was very unlucky to be only a Section Leader, when all his family were at least Divisional Leaders. Maybe he was implying that his family had plenty of clout to ensure decent jobs, but even with this advantage, bad luck hasn't held him back, the man is a fool. The two highest castes in Nepal are the Bramin And the Chietri, and these make up 99% of the government. Grim is a Bramin.

At the place we leave the main trail, I tell Grim about steep rock walls and massive avalanches sweeping the trail at regular intervals, and about the seventeen trekkers recently swept to their death. He takes it all in, eyes staring, a cold sweat breaks out across his forehead, his adams apple moves up and down like a ping-pong ball. The other three wandered away, unable to keep a straight face. I bit my tongue while his head oscillates from side to side in true indecision, "Maybe, maybe it is better I am stopping here," he whispers. What a good idea I cry.....

The next day is an early start for the trek to base camp. As ever the breakfast table is laid replete with clean table cloth, in true style of the English Raj. It is embarrassing, but to make it worse, directly behind and not three feet away, are our twenty two porters, shivering on the porch of a lodge, after a night out in sub-zero temperatures. They are dressed in flip-flops, thin cotton trousers or shorts and shirt, each with a thin cotton blanket. The knocking of knees and the chattering of teeth get to us, so they get a large pan full of toast, and then they decide to strike. There are three ringleaders and the rest are like' chaff on the wind, constantly arguing and changing their minds. Fed up I walk to Old Machupuchars Base Camp Lodge, owned and run by O.B. Gurung, a retired British army Gurka with mean eyes that tell you he can split a fly at 60 paces with a kukri knife, he makes Clint Eastwood's meanest glare look like Bambi's. He is the headman of the area and well respected, a King in his own small patch of Nepal, I had met Obie several times before and to my delight he remembered my last visit. After explaining our problem to him, Obie sorted the porters out with a few sharp words, the strike is over and we head on through



the gorge entrance to the Annapurna Sanctuary, wading glacier rivers coming from the South Annapurna Glacier snout a few hundred yards away.



At Obie's insistence I fix a rope hand rail for the porters along a two foot wide ledge with a sixty foot rope to a steep, grassy slope and raging glacial torrent. The porters arrive and ignoring the hand rail, squeeze past me. I feel like kicking them off the ledge. Their loads are lowered on a rope way, six porters queue to pass me their loads, behind them is Grim, who wants to see where we are going. In his broken English he shouts, "Mr. Keith, Mr. Keith I am frite now, I not liking here, I must go down." He tries to climb over six smirking porters, I conjure a vision of the column in the Kathmandu Times, High Magazine and a hotspot at the front of the quarter acre desk at the Nepali Ministry, explaining how their Liaison Officer fell to his death. I fix a harness round him and declare him trussed like a chicken. Obie and the porters howl laughing, enjoying it enormously. Next a load falls down the cliff, the medical kit is spread everywhere and Kareem jumps down to organise its collection, whilst I curse and rant at the head porter who has dropped it. Obie nods sage approval and gets his twopenny worth in too. The first porters down, head off up the wrong valley and Kareem comes to the rescue again, running after them. Running at 14,00ft is no mean feat, like running up Mont Blanc. All this means we cannot make our intended base camp, but have to stop lower down. The porters are paid off, and then hang about and ask if we will rehire them to carry up to the intended base-camp. "Cheeky So and So's", seems to be well understood, and they leave and go down. Two days of load carrying ensues, only a mile and a half but 2,000ft further up the mountain. My new freebee 80 lr rucsac is packed full and weighs about 40kgs, I wish they had given me a 50 lr instead, but the pay off for all this effort is that I develop sturdy legs and rib-cracking lungs.

Basecamp is below some big avalanche slopes, which in a ski resort would be very fast black runs, but these are surmounted by

the 200ft high snout of the hanging glacier below 19500ft Tent Peak. The camp is protected by a rocky ridge culminating in a 50ft cliff directly behind the tents which was soon climbed from end to end, and in every direction. Surrounded by high mountains of 7,000m, there is the constant thunder and crash of avalanche, seracs collapsing on the glaciers and stonefall. In the mornings we lie in our sleeping bag cocoons until the sun hits the camp at 7.42am, we appear like lizards escaping the drip, drip of melting ice dome formed from the condensation of our breath, freezing during the -15c starlit night.

We had arrived in Kathmandu with a team of four climbers, three experienced alpinists and my girl-friends brother, Kareem, a graphic designer from London who designed the T-shirts, a very keen novice. Ignorance is bliss! Dot Wood our senior member, very experienced. Simon Edgecombe our Doctor, with several alpine seasons and a Bhutan expedition behind him and then of course me. Our problems began at the start of the walk in, Kareem had picked up a virulent bug, didn't complain, got on with his cold and had recovered by the time we were nearing base-camp. The rest of us all caught the cold, including the four Nepali staff. Simon was quite unwell, depressed, negative and argumentative which was all put down to his bad cold. Dot was next and became quite ill, so that when we were heading through the gorge, they were both left dying in Obie's lodge. This left the rope fixing and running of the rope slide to myself, ably helped by Kareem. By the time the invalids arrived at base camp, Simon is better and load carrying, but poor Dot developed bronchial pneumonia and had to be helped back to Obie's by Simon, taking several days to descend what would normally have taken a few hours. Dot refused to be carried down, frightened that we'd both fall.

Down to a team of three, all is still possible, just. By Simon's return from Obie's we have carried all the equipment, tents and food to the dumpsite. Simon, however, is still very negative, I am totally bemused. In a two day stomp we carry up camp 1 at 5,500m, half way up the glacier, below a long icefall which leads to the col between Fluted Peak on the left and Tarka Kang on the right, at 6,000m where we plan to have camp 2, before ascending the shoulder to camp 3 at about 7,000m just over a band at the start of a long, ridge traverse, to the summit at 7,200m. There were three possible routes, the above being the most likely, but a variation would have been to traverse the flanks of Fluted Peak. This was amazingly devoid of snow or ice considering the early winter season, and is frequently swept by stonefall. The most direct and challenging route, was the superb rocky south ridge, which unfortunately was across the glacier, and its lower section is very open with large seracs and crevasses big enough to drop a bus in. This left the first route as the safest, the most dangerous part being the route through the glacier, and this appeared safe, non-technical and straight forward. After worrying so much about having to find an easy route, particularly with such a small team, I am absolutely delighted, we should be able to climb it. However Simon is distinctly unhappy. My disappointment, frustration and anger know no bounds. Whilst still in England, I had suggested recruiting two new members to replace Richard and Rachel, or maybe employ a climbing Sherpa. Simon had adamantly rejected

these ideas as unnecessary, we climb well together and are a good team. I had thought I'd have Dot too, but she is very ill and out of action. This is the most disappointing moment of my life, and long may it remain so. All the hard work in England and Nepal, the £2,000 expense all wasted. Poor Kareem didn't know who to believe, and then to my relief, two Americans appeared, descending through the glacier and they confirmed my thoughts. "Sure the icefall is safe, no problems, a gentle rock ramp leads up to the col." To no avail, Simon still won't climb the mountain. Utterly devastated, its back to base camp where I try to persuade the two guys from Whitefish, Montana to join me in an attempt. They are tempted, but burnt out after a week at altitude, having just failed to reach the summit of Fluted Peak, and had an epic descent in the dark.

Poor Kareem, disappointed, treks out early to see some of Nepal before heading back to home and work. Myself and my ex-climbing partner wait for the porters to come and trek out. I'm so anger ridden I make a solo attempt, carrying 50kg of twelve days food, fuel and equipment up to camp 1, before admitting to myself that I have not enough time. I would be descending three or four days after the porters would have left base camp. This, in combination with the unsettled weather, and me being fond of living, not fancying traversing the glacier on my own, led to turning back. I had also promised Andy, my girlfriend, and my Ma, that I wouldn't do anything daft like soloing.

We still had 36 days of high altitude food left. I took my share to the Everest region, after I'd joined up with the rest of the Ratti gang when they arrived. I climbed three mountains, Island Peak again, Pokaloe and one up Gokyo, all about 6,000m and then trekked out with Terry Kitching over a 5,800m pass to the restricted Rolwaling Valley, which runs parallel and half a mile from the Tibetan border. But thats another story.

P.S. Dot eventually made it back to Pokhara where she rested in the sun, but was still too ill to travel by road to Kathmandu, so had to fly at great expense instead. After three weeks rest and recuperation in Kathmandu she came to Island Peak with us all and climbed it, but thats for her to tell.

