

# ACHILLE RATTI CLIMBING CLUB



1998  
JOURNAL

**ACHILLE RATTI CLIMBING CLUB**

**President** Rt.Rev.Francis Slattery, M.A.

**Chaplain** Rev.Stephen Ashton

**TRUSTEES**

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## 1998 JOURNAL

### INTRODUCTION

1998 will be remembered as a rather damp year, the best of the weather coming in the spring and autumn. Many of the clubs activities suffered and were down in numbers. The wind and rain in the summer months probably being responsible for most of this. Nevertheless, the 'grapevine' tells that still a lot of climbing and walking activities took place.

The death of Jim Cooper, former Club Treasurer, and within a week, Bernard Margiotta, came as a shock to many members. Both Jim and Bernard had been stalwart members, especially in the 60's and 70's when the Club was expanding its membership and fund raising activities outside of the Lake District were the norm. Jim was Treasurer of the club for several years. Also, the death of our Chaplain, Fr.Frank Hughes was another sad event. His jovial nature was a tonic, nothing seemed to worry him and the memory of the 'Late Fr.Hughes' explaining to people in the chapel at Bishop's Scale why he was the 'Late Fr.Hughes' will stay in our memories for many years to come. May the Lord have mercy on them all and grant them eternal rest.

I have to admit to being disappointed with this years journal. In spite of promises from a number of members to provide reports of their activities, few came to fruition, hence a somewhat limited production. We are all members of a magnificent organisation called the Achille Ratti Climbing Club, with huts in the Lake District and North Wales, and being members of this organisation gives us all a responsibility to partake in and support it's activities including providing information for newsletters and articles for the journal, if we are able. Perhaps the excitement of the Millennium will spur people on this year and hopefully they will support the club a little more. However, many thanks to those members who did send in interesting reports of their activities.

*Please note the details towards the end of the journal referring to the new key pad installed at Bishop's Scale.*

**Derek Price.**

**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at the Chapel Stile Village Hall on  
Saturday, 14<sup>th</sup> November, 1998**

**1..Apologies for Absence** were received from Roy and Dorothy Buffey, Bryony White, Doug Blackett and Mary Metcalf.

**2. Attendance.** 48 members attended the meeting.

**3. 1997 AGM.** The Secretary gave a brief summary of the 1997 meeting.  
**Matters Arising.** None.

**4. Chairman's Report.**

Welcome once again to the ARCC Annual General Meeting. A special thankyou to our President, Monsignor Slattery, for making the effort to attend.

I am aware that these meetings tend to drag on and will therefore confine my report to what I consider to be of interest to the members.

**Club Chaplain.** It is with sadness that I report on the death of Fr. Frank Hughes our Club Chaplain or as he would have rather put it 'the Late Fr.Hughes' and for those of you who may not understand that phrase, he usually arrived late for Mass here in Langdale, having driven over the Struggle from Glenridding to get to here, and would introduce himself to those present in the chapel as the 'Late Fr.Hughes'. He was everyone's idea of a priest, a loveable character, kind and generous but with a very stubborn streak. He had a number of minor accidents whilst travelling over the Struggle to Bishop's Scale in the ice and snow, but refused to listen to any arguments about not coming at all in the winter months. He was a great friend to all of us and will be sadly missed. Many members attended the Diocesan Mass in Kendal and the Funeral Mass at Thorn Lea College Chapel in Bolton. A Memorial Mass will be held in the club chapel tomorrow at approximately 12 noon. All members and guests are welcome to attend.

**1998 Journal.** I have already received a number of articles and hopefully will be receiving a few more in the near future. I still fail to understand why members are so reluctant to send in reports of their activities.

**1999 Meets Card.** The pattern we usually follow is to use corresponding dates from previous years to set an activity. However, we still welcome other members to plan activities but would they please let Alan Kenny know the date and details of any such activity.

**Property in the West.** Last year I reported our interest in a property at Hall Dunnerdale near Seathwaite in the Duddon Valley. Several members viewed the property and there were mixed opinions as to its geographical situation. In the end we were out bid by another party. However it was an interesting exercise since an appeal to members for donations towards the purchase if we were successful, amounted to promises of £12,500 from 120 members.

A couple of months ago we had a look at another property at Santon Bridge and the building, whilst a delightful little cottage, had severe parking problems. Since our visit

the owner has withdrawn it from the market. However, with the help of our President, Monsignor Slattery, we now have a retired builder who lives near Gosforth and who is aware of the kind of property we are looking for, checking any properties which may become available. But as he says, they will be few and far between.

**Club Events.** Most of the events went well but the awful weather we have had this year did effect the numbers involved and two of the major events, the Old Counties Tops Race and the Bishop's Walk were both down on numbers. The latter, in spite of efforts to involve more schools, was very disappointing, with only 119 walkers. Next year we will attempt to put more emphasis on parishes and perhaps try to include the families.

**Around the Huts.** Whilst leaving the Hut Wardens to give their detailed reports an over view of the huts will give some idea of the developments and improvements.

**Beckstones.** A couple of break-ins caused some concern, hence the request for users to pay by cheque. This is a practise we would like to follow in all the huts as it means less cash lying around and makes it much easier for the wardens.

**Bishop's Scale.** Members who have visited this year are aware of the improvements being carried out and I will leave it to Arthur Daniels to elaborate on them. The sad loss to us because of Father Frank Hughes's illness, is the Saturday evening Mass in the chapel. There is no chance of this being changed for this winter and whether we can negotiate something for next summer is in the air at the moment.

**Dunmail.** The hut is looking well with its improvements and we had a very successful Long Walk there in May.

**Tyn Twr.** A number of improvements to the hut have been agreed with a local builder. Mainly repairs to the existing property and some updating inside the hut.

**Winter Meet 1999 at the Kintail Outdoor Centre - 5<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> March.** The cost of the accommodation is £35.00 per person per week. All interested parties contact Ben Carter.

Finally, regarding Fr.Hughes's replacement. I have written to the Bishop suggesting the name of a young priest from the Lancaster Diocese who also happens to be a member of the club, and I am happy to report that the Bishop gave his permission for me to approach Fr.Stephen Ashton. Fr.Ashton is a keen walker and known to many who attend the Beckstones Hut. He has accepted the invitation to take on the role of Club Chaplin.

Once again I would like to publicly thank the M/C for their support throughout the year. May I also thank my wife Margaret for her patience, help and encouragement and for putting up with my moans and groans.

**5. Secretary's Report.**

A few things to mention first.

a) Vic Gregg who has managed the land at Bishop's Scale for many years, has now had to retire to look after his sick wife. His place will be taken by Hughie Parker and a formal contract will be drawn up with him.

b) Paraplegics: the BMC has asked for Clubs to be conscious of the needs of climbers/mountaineers who may have been or are incapacitated in some way and if there were any clubs huts that would be suitable. Joyce has put Beckstones forward as suitable accommodation.

c) There has been a suggestion of changing the Club title from ARCC to ARMC, Achille Ratti Mountaineering Club, but after some discussion it was considered best to leave it as it is.

I have had a lot of correspondence from the BMC and one of the main concerns this year that they have been fighting is the Access to the Open Countryside. The Government's consultation document on this has now reached its critical final stages. Michael Meacher is firmly behind the Labour Party's manifesto pledge to increase access but there are many organisations who want these proposals watered down. So the BMC have asked all affiliated Clubs to write to their local MP, which I have duly done and have just received an explanatory letter which states that the principle of greater access is not negotiable. If they cannot achieve the objectives by voluntary means, then they will legislate to fulfil them. So we have to wait and see if they are faithful to their word.

#### The Question of the Millennium.

I have received a number of suggestions, some of which have been discussed by the M/C, some of which need further discussion, here they are:

a) A Mass on Scafell at 9.30 am. On Sunday, July 16<sup>th</sup>, 2000 to coincide with the Mass that was said there by the Bishop 60 years ago. There is a picture of it in the lounge at Bishop's Scale. It was thought that it would be impractical to have it on Scafell Pike but a special Mass for the Millennium could be celebrated if not in the Chapel, then in the field behind the Chapel.

A discussion and vote was taken on this issue, with more votes in favour of a special Mass in Bishop's Scale but this will need a further scrutiny.

b) Colin Jones wants to organise a special CAFOD Race.

c) A big celebration at Fr. Hughes on the CAFOD Race weekend. This of course was proposed before Fr. Hughes died.

d) Margaret Conroy would like to organise a special Christmas Carol Service/Concert in the Chapel for Christmas 1999.

e) Create a good quality touring display - boards, photos, leaflets, etc., showing the aspects of the Club's history and current activities. This would be toured round the huts and the parishes of the Lakes and Wales where holidaying and out-door types of Catholics and non-Catholics will see it during the Spring and Summer months of 2000. This could increase the Club's public image and attract new Catholic members and thereby enable the non-Catholic membership to grow also.

f) Have a good overhaul of current club information leaflets. It's not easy to tell prospective members much about the club without something to give them to think over.

g) A loosely organised trip to Chamonix in the last two weeks of July and the first two weeks of August 1999.

h) A Fell Runners and Mountain Bikers race still to be arranged.

Many thanks to all those who made any suggestions and any more are most welcome.

#### 6) The Treasurer's Report

A written financial statement and accounts were circulated for the report.

A brief outline of the report follows.

1997/98 Results.

The year as a whole has been reasonably successful, but with a small deficit of £709.51. The credit for another good result should go to the people who have made use of the huts and to the Hut Wardens and their support teams. I suppose the M/C can always claim some responsibility, since we seem to spend time trying to do what we think members want now, and will want in the future. In that context we have continued with a programme of planned maintenance and improvements of the huts. We are also continuing to look into the possibilities of acquiring further properties.

#### The Key Matters

Deficit	£791 (= 2% of turnover)
Accumulated Fund	£54,255 (2 <sup>nd</sup> highest ever)
Turnover	£40,275 (2 <sup>nd</sup> highest ever)
Subscriptions	£11,448 (2 <sup>nd</sup> highest ever)
Hut Fees	£23,415 (4 <sup>th</sup> highest ever)
Hut Results:	

Surplus	£	Deficit	£
Dunmail	2144	Beckstones	751
		Bishop's Scale	5640
		Tyn Twr	589

I think the Hut Wardens and their support teams are continuing to do a splendid job, both for everyone who uses the huts and the membership in general.

#### Long term Trends

In 11 years 87/88 to 97/98 the average of energy/hut fees = 28%

Over the past 10 years there have been some wide fluctuations

7 years with a surplus totalling £56,269

3 years with a deficit totalling £14,642

Net £41,627

Yearly average £4163 credit

The Club balance increased over the last 10 years from £21,076 to £54,255 (157%).

Whilst having the level of accumulated funds is a useful safeguard as a healthy working balance, it needs to be borne in mind the under-lying purpose of these funds is to:

A. Be available to meet any essential work costs or other expenditure immediately.

B. Assist with the financing of the Club's medium and longer term plans and objectives.

C. Hopefully contribute towards the acquisition of further club huts.

**Major Heads of Account:** Comparison 96/97 and 97/98

Income	Down	10.7% )	
Expenditure	Up	3% )	This is not a good combination
Subscriptions	Down	2%	
Hut Fees	Down	2%	
Bank Interest	Up	6.2%	(Steps taken to improve returns on funds at the bank.

There followed a detailed account of individual items including rates, water rates, repairs and maintenance, special events, administration costs, BMC subs and insurance.

**Huts**

Over the past 8 years.

4 huts by 8 years = 32 results.	Deficits 19	Surpluses 13
	£53,989	£18,707
	Net £35,282 Dr.	

Hut Fees are £23,415 (4<sup>th</sup> highest ever)

**Auditor**

The Club accounts for 96/97 have been audited and the auditor's report was considered and accepted by the M/C in July 98. Brian Cheetham is willing to continue as auditor for the Club.

**VAT**

The threshold determined by the Chancellor at which point we would have to register for VAT is from 1 .4 .98, £50,000. The total turnover this year of £40,275 can be reduced by £11,448 subs which are not subject to VAT, to an amended turnover of £28,827 happily well under the £50,000 limit.

**General Comments**

Reserves.

Our reserves last year reached their highest ever level. The last 12 months have seen a small deficit and our reserves have fallen back to exactly the same level as 96/97.

Charges.

Subs: 1998 increased from £23 to £25

Hut Fees 1998 increased from £2.50 to £3.00

In the current year the hut fees at £23,414 exceeded the variable running costs of the huts of £22,367. Therefore the huts contributed £1047 towards the running costs of the club. I believe to achieve our longer term objectives I think it will be sensible to look at more frequent increases. The last two increases were four and five years apart. I think a cycle of increases at two, or a maximum of three years, would be more appropriate, depending on other factors.

If we want to hang on to what we currently have, and to maintain it, we have to pay for it. If we have genuine ambitions to develop and/or expand it is essential to build some additional income to help in the furnishing of any developments. That is partly why I am planning for the more regular increase in subs and hut fees. So please look

on this idea as a positive approach to our intentions to continue to develop, which is what I am sure the majority of members want.

Mike was asked about VAT refund of £6500 in 96/97 and he explained that it was just a one off payment. He also is looking into a dishonoured cheque of £120 and is following it up.

**7. Membership Secretary's Report**

The membership in October 1998 was 680. This includes full, life and graduate members. The membership of the Club has risen slowly. Out of 122 Life Members 53 have agreed to pay the BMC subscription. More and more full members are opting to pay the annual subscription by Direct Debit. Nev. Thanked his wife for all the help and assistance she has given him throughout the year.

**8 Hut Warden's Reports**

**Bishop's Scale (Warden Arthur Daniels)**

Arthur pointed out that there had been a fall of 6% in the use of the hut and could only put it down to poor weather throughout most of 1998. The work started previously on Bishop's scale will continue and he will continue to update it in accordance with members wishes as experienced through the M/C.

Derek pointed out that at Langdale Arthur had found a discrepancy between the number of members staying and the amount of money paid. He also found this at Tyn Twr.

**Beckstones (Warden Joyce Kent)**

At Christmas 1997 the gales cut the electricity to the hut and Christmas dinner was cooked on an open fire.

The woodburner, which was a gift from a friend of Terry Kitchens, has been fitted by Terry.

The working weekend was attended by 12 members and 4 guests. The ceiling in the lounge was attended to and the wall was cemented, and the place generally spruced up. Ben and Sue Carter went back two weeks later to finish off the pantry.

There had been two break-ins during the year with money and a few items being stolen. The payment by cheque has eased the problem of money being in the hut. The hut fees have all come from members and guests with no clubs using the hut. The Long Walk for 1999 will take place from Beckstones and Joyce looks forward to seeing as many as possible there.

**Dunmail (Warden David Ogden)**

David reported that last year the high cost improvements are complete for the present. During the last 12 months use of the hut has been good with few free weekends. Bookings for next year also look healthy. General maintenance work has moved on. Significant improvements completed include: construction of a better path to the front door, installation of a new cooker, provision of a new stainless steel kitchen table, replacement of the kitchen sink, provision of new mattress covers.

Jobs that need to be done in the coming year include: treatment of woodworm, replacement of the remaining wooden kitchen work top and replacement of lounge furniture.

We have the traditional trouble with some visitors who do not like to clean up but in general hut users look after the place very well.

I would like to thank, on your behalf, my wife Joan for all the work she does to handle the bookings,

Mike Crawford who has helped me through the year and stood in as warden during the summer when I was on holiday,

Dave Hugill whom I have not needed to call on much this year and Terry Kitchen who looks in when he is passing, and all those members who turned up for the work weekend.

### **Tyn Twr (Warden Anne Wallace)**

The electrical supply and appliances were inspected last autumn and the two cookers were either re-wired or replaced.

When George Partridge became Maintenance Officer we met at the hut and had a good look around, and fixed one or two things. Alan, the builder, did other jobs like fixing slates, repairing window frames, securing the bike shed. George and myself put a rail across the window by the men's stairs to prevent children from tripping and going into the window.

During the year the builders' yard was sold to Nick (who?). He is putting 4 dwellings there. When I last spoke to him he had not decided whether to let them out as holiday homes or have them as permanent dwellings. He also wanted to buy Frank's house in order to live there himself. If people are living next to us, it should increase security at the hut.

There is a mystery as to why the vacuum cleaner has left home. The hoses and attachments are there but not the machine. I have ordered a replacement.

We had a Working Weekend and bonfire. Thanks to the 20 people who turned up to give the hut and grounds a good clean and tidy up. Bolts were fixed in the bike shed. A chain was purchased and will be fixed so that it can be threaded through bike frames for security.

### **9. Election of Officers and Ordinary Committee Members**

Treasurer	Mike Lomas	prop. Austin Guilfoyle	sec. Dot Wood
Membership Secretary	Nev Haigh	prop. Derek Price	sec. Faz Faraday
Ordinary Member	Miriam Warren	prop. Tony McHale	sec. Arthur Daniels
Ordinary Member	Faz Faraday	prop. Tony McHale	sec. Mike Lomas

### **10. Any Other Business**

Peter McHale asked about the proposal of Associate Membership for those who had been on the waiting list for a long time. Derek pointed out that until we got a full reply from Life Members we cannot work out accurately the % ratio of R.C. to non-R.C. members. Is Associate Membership a 2nd class membership? Jim Cooper suggested a non-voting membership? Dave Ogden warned that it needs a lot of careful thinking, all members must be equal. The waiting non-R.C. members, Joyce Kent observed, would like to join as any membership. Derek pointed out all the difficulties

of a non-R.C. membership that he has encountered. The problem will arise when we work out how many life-members there still are.

The security lock at Bishop's Scale cannot be implemented until everyone knows the number combination which it is proposed will be sent out annually with the membership card.

Margaret Conroy would like the key discussion points of the M/C to be put in the quarterly newsletter to let members know what has been discussed. There was a vote of thanks from Dot Wood to the retiring ordinary member, Tony McHale.

Derek wants the money collected from the raffle at the dinner dance to go to the Cafod Central America Crisis fund and also there will be a special collection at the Mass at the hut tomorrow (Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> November) for the same cause. *(I am happy to report that £500 was raised from the raffle and the collection - many thanks to all - DWP)*

It was suggested that a different time for the AGM be arranged and a new venue for the dinner and the AGM be sort. Much debate followed. Peter McHale had been shown around the extension to the New Dungeon Ghyll Hotel, and he thought that it looked really good and could accommodate the Club in the future if we considered it suitable. *(A later examination of the premises suggested that the dining facilities would not accommodate the numbers we normally have at the dinner).*

Derek had taken on board the complaints last year from 3 or 4 people regarding a change of venue for the dinner from the Waterhead Hotel. A different location was suggested - even Blackpool was mentioned - but Micky Pooler pointed out that that the Lakes was the best compromise. Derek said that the attendance at AGM's in Preston had been falling and the present arrangement of AGM and Annual Dinner on the same day in the Lakes had shown higher attendance at both. He also mentioned that he and Alan Kenny had looked at a total of six other hotels in the area and only one, the Prince of Wales in Grasmere, could accommodate our numbers but these prices would have put tickets in the region of £25/£26 which was considered too expensive, particularly when most members are happy with the Waterhead.

Margaret Conroy proposed a vote of thanks to the Management Committee and Hut Wardens.

The meeting closed at 3.00pm.

**THE CRAG "X" FILES**  
(or New Routing for Bumblies)

**Nick Smith**

Here is a dilemma. You are a middle grade climber with a sense of adventure. You eschew the quick fix, super vertical world of the super safe, quick clipped sports climber. You aspire to exploring unclimbed cliffs in a mountain environment using where possible the old ethics of on sight leader cleaned and leader protected ascent. In short the most fun a sub extreme leader can have. But here's the rub. 100 years of climbing history has picked the carcass clean. If you want a new route in England or Wales you had better be leading E5 or above and have special knowledge of where "the gaps" are.

But it doesn't have to be like this! And you don't have to go to far flung corners of the globe to satisfy your pioneering urges. Scotland has acres of unclimbed rock, some of it surprisingly accessible, and all it takes is a little imagination to ferret out some very good routes. And before you complain at the tedious hours of driving involved to reach anywhere with virgin rock not to mention the epic walk-ins let me tell you of a place with ample scope for new routing in spectacular surroundings only three hours drive from Penrith and one hours walk from the car to the crags.

The area known as the Arrochar Alps is a wee gem. Nestling between the heads of Loch Fyne and Loch Long, just west of Loch Lomond, it is an exciting landscape of rocky peaks and dark waters, a miniature wilderness yet less than an hours drive from Glasgow. Its principal though by no means highest peak, the Cobbler, has been an important climbing venue from the dawn of the sport to the present day (Garry Latter's much practised 1995 route Dalriada E8 6c awaits its first on-sight ascent) but in the rest of the district development has been at best sporadic. Most climbers, especially those from south of the border, rush past to Glen Coe without even noticing the tantalising glimpse of the cobbler from the A82 at Tarbet. But I've been walking and climbing regularly here since I first moved to Glasgow in 1991 and am thankful for these forgotten hills where, with the possible exception of that most famous triple crested summit, there is a lack of crowds and a surplus of unclimbed rock. Take Beinn Narnain for example. The hill achieves Munro status, but how many ascensionists have noticed the clean 100 foot buttress only yards from the main path below the spearhead arete? However I'm getting ahead of myself.

For several years I was content to tick the Cobbler classics; Recess Route, Punster's Crack, Wither Wether, Gladiator's Groove, there was little need to look further. But eventually my curiosity was aroused by the surrounding hills and I persuaded a reluctant climbing partner to forsake his favourite industrial belt quarry and tread the snow suckled saxifrage to the summit of Ben Donich. The way is steep but height is quickly gained and soon we were rock hopping across the boulder field below the crags which are strung out below the ridge like a gritstone edge. The metaphor is worth pursuing for the rock throughout this region is mica schist which is sedimentary in origin and, though metamorphosed by pressure and folded into wild contortions, it outcrops regularly and forms crags which are rarely more than 40 metres high. These can vary according to the dip of the strata from delicate slabs to juggy overhangs and,

where faulted, supplying cracks of all types from finger seam to off-width and chimney.

Our climb that day was a particularly awkward off width called Voulez Vous and on our return from it we pondered why there were so few routes here, only five in the current guidebook. The existing routes were clearly good, if a little under graded, but then perhaps we were only the second ascensionists. Soon I was back with another partner. The snow which lay below the crags on my last visit had largely melted but the crags themselves were very wet and climbing was clearly not an option. So while my friend walked to the summit I threw a rope down the prosaically named and apparent unclimbed Number Five Buttress. Although the rope hung free of the crag for much of its height a brief inspection suggested that it would go and that the steepest section was protectable. I would be back.

It quickly became clear that one of the biggest obstacles to new routing is not the availability of rock but the conscription of willing seconds who's job involves humping heavy packs uphill and then standing around for hours in the cold holding ropes while having clods of earth and rocks dropped on them. However another climbing partner was press-ganged into service and one evening in late July 1995 my first Scottish new route was climbed. I topped out just as it was getting dark and the first spots of rain were falling. My second was unable to follow in the conditions so I stripped the route on abseil and we struck off the hill just in time to make last orders in Arrochar village. A few weeks later I returned to the scene with yet another two climbers who would repeat the route (by now called Night on the Tiles) with me to confirm its grade and quality and then make the first of a neighbouring corner system.

Summer soon gave way to autumn and through the dark months I scoured the maps and guide books for possible sights for new routing. The guide book held the main clues with so many worked crags, but hill walks were diverted into forgotten corries to provide the essential evidence on the ground. Reports that a new guide to the area was in its final stages of completion gave an extra urgency to the proceedings.

Early next spring I made my first visit to Coire an Creagach of Binnein an Fhidleir. The name "corrie of crags" on "the hill of the fiddler" was not lost on me. A number of the existing routes were climbed and at the end of the day an exploratory new route was put up. Later to be described by the guide book writer as "poor climbing and poor protection", "Safari" was an inauspicious start but was to provide the spring board for some thirteen new routes in this corrie climbed by Nigel Warnes and myself with various partners over the next two years. The hill is by no means worked out.

Unlike the north-west facing Ben Donich, the crags of Fhidleir are mostly slabby and quick drying and so can come into condition surprisingly early in the season. Some of the routes were followed by hilarious descents of snow filled gullies in smooth soled rock shoes. The existing routes were concentrated on two principal buttresses but the hillside is covered with crags of various sizes rather like Polldubh in Glen Nevis and on entering the corrie one merely had to pick a crag and then climb it. Although many of these offered only one or two lines, the climbing was often very good indeed. It occurred to me that some routes may have been put up since the old guide by other parties. I contacted the guidebook writer, Tom Prentice, and found only one clash of



### Creag Tharsuinn, Upper Buttress

1998 19 May Firebird\* 35m HVS 5a N J Smith C J Watt

Start up cracked slab of V-Groove Direct to a small roof. Layback steeply left on undercuts into a recess. Up groove above to ledge. Traverse left onto face and climb its left side passing a small overhang on its right and exiting left to a ledge. An easier heathery buttress leads to the top.

1998 24 May Rite of Spring \*\* 30m E3 6a C J Watt N J Smith

Climbs fine crack-line in smooth right wall of open book corner left of Firebird and finishes up the final wall of that route.

\*\*\*\*\*

## THE CAMINO FRANCES TO SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELLA

Joyce Kent

Easter 1998

We left Roncesvalles on the Spanish side of the Pyrenees on a balmy afternoon and rode west. The signpost pointed to Santiago 783km, and I wondered if we would make it.

I first read about the Pilgrim route years ago, and how it had become popular in the middle ages because the Crusades had prevented pilgrims travelling to Jerusalem. The cathedral in Santiago reputedly held relics of St. James and Chaucer's Wife of Bath was one of the first intrepid travellers on the route. Ever since then, peregrinos, with their scallop shell symbols (an old lady in Plockton gave me mine for my journey) have been travelling along the Camino. We cycled, we only had two weeks.

The refugios were good and cheap, not too far apart and it was wonderful. Special meals for peregrinos in restaurants including a bottle of Rioja for less than a fiver. The azure sky was full of wheeling eagles one day, and the red earth, the neatly ordered vineyards, the storks on the church towers, the snow covering distant sierras, and we pedalled and pedalled. We reached Burgos. Father Hughes had asked me to light a candle in Burgos cathedral, as he had spent time there as a young man, and to pray for him and all our club members. A did this and then wandered around and watched two old men preparing the Easter tableaux, drinking red wine out of leather skins and smoking fat cigars as they worked. When I got back to the cathedral my candle had gone out, I hastily relit it.

We were lucky to find accommodation in Leon, all of Spain was there for the Easter Semana Santa processions. Liam and Bill, Irish Mountaineering Club, and myself managed to get the last four attic rooms near the cathedral. It was bitterly cold, the furs were out in force and as I went to find Pete, still on my loaded bike, people pointed, "Lo peregrino," clapped and took my photograph! It was so cold I made a double vest for myself out of my space blanket and wore two hellies at once, I had planned warm, it was Spain. We stood in the frosty air and watched the first processions leave the cathedral. Each of the confraternities wore a different colour, ruby satin, white satin, mauve satin, purple satin, weirdly hooded and masked penitents atoning for their misdeeds, accompanying and carrying the huge pasos, floats of wildly theatrical religious scenes. Trumpets played weird, wailing music, side-drums beat a high note, a soprano in a tall mantilla singing, strange, flamenco-style no words. Children, babes in arms, tall Klu Klux Klan hoods and slit eyes, it lifted the hair on my neck. Easter Saturday the drums started early. I was out in the half dark to the main square where all the balconies were shrouded in black silk and the pavements covered in four inches of wet snow. The penitents in black satin now and many in bare feet, 96 of them to carry enormous, magnificent tableau with a slow, swaying, pachyderm motion round the medieval streets and squares for hours, watched by the immaculately

groomed crowds telling their beads. In the afternoon it was mostly red satin and the hooded, chain-mailed cavalry were superb.

We had to press on, the high pass was blocked with snow and after a long detour we had a brief interlude in the weather, and then it became even worse, a metre of snow at O Cebriero and a long, long, cold 13km descent. Heavy rain and a flooded camino followed, slender swallows swooped low desperately trying to refuel for their journey north, drenched willow warblers sang beautifully in the wet and a cow was wearing a sacking coat for warmth. The combined faiths of all the pilgrims seemed to rise out of the cobbles and help me pedal into the headwind and splosh and push through water.

At last the final hill, Monte del Gozo and a free eight hundred bed refugio. I was so tired, I pedalled so slowly that a Spanish pilgrim pushed me uphill from behind, and we both collapsed laughing on the ground. The next day we never saw the view, it was blocked by mist, and as we loaded up for the last time and left the Mount of Joy the drizzle turned once again to torrential rain and with water seeping down our necks we freewheeled down the hill and pedalled triumphantly into Santiago de Compostella. The Pilgrim's Mass at 12 noon in the cathedral was concelebrated by three priests, the transepts were full of pilgrims, rucksacks piled high by the doors bicycles too. I found it all immensely moving, many pilgrims we met on the way were there, Jean-Marc from Orleans, the four young Majorcan bikers, the Argentinian riders whose horse prints we had followed, Friedhelm aged 58 who walked from Frankfurt and his wife said he had to be home, and I remembered the Norwegians we met drinking red wine sat in a ditch, Liam and Bill, and all the rest, not least the hunky Spaniard who paraded the dorm in his Calvin Kiens.

When I think of it now I am almost moved to tears. The power of it all was enough to turn a raving Wee Free into a devout Roman Catholic. I have to do it again and next time take more time to appreciate the buildings, the people and the history.

At home as I loaded my laundry into the machine I realised just why that huge incense burner, the Botafumeiro which hangs from the gantry in the dome of Santiago Cathedral and takes eight priests to set it swinging is so very necessary. And then in the middle-ages, they didn't just get on a plane, they turned around and walked back again.

## HARDKNOTT PASS

### Tom Brodrick

Some years ago, when living in Cockermonth, I went down to Wasdale to do some sketches of the area and as we had a niece staying with us, I took her along, as that side of the Lakes are new to her. Now Jane was or had been a policewoman and had been known to nick the odd burglar all on her own and wasn't above giving her favourite Uncle a demonstration of her favourite hammer-lock as used on these occasions, when I give her a bit of lip. In other words, pretty sensible, practical and down to earth,

I did my sketches, and we explored Wasdale and then into Eskdale, Had a look at Ratty and then headed towards Hardknott. Jane was suitably impressed by the sight of the road ascending to the summit as we approached the foot, I dispensed the wisdom of age and experience. "If you drive round here yourself" I said in my best oracular manner, "you need to watch the next corner *and* the one after that, if possible. Trouble is, they should allow the car going up to have priority, but most don't, so it's best to play safe", and I pulled into the side where the road was wider, to allow the car coming round the hair-pin above us to come down past us. It was a nice, late afternoon, the sky was blue, the day beginning to get that golden look about it, and Eskdale was full of that slanting sunlight and deep shadows that convinces idiots like me that they, too, could be an artist if only they had the right kind of paint-box. Why don't they put proper colours in a paint-box, nowadays? How can you be a Constable or a Turner if they don't give you the proper tools for the job...? I was still trying to work out the colours needed, when I realised that we were still waiting for the car above to come past. 'What's he waiting for?', I said, and Jane replied that he must be waiting for us. Grumbling, because I knew the road was narrower above, I moved off, and got round the first corner to find it clear and then went around the second - and found that equally empty! Surely, I thought, he couldn't reverse back up the hill, but we had now passed the place where I'd seen him. We went on around the next corner and came upon open fell-side. There was no sign of the white-ish car I'd caught sight of. I could see a mile or more to the top of the Pass. Still no sign of him! By this time, I was wondering if I had imagined it, saw I asked Jane if she had seen a car coming down the hill towards us; 'Yes,' she said, 'a creamy coloured one, wasn't that why you pulled in? 'Where's he gone?' We looked up the Pass. We looked down the Pass. Just a couple of cars in the distance making their way *up* the Pass but nothing resembling white or creamy in any direction. In case he'd reversed on to the side of the road near the gully, and gone over, we got out and looked down at the stream. Nothing there. Not a cream coloured car anywhere. We chewed the matter over for a minute or two because we'd both seen it, and then continued upwards, carefully checking every piece of ground that could hold a car, near the road or off it, but without seeing anything that would explain the mystery.

There are some weird stories about the Hardknott area, like ghostly ponies with coffins on their backs, strange shapes seem looming dimly through the mist, of

legionaries on the Roman road at Dale Head but so far as I know, no tales about cars. And no, it wasn't a Rolls-Royce Silver Wraith, Silver Ghost or Phantom! It had a bonnet, a boot and looked like a Ford! A perfect ordinary, everyday kind of car! And it went absent. Without a word of farewell! Gone! But it makes you think, dunnit? Wonder what it used for fuel, though.....spirits?

**Tom Brodrick 1997**

**(Sober, and in my right mind).**

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#### **Mr.Sidney Cross**

One of the pioneers off Lakeland mountain rescue, hotelier Sidney Cross, was remembered with sadness and affection by many, following his sudden death on March 31<sup>st</sup>.

Born in Kendal, he was the youngest of five children and discovered his life-long passion for climbing at the age of 14 while camping in Langdale with a Sunday School group.

Sid Cross taught himself to climb with other Kendal friends including Ped Palmer and Charles Tatham, and his equipment for his first big climb, Napes Needle, included a borrowed length of old coffin rope and a pair of 1/11d rubber galoshes for climbing boots.

In 1949 Sid and his partner Albert Hargreaves took over the Old Dungeon Ghyll Hotel in Langdale and in 1950 converted the old barn into a climbers bar, where the famous names of that era, including Don Whillans and Joe Brown, often gathered.

Mountain rescue in its earliest days in Langdale relied on climber helping fellow climber, and it was Sid Cross who organised the volunteers into some sort of team - but with virtually no equipment. Sid was president of the Langdale rescue team for over 25 years and was awarded the MBE for his services to mountain rescue. He was also the first president of the search and rescue dog organisation, SARDA (England) and an original member of The Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme when it was instigated in 1954. Sid Cross will be greatly missed by his family and friends.

## **COAST TO COAST WALK**

### **Alex Bateson**

I walked the Wainwrights Coast to Coast route in July last. Jaz (my dog) and I walked all the way while Mum and Dad alternated between walking with me and being with my younger sister, Paula.

It took us two weeks to do it and it was a relief to reach St.Bees at the end. The best day by far was when the Lake District flooded. At Bishop's Scale, where we had spent the night, we watched the fields flood up to the top of the fence posts. That day we walked from Borrowdale to Ennerdale, where it was the worst flood for 60 years. It was spectacular! The worst day was when we walked over High Street in very bad weather and I got really cold. Jaz wasn't too happy either. Apart from these two days, the weather was fine, though the wind was always against us.

Jaz and I both got a bit tired towards the end but we had no blisters or injuries. Good preparation for my Duke of Edinburgh.

## ARCC versus THE VIC, BETHESDA

### Sylvia Kenny

The traditional summer fortnight at Tyn Twr had begun. Despite vigorous activity during the day, on and around Tryfan, most of the assembled found the energy for a visit to the Vic in the evening. Later, ARCC spent some time on the pool table, closely watched by the locals. Having observed the standard of play (??) the Vic challenged the ARCC to a match on Thursday, sandwiches to be provided by the landlord. I accepted the challenge on behalf of the team, and was appointed captain.

Thursday came all too soon, with little time to consider team selection and tactics. The team comprised myself, Derek Price, Mickey Pooler, Anthony Pooler, Brian Kenny, George Partridge, Peter and Tony McHale and Mickey Donnelly. There were some pre-match nerves but these were easily controlled, Bill Werbeniuk style, by a few pints.



US



### THEM

Before the match we received bad news. The Vic team were regular players in a pub league. The good news - they were currently languishing next to the bottom! Had this information been deliberately leaked to lull us into a false sense of security?

Mickey Pooler had volunteered to play first. His opponent was Carol - tall and blonde - but Mickey kept his eyes on the balls. It was a close fought match but Mickey emerged VICTorious - a great start for ARCC!!

Up stepped George, who was playing Geth. George hadn't been playing well all week but raised his game when it mattered and beat off the challenge. 2-0 to ARCC.

Mickey Donnelly had to play Toots. Don't be fooled by the name. He was a mean pool player. Another close fought match but this time the Vic were Victorious.

Anthony Pooler to play Les. He had a double fight on his hands - for the ARCC and the Pooler name!! Many older would have crumpled beneath the weight of responsibility but Anthony rose to the challenge and saw off his opponent in style. 3-1.

Now my turn. An opportunity to play a captain's innings and set an example to the tail-enders (sorry, I've watched too much Test Match cricket courtesy of MP). I faced Martin. It was a close match but, despite vigorous coaching from the sidelines, I lost the match. 3-2.

Peter hadn't been playing well during the week but had obviously been saving himself. He played a 'blinder' against Colin but was finally beaten in a closely fought game. 3-3.

The pressure was building. After a good start by the ARCC the Vic had managed to draw level. Brian stepped up to face Stiev (sic). Brian played some great shots (hinting at his misspent youth in the Pool halls of Morecambe) but was finally beaten. (3-4).

Tony had to face Meins - a female version of Alex Higgins who liked to be known as Meiin (pronounced MEAN!) Tony played a mean frame but Meins finally asserted her female authority and won the game. (3-5)

Derek (who is known on the circuit as the Chairman) stepped up to defend the reputation of the ARCC and faced Ger, the captain of the Vic team. Derek played well and fought hard but was finally beaten in a close match.

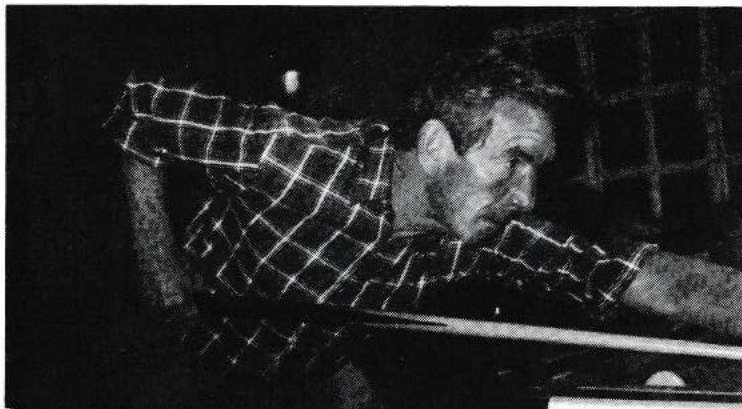
FINAL SCORE: The Vic 6  
ARCC 3

Sandwiches were served and the two teams sat around and chatted as friends rather than competitors. As the evening wore on someone suggested a return match the following Thursday and this was agreed.

Although I wasn't able to be present at this return match I am reliably informed we won the match.

RETURN MATCH FINAL SCORE: The Vic 4  
ARCC 5

Congratulations to the team! I understand a 'decider' will be held at some time in the future, possibly in November. Watch this space.....!!!



THE CHAIRMAN IN ACTION

## FR. FRANCIS HUGHES S.D.B., L.R.A.M.

It is with sadness that I report that Fr Hughes, our Club Chaplain died on 15<sup>th</sup> October. May he rest in peace.

Frank Hughes had been ill for some time and though many members knew that his condition was serious, it was still a shock when his death was announced. He will be missed by his friends in the ARCC.

Unlike most people who have one Requiem Mass, Frank had two. The first being the Lancaster Diocesan Mass at Holy Trinity and St George, Kendal on Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> October and the main Requiem was at Thornleigh Salesian College in Bolton on Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> October. The Club was well represented at both Masses.

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### Memorial Mass for Fr.Frank Hughes.

This was held at Our Lady of the Snows, Langdale on Sunday, 15<sup>th</sup> November, 1998.

#### Speaker - Margaret Price

The Chapel was full, even though the service had not been widely publicised and Monsignor Slattery was the celebrant. I was able to use the words of the two previous orations and added the following:-

Frank Hughes life touched and enriched an enormous number of people. The first reading from Isaiah 25 v 6-9 refers to a "banquet of rich food" - this was always on offer for all people at St.Philip Howard, Glenridding.

The second reading from St.Paul to the Romans 12 7 4-13 reminds us "to make hospitality your special care" - many individuals and groups were made welcome by Fr.Frank. In particular, members of the North West Handicapped Children's Fellowship will miss the tea they had with him, a regular highlight of their annual holiday.

The Gospel Matthew 25 v 31-46 speaks of the final judgement and the importance of giving a welcome to the stranger, food to the hungry, drink to the thirsty and visiting the sick. This and the other readings encourage us to look to the needs of others and to do something practical in our lives to meet these needs, not to give up and above all to "keep on praying". How can we emulate the way Fr.Frank lived his life in and for the love of Our Lord.

I can recall Fr.Frank telling us during one sermon to have a Big Faith, to expect Big Things and we will receive Big things. He also encouraged us to ask for help and guidance in the small things of life rather than rushing along thinking we are alone. It is the way we act in the small things of daily life that can attract or antagonise those around us.

Fr. Frank Hughes life and ministry was full of acceptance, generosity, joy, hospitality and optimism and was very Big on the small things of life. Through his humanity he made Our Lord known to many people. So may the angels welcome Fr. Frank into eternal life and may he Rest in Peace. Amen.

*Margaret Conroy placed a memorial to Fr. Frank, surrounded by candles on a window sill in the Chapel, overlooking the fellside. Somehow this reminded me of the last line of one of the hymns we had sung:-*

The air is silent  
earth is at rest  
only your peace is near me.

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#### A MAN of LETTERS and MUSIC

##### Mike Lomas

Our Club Chaplain was involved in a great many activities, some of which were charitable, such as the Liberian Leper Colony, whilst others were community-based, like the annual party for his "parishioners, families and friends", and there was a further category, miscellaneous, which covered everything else people asked him to help with. In this miscellaneous category one of his fortes was preparing musical quizzes for the entertainment of parishioners and other groups, which often meant travelling some distance, from the Scottish border to the deepest Cheshire.

He also saw it has a challenge, which he allegedly found enjoyable and stimulating, and occasionally positively exhilarating, to cross Kirkstone Pass every week to say Mass in the chapel of Our Lady of the Snows at Bishopscale. In fact only when these snows made the Pass impassable did he resort to a longer and supposedly easier route via Troutbeck. Only when conditions became at least impassable did he fail to get through, but not for lack of trying, as the odd bent bit of bodywork or dry-stone wall testified.

ARCC recognised his commitment, enthusiasm and dedication to his duties as our chaplain by way of an annual donation, which I usually described, in the covering letter and Christmas card, as a small token of our appreciation, love and esteem, and commented that we assumed he would inevitably find some worthy cause on which to spend it.

As can be seen from his letter of acknowledgement he appreciated our good wishes and the donation. His brief comments on the life-style of a remarkable octogenarian priest give an insight into how involved and active he was in so many different ways.

Glenridding  
CA 11 OPG  
Jan 14<sup>th</sup> 1998

Dear Mike,

Many thanks for your very kind letter, and for the donation from the Club. You are all very kind! I am ever so sorry not to have written to you before this, but life has been hyper-active over the Christmas period, and it will be Easter before I am able to get back to normal correspondence - I am 125 letters behind at present! I was over in West Yorkshire just before Christmas. The clergy asked me to give then a day of recollection! They'll never ask me again! I did the Creation story from Genesis in music, starting with Satchmo, Louis Armstrong - "What a wonderful world"!\*! That shook them! With renewed thanks and every good wish.

Fr. Hughes.

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*Since he cannot receive this year's donation in person it is being made in his memory to CAFOD, one of his favourite good causes, for their Central American relief work.*

**ALMOST £2000 HAS BEEN RAISED FROM CAFOD EVENTS.**

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#### AFTERNOON TEA

##### Mike Lomas

My late mother-in-law only met Fr. Hughes on one occasion, but he made an indelible impression. She had needed a hip replacement, and had circulation problems, so was not up to walking far, other than a stroll around Heyes garden centre in Ambleside, but enjoyed the Lakes in her own way. This involved me taking her on a few day trips each year, at different seasons, hopefully with clement weather, to drive around the glorious scenery, over various passes, by the side of different lakes, and to enjoy lunch at Sheila's Cottage, or a bar meal at some of my favourite hostleries.

On one such trip we found ourselves passing Ullswater and I pointed out it would be unthinkable to be going to Glenridding and not call on Fr. Hughes. Phyllis was reluctant. She had been the non-Catholic half of a mixed marriage in the 1940's when such things were frowned upon, and people on both sides were less than tolerant. We compromised....I went to see Fr. Hughes and she stayed in the car.

As always Fr. Hughes was delighted to receive a visitor and promptly invited me to stay long enough to have some light refreshments. When I explained about Phyllis

outside in the car, and the reasons for her reluctance, he said he could quite understand her position and suggested that I leave it to him. We went out to the car, I made the introductions, and he proceeded to charm my mother-in-law from the car to a comfortable armchair in front of his welcoming open fire. In a short while he emerged from the kitchen with a generously laden tray and we had afternoon tea.

The conversation discreetly avoided religion but covered all sorts of other topics, ranging from the beauty of the Lake District to the state of the national economy. It was when we reached music and concert-going that things took on a momentum of their own. He went over to his piano and entertained us with a short impromptu recital. It arose because of a mention of Bach's Toccata and Fugue, which he gave us first, moving to Mozart, Beethoven and Tchaikovsky, amongst others. Phyllis was amazed and very impressed at his virtuosity. It is not every day an ordinary trip to the Lakes takes on such standards of quality, what with an old-fashioned afternoon tea and your own private concert.

All too soon it was time to go, since with Fr. Hughes time seemed to pass so quickly, and we thanked him for the hospitality and entertainment. He reminded Phyllis she must get me to bring her to visit again, and he would look forward to it. As we were driving away Phyllis asked me: "Are you sure he's a Catholic priest?" I assured her that despite the lack of a dog-collar he was, albeit perhaps not your average sort of priest. She thought about this reply for a while, and then commented that if he impressed everybody the way he had impressed her he must do a lot of good in the world. I told her I thought that was a pretty fair way of summing up part of what was special about Fr. Hughes.

When I told him a this a few weeks later we laughed about it, in a kind way, and he said he was grateful for the compliment, particularly since it came from someone who initially had not wanted to meet him. Sadly, Phyllis did not manage a return visit, but she always remembered with pleasure her one meeting with the man, the priest, the entertainer and the incomparable dispenser of afternoon tea and goodwill.



Fr. Frank Hughes SDB  
1915-1998

## ARMENIA, NAGORNO KARABAKH AND THE SHUSHI GORGE

### J.P. Marmion

The invitation came over a late dinner. Would I join a small party going out to Nagorno Karabakh to express solidarity with a persecuted people and climb their highest mountain? And the invitation came from Baroness Cox. How could any member of the ARCC refuse? Lady Caroline Cox must be by far the leading worker in the House of Lords for peoples suffering from oppression. Her visits take her, among other places, to Russia, on behalf of orphans; to Burma; to the South Sudan, where an oppressive regime in the North which seized power in waging a gihad against the whole of the South Sudan. And to Nagorno Karabakh, an enclave beyond Armenia which the Azerbaijanis have been trying to wipe out. It is called ethnic cleansing. But this is a term which covers anything from mass murder to genocide.

### Where is NK?

A flight from Heathrow took us first to Tbilis in Georgia, and then to Yerevan, capital of Armenia and in sight of Mount Ararat. This location is in the Southern Caucasus, against the border of Turkey and between the Black Sea and the Caspian. However to get to NK it is necessary to make a long journey by road (minimum of eight hours) or find a helicopter which is flying. Even the Russian copters take a couple of hours to fly through mountain passes and on to Stepanakert. The normal flight will take you past Kirs, which at 2724m is the highest mountain capital. Others in the North reach towards the 3000m, but the first that had been selected was finally rejected because of antipersonnel mines from the recent war presenting an unacceptable hazard.

The area of NK is probably twice (or more) that of Wales, and virtually all of it is a mountainous region. An idea can be gained from O30 in the series of International Travel Maps; more difficult is the Tactical Pilotage Chart series as NK does not really come on F-4C, as is best seen by relating G-4B and G-5A. These are available from The Map shop, 15 High St. Upton-on-Severn, Worcs. WR8 0HJ. None of these are really of a scale for mountain walking and climbing, and I am not aware of any that are. However all is not lost, before the collapse of the Russian Empire about a hundred men from NK had been trained in mountain sports at centres in the Northern Caucasus. Many of them died fighting for their freedom, but there are still some trained mountain guides available.

### Mirs and Shushi

We walked into a base camp to try for the highest point on the ridge of Mirs. It had been possible to do a quick survey from the helicopter to check the amount of snow on the top, and by the beginning of May this was light. On the second day we crossed the valley and approached Mirs by ascending the ridge on the right and working our way along to a peak which has a mast on the top. Clearly this was the highest point, and it celebrated with a raising of flags, and, to my surprise and delight, a popping of corks. On the third day we broke camp to return to Stepanakert by a different route

down a ridge. Mirs will not present any major challenges to ARCC members, but has the distinct challenge of being somewhere very different, and other mountains in NK may well be worth testing. However if Mirs is not a major challenge the Shushi Gorge is.

### Shushi

Shushi the ancient capital of NK stands on an almost impregnable hill-top with the gorge on the side nearest to Mirs. There are ancient rock chapels and cave dwellings in the gorge. The mouth of the gorge to the west is possibly six hundred feet of vertical unclimbed face. There is a certain amount of growth on the rock, and seen from the opposite side of the gorge some of the face is loose; but in the main the rock is limestone or marble, and presents a major challenge to climbers. I suggested to Mark Winfield, the rock man of our party, that if he was coming out with a group of climbers to set up a first on this, I might join them to abseil down and clean up the face a bit for them. Should any ARCC member be interested I will put them in touch with Mark. Meanwhile the challenge stands.

### Background

NK has been out of reach for most of this century. And recently it has suffered greatly from attempts by the Azeris to ethnic cleanse the whole area. Visitors to NK will wish to gain something of the picture, and two publications are easily available. Lady Caroline Cox is one of the editors of *Ethnic Cleansing in Nagorno Karabakh*, and Levan Chorbajian, Patrick Donabedian and Claude Mutfian, *The Caucasian Knot. The History and Geo-Politics of Nagorno-Karabakh*. (Zed Books 1994). As history moves on both of these publications are slipping out of date, but they do present the best information available in terms of general history. I do not know of any good geographical survey in English. Perhaps this has yet to be written by an ARCC member. It could be you.

Christian Solidarity Worldwide may be contacted at P.O.Box 99, New Maiden, Surrey. KT3 3YF. Lady Caroline Cox is president of CSW

## ACHILLE RATTI IN IRELAND 1998

### Derek Price

#### Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> May

Left Tyn Twr at 7.30am for the 8.55am ferry from Holyhead to Dun Laoghaire. (This year our numbers had increased by one, Trevor Makay being the addition to Allan Brighton, Austin Guilfoyle, Peter and Tony McHale and Derek and Simon Price). The crossing was calm and quick and we disembarked and were clear of Dublin by 12.00 noon.

Our plans for this year included walking and biking in the south west and we were spending four days on the Dingle Peninsular and four days in the Macgillycuddy Reeks. Our transport consisted of Tony McHales Vectra and Simon's seven seater Toyota Land Cruiser and Allan's trailer.

We headed across country towards Limerick making occasional stops at places of interest. From Limerick to Tralee and then over the Connor Pass to Dingle arriving at the pre-booked accommodation about 7.00pm. After a meal and a drink we retired early.

#### Monday 25<sup>th</sup> May

The weather was a little 'iffy', so we decided to cycle the Sleah Drive, about 35 miles around the coast of the Dingle Peninsular, starting and finishing in Dingle. We left at 11.00am and returned about 5.30pm having seen some magnificent coastal scenery. Fortunately there were very few steep hills and the roads were reasonably quiet. Unfortunately the three not used to biking, Allan, Simon and Tony, did have trouble sitting down that night.

#### Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> May

Allan and Tony went bird watching at a local nature reserve and the rest of us went up Mt. Brandon - 3144ft. Later we went to Brendon Creek where St. Brendon set sail to find other lands (which the Irish claim was America, hundreds of years before Columbus) after spending forty nights and forty days on the summit of Mt. Brandon preparing for the journey.

A local Irishman told us the story of Noah and all the animals of the earth in the great flood. It appears that the Ark was in danger of capsizing due to the immense weight of the animal dung which was increasing day by day. So Noah instructed the big animals, the elephants and the Rhino, to push the dung over the side of the Ark. They pushed and pushed and pushed for four days until all the dung was over the side and the safety of the boat was secured and Noah looked at the huge pile of waste which stretched for miles and miles into the sea, and decided to call it America!! (Only an Irishman could come up with that story).



St.Brendon's Creek is still used by local fishermen in their (now motorised) currachs and who enter the narrow bay on the seventh wave to avoid capsizing. We sat for a while on the cliffs above the creek watching the gannets diving and entering the sea at 100kph! Later, back in Dingle we visited O'flaherty's Bar to listen to some Irish singing.

#### **Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> May**

The weather report was very poor for the afternoon so we drove down to the mouth of the bay and walked along the cliffs to watch 'Fungie' the dolphin performing for the spectators on the boats. Apparently Fungie appeared in the bay in 1983 and it is now a successful tour business with hordes of tourists paying £6.00 a trip to see him(her?) swimming around the boats. Fortunately it didn't cost us a penny.

We then went to a lake near Anascaul it being recommended as a local beauty spot but it was too windy and cold to stay very long so we drove down to Ince and spent a couple of hours sunbathing and swimming, well Simon and Tony did the swimming. (The weather forecast was completely wrong in the afternoon).

#### **Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> May**

Left Dingle and the Devanias (B&B owners) and travelled to Beaufort just outside Killarney. Trevor was cycling the 40 miles from Dingle to Beaufort and as the weather was improving and the mountains were clear, we decided to climb Carrauntoohill, the highest in Ireland at 3414ft. We made the summit inside two hours from the carpark and completed the round in just over three hours. We had intended to take in a number of tops but we were met with a real downpour on the summit which continued all the way back to the car.

The Macgillycuddy's is an interesting range of hills with most of the peaks being conical in shape and therefore very steep approaches. Carrauntoohill or Carrantouhill, depending on which map you use, is unlike many Irish peaks in that it has a well marked approach, in fact there is even a carpark at the start of the walk-in. There is something like two miles of gradual rising ground before a very steep gully (a steeper version but similar in appearance to Rossett Ghyll) leads up to the col at around 2000 plus feet. From then on there is a fairly good track to the summit, which, like most Irish tops, has a huge iron cross on it. In good weather the views must be breathtaking with several 3000ft tops within a short distance of one another.

#### **Friday 29<sup>th</sup> May**

Weather dull, cloudy and wet. Austin and Peter went on their bikes to the Gap of Dunloe whilst the rest of us went to visit Muncross House in a huge estate on the edge of Killarney. Then we had a run over to Kenmore to see the Ladies View and the Gap of Mol. Later Simon went back to Dingle to collect the odds and sods we had left behind. All met together that evening in Killarney and watched England v Belgium on the TV.

#### **Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> May**

Trevor went to climb Carrauntoohill and the rest of us went for a drive down the next peninsular leading to Dursey Island and Bantry Bay. Amazingly, every bay we came to, large or small, was covered with salmon breeding equipment, spanning in some places two or three miles across the bay. We stopped at various places of interest, mostly in the rain and slowly made our way back to Beaufort. Trevor succeeded on Carrauntoohill and a couple of other 3000's before he was put off by the rain. That evening Tony and Allan went fishing in the local river but caught only colds!

#### **Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> May**

A miserable wet day - drizzle and low cloud. We had hoped for good weather and the rest of the 3000's. We changed our plans and went to Mass at Killarney Cathedral and had a last look at the town. The weather improved a little so Allan, Simon, Tony and Trevor went to the Leisure Centre, Austin and Peter on a bike ride and Derek by bike to the Gap of Dunloe. By 5.30pm all had returned to the B&B and we loaded our bikes on the trailer ready for an early start for Dun Laoghaire. (This weekend is the Irish Bank Holiday so we expect heavy traffic).

#### **Monday 1<sup>st</sup> June**

Up at 7.00am loaded cars, had breakfast and left at 8.00am. All the flap about busy roads etc., that had been fed to us was proved wrong as we were in Dun Laoghaire by 1.00pm and that included stopping to visit Cashel Castle. (Worth a visit!) The HSS Stenna ferry was a little late on the way back but we docked just after 6.00pm. Peter and Tony went straight off to Leeds and the rest of us went to Tarpoley collected our own vehicles and headed for home.

#### **Comments:**

Much had happened during the week and the camaraderie was as expected between ourselves and the friendly Irish. The weather could have been a lot better but had not prevented us from taking in the magnificent scenery.

#### **The South West**

This part of Ireland, especially around Killarney, is, or appears to be, a very affluent area, with new houses almost like mansions springing up all over the countryside. Sadly, the same cannot be said about the roads, because apart from those around Dublin, the road surfaces are generally poor. It is much more of a tourist area, there seems to be Americans everywhere, all trying to trace distant relatives. Nevertheless, I wouldn't hesitate to recommend the south west of Ireland for its outdoor activities, beautiful scenery and friendly natives.

## TALES OF THE MOUNTAIN RESCUE - No.VI

### A BLACK CHRISTMAS (Part 1)

#### A dream of a white Christmas turned into a nightmare

##### REPORT A

##### MOUNTAIN RESCUE INCIDENT REPORTS

DATE: 25th December, 1956,

TEAM: KINLOSS

1. Nature of Incident - 4 missing climbers reported on Ben Nevis,
2. Time M.R.T. alerted - 12.00 hours Newtonmore party  
12.45 hours Kinloss party
3. Authority alerting - R.C.C. No. 48 Group
4. Time team left station - left Newtonmore 13.00  
left Kinloss 13.30
5. Time team arrived search area - Newtonmore party at Achintee 15.00 hours  
Kinloss party at Achintee 16.45 hours
6. Area searched - Carn Dearg - Sheet 47, MR 1572
7. Duration of operation - 27 hours
8. Type of operation - Stretcher lowering on steep snow slopes
9. Weather conditions - 25.12.56 - Freezing - Gales  
26.12.56 - Freezing - Light Breeze
10. Composition of Rescue Party - 1 officer; 1 SNCO and 11 Team members (Search)  
1 officer; and 3 Team members (Base).
11. Equipment used:-
  - (a) M.T. - 2 Q.L.s, 1 Landrover, 1 L/R Ambulance
  - (b) No. of R/T Sets - Nil.
  - (c) No. and type of stretchers - 1 Thomas and (1 Thomas & 1 Duff) (Service) (Civilian)
  - (d) Medical stores - Nil.
  - (e) any other special equipment - Nil.
12. Sub units co-operating - Port William Police
13. Map reference of bodies located - 47/157722
14. Time bodies located - 10.15 on 26.12.56

Such is the first page of the Kinloss Team incident report.

Although I was not personally involved with this incident, I have decided to conclude this short series on the R.A.F. Mountain Rescue Service with the following account because it is a good illustration of how the R.A.F. teams respond to requests for assistance from the civil authority, even though their prime responsibility is to attend to crashed aircraft, civil or military, on land. Also, because two of the lads involved, Mike Hornby and Tom Carrol, were at some time club members.

The Ben. For most climbers, that name can mean only one mountain. Ben Nevis. In Gaelic, pronounced 'gallic' in Scotland, Beinn (as in vein) NIBHEIS (neerish).

The Gaelic language is very descriptive, and while 'beinn' is very obviously mountain, 'nibheis' is usually taken to mean evil or venomous. So it has proved to many climbers, and those who refer to it as the Big Bad Ben are nearer than they realise to the accepted meaning of the name. Certainly, too many of our young gallants have paid the ultimate price for daring to attempt to solve the riddle of this icy Princess Turandot of a mountain. And so it turned out for four Lancashire lads that Christmas of 1956.

The story starts in the bar of the Old Dungeon Ghyll Hotel in the Autumn. The talk was of doing different over the Christmas holiday instead of dossing in Wall End barn as usual, in the forlorn hope of good snow conditions. Surely, Scotland would be a better bet. Many expressed interest, and as Christmas Day was on a Tuesday, the plan evolved to take the Monday off work to couple the weekend in as well. This proved difficult for some, and others could not afford to lose a days pay, so the final count of definites dropped to six.

Frank Wearden (Blackburn) was the daddy of the party at 22, and had climbed in the Alps. Ivor Sumner (Darwen) was 20. Jeff Bond (Bolton), 19. Mike Hornby, 19, Tom Carrol, 20 and Barry Timmins, 16, were from the Thornton/Fleetwood area of the Fylde. I too might well have got involved had I remained at RAF Leeming, but in October I was posted to Valley to join the rescue team there. Had my posting been to Kinloss instead, I would almost certainly have been involved in the search, and recovery of the bodies.

Four wheeled transport was a luxury beyond reach for the young Langdale regulars of the day, and while a few had small motorbikes, they were wisely considered inadequate to tackle winter conditions in the Highlands. So the thumb was adopted as the means of obtaining more reliable and less uncomfortable transport. Hitching a lift was much more common then, with the slower traffic, no motorways, and the A74 still just a single carriageway continuation of the A6. So, with varying luck, the lads proceeded northwards over the weekend, but it was Sunday before the little encampment in Glen Nevis was complete. Tom Carrol was very proud of his brand new Black's mountain tent, with sleeve entrance, which a doting aunt had bought him.

There was much poring over guide books that Sunday evening, and much arguing as to which route they would attempt, before a consensus was achieved. One of the great buttresses of Ben Nevis, which first felt the touch of human hands and feet when it was descended by three of the famous Hopkinson family in September 1892. The first winter ascent followed only 18 months later, led by Norman Collie, who is more

usually associated with the Cuillin of Skye. Tower Ridge (Grade 111), in winter is one of the finest mountaineering expeditions in these islands.

I don't know if the lads managed a pint or two that night, but it was already light when they awoke on the morning of Christmas Eve. They should have been breakfasting at least a couple of hours earlier so as to be on their way by before first light, and ideally at the start of the climb when full daylight came. But it had dawned cold, bright and clear, and what could possibly go wrong in such perfect weather. The snow should be in good condition, crisp and firm for the bite of axe and crampons. The excitement of what was in prospect drove them on, up the Tourist track to the Ben at first, before branching off left above Lochan Meall An t-Suidhe (me al on tee) to skirt the foot of the northern crags of Carn Dearg (carn jerak) and traverse into the Allt a' Mhinilinn (alt a' voolin). At the C.I.C. hut (in memory of Charles Inglis Clarke, Western Front, 1916) they headed diagonally right, direct to the foot of Tower Ridge. There the five mates roped up, in what order there is no record. Barry had been left behind to mind the camp site, considered by the others too young to tackle such a route. This was a day for men!

They had made good time, but as the sun was well up when they had set off, it was midday when Frank (probably) led off up the first pitch. On one of the shortest days of the year, there were barely four hours of daylight left, and 2000ft. of climbing before they reached the summit plateau. All five of them were quite able rock climbers, but only Frank had much experience of snow and ice. Nevertheless they made good progress, without incident, and all the time the exhilaration of their situation, the icy splendour of the immense faces on either side of them, blue sky overhead, and the sun bathed snow covered slopes of Carn Mor Dearg opposite them. This would be a day to remember for the rest of their lives.



Carn Dearg February 1986

The blue of the sky slowly darkened, and the sunlight spilling over the top of the crags became more golden as their shadows crept up the slopes above Allt a' Mhuilinn. The gloom was beginning to thicken as they reached the ramparts of the Great Tower and followed the Eastern Traverse before ascending to its summit. There dusk caught them, but there was just enough of an afterglow to brave the narrow crest and the delicate step across the Tower Gap. Good holds on the steep rack beyond enabled them to continue despite the darkness, then easier rock for the last couple of hundred feet took them to the plateau.



Dave Hall, Terry Kitching, Barry Rogers below the Great Tower  
Winter Meet, February 1986

But what now? The summit was only 400 yards away to the east, but their interest lay in the opposite direction; the shelter of their tents from the bitter night air, hot food and tea and the luxury of their sleeping bags after such a hard day. None of them was familiar with the ways off the mountain, and while the tourist route is obvious enough in good visibility, on a moonless night and under snow it was far from clear. Starlight allowed them to wander along the plateau, but to right and left the dark shadows below gave little indication of the crags or gulleys or steepness of the slopes they hid. So they missed the descent they needed by the Red Burn, and finished up on the summit of Carn Dearg where they decided there were too many crags about to risk an uncertain descent. Just north of the summit they found a hollow which sheltered them from the south east wind, and making themselves as comfortable as they could on their sacks and ropes, sat down to await the dawn. It was a grim decision to make, knowing that this would be the longest, most uncomfortable night they had ever experienced, in an arctic wilderness at an altitude little under 4000ft.

Back home at Bromley Cross, sat comfortably by the fire, Jeff. Bond's mother was startled when the clock on the wall suddenly chimed. Edith looked at her mother's old clock, and wondered. For the worn old clock was normally silent, and only struck when one of the family was in danger. She thought of her son up in Scottish mountains, but relaxed when she remembered that for almost every weekend and holiday these past three years he had been away climbing somewhere, and must have enough experience by now not to get himself into any serious predicament.

It was after all Christmas Eve, a time of Peace on Earth, and Goodwill to All Men.

## JUNIOR MEET TYN TWR 1998 3<sup>rd</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup> JULY

### Debbie Green - aged 11 years.

Everybody arrived on Friday night, that is: Christopher Daniels, Debbie Green, Carl Gale, Heather Donnelly, Jake Davy,, Joel Green, Sarah Gale, Micky Donnelly, Oliver Davy, Robert Green, Jammie Gale, Arthur Daniels, Diane Green, Dot Wood, Robert Green and Peter ??

Team Leader: Faz Faraday.

After supper we all went to bed, but boys being boys they told the tale of the 'ghost of Tyn Twr' and managed to frighten each other to death.

Saturday came with rain, so we decided the sun might be on Anglesey. Everybody made there way over to Treardur Bay, except Dot, Carl, Sarah, Jammie and Peter who had to repair their car. The sun came out and we found three new climbs on the sea cliffs. We made base camp on the beach and went off climbing. After climbing for a couple of hours everyone played on the beach, except Faz, Diane, Arthur and Joel who went to Holyhead Mountain to look at the possibility of climbing there on future Junior meets. Dot followed later but could not find us, so they went scrambling on another beach. When the others returned from Holyhead Mountain we all went back for tea.

After tea the boys went a walk to the river and Oliver fell in and got wet for the second time that day, after falling in the sea. When Oliver was dressed and dry, the boys had a magical fire. They put some copper wire and red leather into it and produced florescent greens, blues, red and purple flames. Then it was bed time again and Arthur made us all Scotch pancakes and pop corn. (No ghost stories tonight, too tired).

Sunday, guess what? Rain again! Climbing was cancelled, so we went for a local walk to see the giant water wheel. As we were walking through the quarry our little dwarfs, Sarah and Heather, sang merrily to us 'I ho, I ho, it's off to work we go.....'. We crossed the river and walked through the fields to the bottom of Bethesda then through the main street back to the hut through the woods. We had dinner, tidied up, said goodbye to each other and the Greens, Daniels and the Davy's went swimming in Bangor swimming baths.

## ARE THERE ANY MOUNTAINS IN PORTUGAL

**Jim Cooper.**

Yes and the ones I visited with my mother at a max of 5105 ft (1556 metres) are not the highest.

Serra da Penada and Serra do Geres combine to form a national park on the northern border of Portugal and Spain. The charm of the area is that it is virtually unheard of outside the country and likely to remain a backwater despite a new motorway. It is approximately one and a half hours north of Oporto and about 40k inland. The highest point is the second highest in Portugal (about 3 hours walking from the road, *no we didn't manage it, my mum is 83*), the highest is Serra da Estrela which reaches 6539ft in mid Portugal. Most of the tops where we were are about 700 to 1200 metres.

We explored the area by car for a week in June and found the costs low and the people very hospitable. Tourism lies very lightly on the locality. There are Portugese day trippers at the W/E but few foreigners. I am told organised walking groups are beginning to discover this unspoilt area. Away from the main roads village life is from a past age. Ox carts are still in use though EU grants mean tractors are now the norm. the communal village wash house still holds sway over the washing machine. Camp sites are available and it is possible to tour using the pousadas (guest houses). A surprising amount of English (and French) is spoken by returned emigres (rural de-pop is I am told a problem). The locals accept visitors easily with no hard sell.

The scenery and walking is wonderful. The valleys are narrow, often flooded for hydro-electricity, steep sided and in the more mountainous areas thickly forested. The upper slopes are dense covered with shrubs and the higher tops usually consist of rounded and slabby outcrops of granite rock. The roads go over the ridges and so it is possible to start most walks at a high level. As far as I can find out there is no developed rock climbing but there is potential. Most of the extensive rock is very blank and is likely to require bolts for protection. There are vast and huge boulder fields with boulders perched in fantastic positions. Despite this crags suitable for roped climbing require some looking for but they do exist! There are two crags that I found (with unsuspecting aged mother in tow!) 600ft to 800ft high and others of more modest height. The quality is untested.

The climate seems almost perfect, the temperature not too hot and not too cold though periods of rain can occur any time of year (like southern Britain only warmer). The country side is a lush green and intensively cultivated away from the bigger hills. Being a protected National Park the flora and fauna is exceptional (wolves, though rarely seen, still exist in the wild here). The nearby coast is a gem. For somewhere different, little chance of seeing a Brit and a kind of continental Lake District without the crowds this is a place I would recommend. BOA VIAGEM!

## SPRING SATURDAY WALKS FROM BISHOP'S SCALE LANGDALE

**Dave Hugill (Leader)**

**Saturday, 20<sup>th</sup> March.**

1. Tilberthwaite via Hodge Close, return via Slaters Bridge, Little Langdale and Baysbrown Wood.

**Saturday, 17<sup>th</sup> April.**

2. Ambleside via Silver Howe and Loughrigg Fell, return via Loughrigg Terrace and Elterwater.

**Saturday, 15<sup>th</sup> May.**

3. Three Shire Stone and Three Shires Pub via Oxendale, Red Tarn, Little Langdale.

**Saturday, 19<sup>th</sup> June.**

4. Grasmere and White Moss Common to Rydal Hall. Return via Rydal Water, Loughrigg Terrace and Elterwater.

All the walks are of moderate length (under 10 miles) and involve no great altitude gain though some up and down. Everybody welcome, this is not a fell run or race, and plenty of time for lunch and photographs etc. No messing about with cars needed.

All walks start at the Langdale Hut (Bishop's Scale) at 9,15 prompt. Butties, flasks etc., will be needed.

Please come and walk as a club group, lets hope for good weather, though the routes can be done in poor weather or slightly modified if its really bad.

## BECKSTONES WORKING WEEKEND - MARCH 1998

### Joyce Kent - Hut Warden

The weekend was well attended by 12 members and 4 guests. I was wakened at 7.45am on Saturday morning and told to, 'Get up, if you want any breakfast, the furniture is already outside on the grass!' Fortunately, it was a beautiful spring morning.

The ceiling in the lounge, started last year was finished, and the lounge and kitchen cleaned, scraped and painted. The concrete mixer rolled and the small bedroom with the internal drystone wall was rendered. General cleaning throughout was done, window frames patched and painted and everyone worked incredibly hard, with great enthusiasm, for the whole weekend.

Lunch was taken outside on the grass



Ben and Sue Cater relaxing over lunch

and by 7pm the pork was roasted to perfection, the furniture was back in place and we sat round the table, tucked in and the wine flowed. The next day work continued and Ben and Sue came back two weeks later to finish off, and Terry Kitching came back later to fit the woodburning stove that a friend of his gave us, and now it is too hot!

I would like to thank everyone for their help and especially Terry Kitching without whom the hut would not run.

## ARCC MEETS CARD 1999

January 30th	Working Weekend - Langdale	Arthur Daniels 01706-819706
February 19-21	Working Weekend - Dunmail	David Ogden 01253-398252
March 5-12	Scottish Winter Meet	Ben Carter 01706-841978
March 20 <sup>th</sup>	Working Weekend - Beckstones.	Joyce Kent 01253-697948
March 26 <sup>th</sup>	Fell Running Weekend - Langdale	Arthur Daniels 01706-819706
May 8 <sup>th</sup>	Annual Long Walk from Beckstones	Joyce Kent 01253-697948
June 26 <sup>th</sup>	Old Counties Tops Race.	Arthur Daniels 01706-819706
July 3 <sup>rd</sup> .	Biking, Climbing BBQ-Beckstones	Joyce Kent 01253-697948
July 10 <sup>th</sup>	Junior Meet -TynTwr.	Faz Faraday 0131-661-2816
September 4 <sup>th</sup>	CAFOD Grisedale Fell Race.	Colin Jones 01204-690013
September 11 <sup>th</sup>	Climbing Meet -Beckstones	Terry Kitching 01325-721390
September 18 <sup>th</sup>	Junior Meet - Langdale	Arthur Daniels 01706-819706
September 19 <sup>th</sup>	Club Fell Races Langdale.	Leo Pollard 01204-694657
October 2 <sup>nd</sup>	Bishop's Walk - Glenridding	Derek Price 01772 768174
November 6 <sup>th</sup>	Working Weekend/Bonfire-Tyn Twr	Anne Wallace 01744-811864
November 13 <sup>th</sup>	AGM-Chapel Stile/Annual Dinner	Alan Kenny 01254-414615
December 4 <sup>th</sup>	Biking/Walking Meet - Beckstones	Joyce Kent 01253-697948

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PLEASE NOTE THAT FROM THE 1<sup>ST</sup> FEBRUARY A KEY PAD WILL BE  
IN USE AT BISHOP'S SCALE, LANGDALE.

**THE NUMBER IS:-**

**1524**

**(and turn the lever clockwise)**

**PLEASE REMEMBER IT AND PASS IT ON TO  
OTHER MEMBERS IN YOUR FAMILY**

\*\*\*\*\*

#### ARCC MEET IN CHAMONIX 1999

The meet will be based in Chamonix during the last two weeks in July and the first two weeks in August. The name of the campsite will be given at a later date. The idea is that over the period of four weeks different members will be using the site, some may stay the full four weeks, others for a shorter period. Everyone is welcome. *(It is the same site as that used in the early nineties but it appears to have changed its name - hence those details coming later).*

#### SPRING WALK AND FELL RUNNERS WEEKEND

Spring Saturday walks with David Hugill and the Fell Runners weekend in March with Arthur Daniels are for any standard or grade of walkers and runners. You don't need to book in advance - just turn up.

#### WORKING WEEKENDS

Please make every effort to attend - don't leave it to the same people everytime.

#### HUT MEETS

It is essential that you contact the meet organiser well before the meet date since places need to be booked in advance.