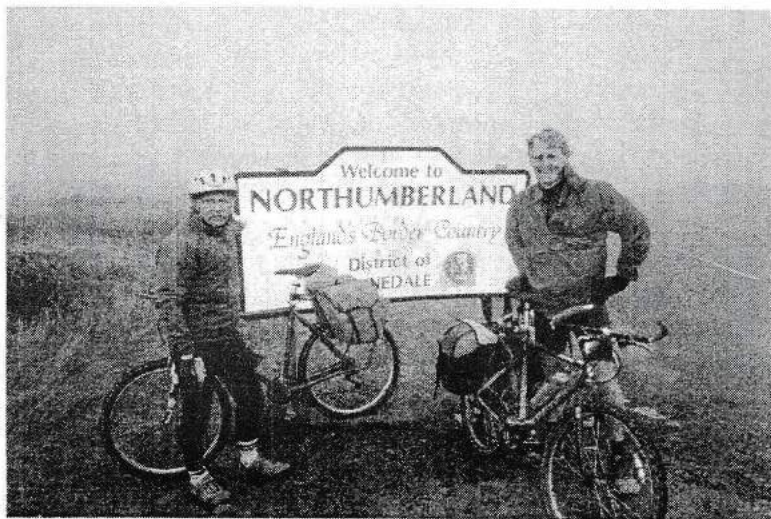


and windy on top. Luckily the cafe at the top, which is seasonal, was open, and so we stopped for food and drink.

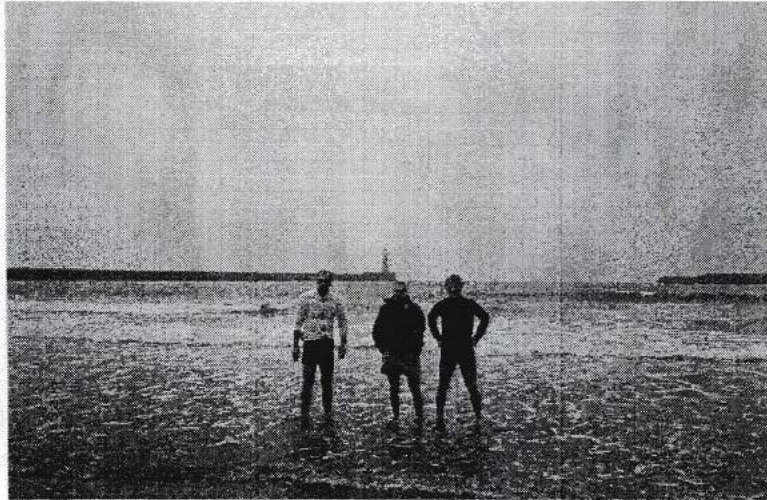
The weather was turning duller and colder, and from here you are in a wild moorland area until you get to Consett. We descended to Garrigill, the first of a series, with Nenthead and Allenheads, of quiet, isolated villages. We realised at this point that we had lost John, who had, as usual, pulled away from the rest of us. From Garrigill, I followed the route through the forest to Priorsdale, and into Nenthead on steep tracks through the old lead mines. Paul and Dave took the alternative surfaced route to Nenthead, where we met. There was still no sign of John!



More steep climbing from Nenthead to the top of Black Hill (aptly named) the highest point on the C2C, before descending to Allenheads. In Allenheads we asked a cockney with a dog if he had seen anyone answering to John's description. He said that he had seen a stranger in town barely 40 minutes earlier, but he had hightailed it out of there. We continued, hoping to catch up with him before Consett, where we had tentatively thought of stopping for the night. Because of foot and mouth, we were diverted onto the alternative route to Stanhope. At Stanhope, Paul got a puncture, and it started to rain and get dark. As Paul mended his puncture, Dave and I looked through the window of an adjacent pub at the glowing fire and foaming pints. We were sorely tempted to stay there for the night, but no! we had to meet up with John! The puncture mended, we were faced with the sign 'Very Steep Hill'. Which forewarned another steep climb into the wet misty darkness and away from the cosy pub. The three of us stopped at the top, knackered, and stuffed food into our mouths. Luckily, it was the last climb, but the visibility on the top was down to 50yards, and we all struggled, slowly moving in a formation of three. The road gradually began to slope downwards towards Castlefield, and we stayed on the road, rather than following the official off-road route along Wakerley Way. (We later found out from John that he had followed the official route). We arrived at Castlefield at 7pm, ready to find somewhere to stay – fast! It only took one phone call to find a B and B, and we thankfully finished the day's effort there and then. This had been quite a hard day, in hilly, wild, bleak moorland, with deteriorating weather conditions. Soon after washing and changing, Paul got a call on his mobile from John, who had got to Shotley Bridge, 2 or 3 miles away. We arranged to meet at the Smelters Arms at Castleside. After another good night at the pub, we arranged to meet John next morning at Consett.

It was pouring down when we started out on Saturday morning. Dave, Paul and I were late at our meeting point and, understandably, John had gone, in the pouring rain. It soon stopped however, and developed into a dry, but dull day. From

Consett to Sunderland you follow the line of the old Consett and Sunderland Railway, which has been converted into a cycle and walking path partly surfaced in asphalt, and part in ash and shale. It is almost all downhill from Consett to Sunderland, with little of interest, apart from some interesting sculptures, of surveying instruments, and, the best, of cows made from JCB parts. You also pass the Beamish open air Museum which would be worth a stop, if you have the time. Basically though, this is 'pigeons and whippets' country (sorry Gerrard), with little of interest that you can see from the old railway line. Approaching the edges of Sunderland, the route passes through industrial estates, and the seashore, when we saw John. We all had a dip in the sea, followed by a meal of pie and chips in a local bistro.



THE NORTH SEA REACHED AT LAST, PHEW!

The ride completed, we rode along the sea front to the Tyne Ferry at South Shields, and from there, into Newcastle to catch our trains, me to Leeds, and Paul, John and Dave to Whitehaven.

The first day we had cycled 50 miles, and this was definitely the best scenery and weather on the whole route. The second day was 60 miles, which was the longest, hilliest, and most remote section, on which we had the worst weather. The last day was an easy 24 miles, adding up to a total mileage of 134 miles. The train fare from Sunderland to Whitehaven is £15 single, and it may be possible to get a reduction on that. The total time taken was 20 hours, about 18 hours cycling, allowing for stops. If you are thinking about doing this ride, it may be a good idea to go east to west, so that you finish in the best area, and (for most people in the club) nearer to home. Three days should be sufficient if you do a reasonable amount of cycling, but if you don't, allow 4 to 5 days.

HOW I SURVIVED A TRIP TO MOUNT KENYA

By Faz Faraday.

It was after my return from a trip to Mount Kenya that I stayed with Derek for a few days. I told him about the bad weather we had encountered and how we had failed to reach the highest of its summits. The conditions usually good in January had been poor and one of our team developed altitude sickness and had to be evacuated. Derek listened politely and with the interested ears of a climber. He had heard it all before and what was more could have matched any such epics with experiences of his own. But there was one incident that didn't quite fit in with his experiences and he told me that I must write about for the Journal. So this is what I told him.

The most feared of these animals is perhaps the leopard which is secretive, silent, nocturnal and alert. We were told however, that they do not attack humans unless provoked or just hungry. We were also assured that where we intended to camp that night was safe. What was more, we were given to understand that the camp site would be patrolled by guards.

It was almost night fall when we arrived at the camp site. It was an idyllic spot, flat and grassy and surrounded by trees. We had the place to ourselves and although there were no guards we felt safe. I was relieved to find that there were no buffalo. Experience had taught me that of all animals the buffalo is the most unpredictable. They can suddenly charge at you without any reason. Years ago I had naively camped among them and been given a strict talking to by the Park Warden the next morning. He told me I was lucky to be alive!!

In Africa there is hardly any dusk so nightfall drops quickly. Fortunately on this particular night there was a full moon. This gave us enough light to put up our tents. We had a large four wheel drive and camped on either side of it. I usually camped about a cricket pitch length away from the others so that I had some space to myself and wasn't kept awake by their talk and laughter.

It had been a long day and we were all tired, so after a makeshift meal we went to our tents. We were not far from the Equator and so it was still warm as we went to bed. Covered only by my silk sleeping bag inner I lay and reflected on the day's events.

The day had not only been long but also full of incidents and extremes. That morning we had been in snow, strange to find just fifteen miles from the Equator. And then within a few hours drive we were in a landscape that was arid and parched. The other extreme had been to sit in the luxury of a Game Lodge and brush shoulders with wealthy Americans and rich Europeans, while we lounged and drank by the pool side, and then to drive into a region where people were living in poverty because of drought. It was a World of extremes.

And the incidents of the day had also been bizarre. I had gone for a hair cut just for a trim, and come out with a shaven head so that I looked like a worn tennis ball, as one friend described it. We had also been stopped by an enthusiastic police patrol who threw a spike trap across the track hoping that they had caught poachers. When I got out and showed them my British passport, they apologised and said how pleased they were that Britain had colonised them. It sounded rather like the natives of the Gold Coast praising the Slave Trade. They did however, offer to help change the tyre. It reminded me of ARCC working week-ends where members suddenly become experts on all the jobs needing to be done and stand around giving conflicting advice. Fortunately I remembered the advice I had been given years ago, at Ushaw before going abroad for the first time "If anything should go wrong, remember you are British and take command" With these words in mind I changed the wheel, thanked the police insincerely for their help and headed to our campsite. It was with these thoughts in mind that I fell asleep.

Sometime later I was suddenly awoken. There was the sound of heavy breathing outside. I sat up sharply and the breathing stopped. I lay down again and held my breathe. The breathing outside started up

again. The full moon cast a clear profile of an animal on the tent wall. I froze as I depicted the outline of a leopard sharply shown in relief. It was just a few feet away. Then on the other side of the tent I heard more heavy breathing, and although there was no shadow from that side it was obvious that here was another leopard.

I had come close to death before when I almost drowned on the Fraser River in Canada. Then and now the immediate thoughts that came to mind were macrocosmic in detail and equally bizarre. It was as if in these life and death encounters the mind becomes hypersensitive to detail as one hangs on to life. Here I lay in my sleeping bag inner without any clothes on and my immediate thoughts were not of the danger of an impending attack but rather that here I was laying in my tent naked I could hardly run outside in this state of undress. I was reminded of a radio programme on which the former Prime Minister Ted Heath had stated that if the phone went in the night he would always put his dressing gown on before answering it. After all one never knew who was calling. And now in my state of nakedness I understood his dilemma. But the thought of Ted Heath did nothing to transmogrify my own very naked situation!

Soon my thoughts became focused and I sensed real fear, and this in itself took me by surprise. For some reason I have rarely been afraid of physical dangers and as a boy I used to love playing games of dare. The fears that have dominated my life have been those more subtle and invisible ones that attack the psyche and probably, in the process leave little room for fear that is to do with the physical. But now I was faced with real danger and was very afraid of it.

I don't know how long it was that I lay there. At such moments as these time itself gets distorted and minutes become like hours. I was afraid of moving in case it caused the leopards to pounce. I started to feel extremely cold. I wanted to get into my sleeping bag both for warmth and protection. It even occurred to me that my down sleeping bag might make the leopard's attack less painful. And I did wonder about

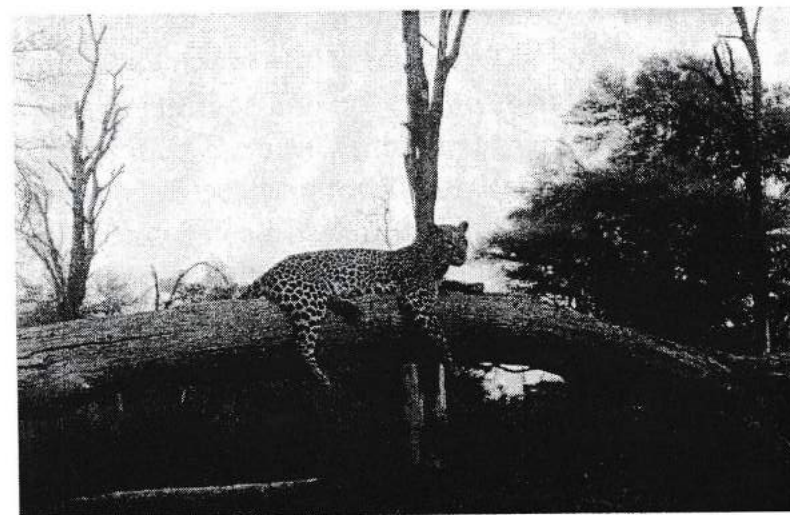
the pain which would be coming. I wondered how long they would take to kill me. Would they bite my neck as I had heard they do when attacking other animals? Would the tent wall protect me? I thought of my friend Mark, who had been in his tent when an old lion attacked him and had survived. Would I be as lucky as him? What could I do? I did think about getting my Swiss army knife out and then remembered that I had given it to one of our porters.

As I lay there I thought of the others, I could hear no noise from their tents and I wondered if they like me, were in the same almost catatonic state. Should I shout and warn them? Would they have time to get into the vehicle? Probably not. By now I thought the leopards must be able to smell my fear. I just wanted them to pounce on me and get it over. Waiting to die like this just added to the fear. And then almost at a deeper level I felt afraid to die. I wasn't ready for death. How different it had been when I was drowning on the Fraser River. I had been composed then and ready, thanks to the Christian family I had stayed with prior to the Expedition. But now I wasn't too sure about dying. Something had gone amiss. I hoped that I would be given time to put that right and to find again the means of that composure. Being unprepared for death was even more frightening than fear of the awaiting pain.

The fear became unbearable, I just wanted them to get their killing over and down with. I waited and waited, in the end I could bear it no longer. It was literally a case of "do or die". I grabbed my head torch, switched it on and screamed at them to go away. I shouted out to warn the others. Suddenly there was silence. Then there was a scurry. The heavy breathing had gone. I was still alive, I called to the others to see if they were alright. I warned them that there was leopards about and suggested that they get into the vehicle. Their response however was tinged with irritation. I had woken them up and they suggested I had merely been having a nightmare.

Next morning as we were packing up, I looked at the ground around my tent.

There in the frozen dew were the foot prints of my would be assassins. And as we drove off I become aware of Nature's order, for night was turning to dawn and the creatures of the night were returning to their order of the day. And high in a nearby tree a leopard was resting after its nocturnal hunting. Close to it was its half eaten prey. I thanked God that some other creature had taken my place. And now I would have time to put my own life in order. I was alive to tell the tale.



•Swansong 5th May 1999 by John Foster

A farewell to the Cuillin

Towards the end of 'Cioch or Bust – A return to the Cuillin in the 1995 Journal, I expressed the expectation (hope?) that if a suitable kidney was found for me, I would be rejuvenated. Well, it hasn't quite worked out as good as that.

The call from the hospital eventually came in the early hours of 24th May 1997. Fortunately I was in Billinge and not on the croft, but seven hours later Bernard Potter and I would have been on the M6 heading for Skye. Recuperation proceeded steadily during that hot summer and by September I felt well enough to head off to Skye for a couple of weeks, arriving just in time for the party at Sligachan Hotel which marked the transfer of the Sconser Estate to the John Muir Trust.

I grew steadily stronger, measured by my time for the 200ft. ascent of Billinge Hill, a mile from the back of my house. Ah, but what about a real hill? My second visit to Tyn Twr was for the Valley Team dinner at the end of November, and Saturday dawned, dry but with a high overcast as I headed for the Lleyn Peninsula. My target was Yr Eife 564m, but the lay-by where I parked, about a mile above Llanaelhaearn has a

spot height of 209m. leaving me with about 1200 ft to climb.

A slow steady plod got me to that superb viewpoint, with only its near (but lower) rival for miles around, which is why they are so called. I longed to explore the ancient hill fort ringing the top of the latter, but needed all my strength for the descent. My next foray was up the back from Bishopscale the following March to Sergeant Man, then Pavey Ark, and down Mill Ghyll. In late April it was Ben Ledi. Over the Mayday weekend, Cnicht and Moel Hebog on consecutive days. The ascent was always slow, the descents even slower and very painful. Progress was not up to expectation.

And what of my beloved Cuillin? Well, for a good many years now, whenever I return to Skye those magnificent mountains seem to be that bit higher, and that bit steeper and I contented myself with relatively low level walks. A stimulus came in early April 1999, when a huge rock fall occurred from the Eastern Buttress of Sron na Ciche. Many hundreds of tons of rock swept away the start of the Terrace, formed by the edge of an enormous cone sheet of basalt, which Norman Collie and John MacKenzie had followed round to the Great Slab when making the first ascent of A'Cioch in 1906 (it was so named by John Mackenzie, the Sconser guide and is the Gaelic for

'breast'). The Skye Rescue Team had warned that the great pile of debris was extremely unstable, requiring great care, but best avoided if possible. I had been very familiar with that area for over 40 years so decided to investigate.

Five days after I officially became an O.A.P. I drove over to Glen Brittle for what I intended to be an easy day, with a light lunch for the few hours I would be out. Naturally I called at the Memorial Hut, where a friend in the Ochils M.C. was wardening that fortnight. Her intention was to climb, that day with an acquaintance who happened to be at the hut, but he wasn't feeling so well, which decided me to change my plan.

The highest peak in the Cuillin is Sgurr Alasdair, which is higher than Scafell Pike. As you are near enough at sea level wherever you start from, you get your full 3,251 feet's worth in making the ascent.

The majority do so by the Great Stone Chute, returning the same way, a real pain. I had promised Liz some years before, that some day I would show her the much better approach over Sgurr Sgumain, a hard scramble but well within her capability. Now was the chance.

I set off straight away at just gone ten o'clock knowing how slow I had become. Liz left at ten thirty, but being built like a will o' the wisp, had caught me before I reached the foot of the Cioch

Buttress, there we had two choices; to go up to its left and follow the Sgumain Stone Chute, but that meant traversing the pile of debris from the rock fall, and that I could inspect on my own another day. To make the ascent as interesting as possible, I decided to pass to the right, and ascend the Cioch Gully. I described my ascent of this with Mike in the previously mentioned article in our '95 Journal. We soloed at first, but as the gully steepened Liz asked to put the rope on, pointing out that I was carrying nothing while she had a heavy sack, including the rope. Fair enough, and it didn't slow us up because I was glad of the rest while I took the rope in at the stances.

The top two pitches, a chimney and a layback are very strenuous, and while I had coped well with them five years before when Mike was leading, I knew they were beyond me now. However, this was 'home' territory from my days instructing for the M.A. in the sixties, and I remembered almost every nook and cranny on that crag. Just before those last two pitches. I knew that a grassy rake leads off to the left, which hardly ever has any traffic, which is why grass still grows in it.

This took us round to the left passing below the Cioch on to the terrace where all the routes on the Cioch, buttress finish. This we followed to the foot of the Great Slab, and ascended the twin cracks across the lower part, which Collie and Mackenzie had followed to bypass the enormous boulder

which blocks the Eastern Gully. Then they had traversed right, below the upper buttress, and followed the neck onto the Cioch itself. What a thrill that must have been; but our target was much further on, and we continued up the Eastern Gully.

This is just a rough scramble, with the only interest a crawl through a cave pitch near the top. This is invariably wet and Liz pulled her face at the prospect of having to lie on wet rock, but she had little option. She was on the tail end of the rope, I was in the lead, and retreat without me wasn't possible. She was soon through and quickly dried off as we continued to the top of the gully.

Emerging from, it opened a marvellous prospect. Immediately below us was the south west shore of Skye, and just off it the island of Soay, where Gavin Maxwell based his shark fishery just after the war, telling the story in 'Harpoon at a Venture', his first book. Beyond it the jagged peaks of the Isle of Rum, to the north of that, the low isles of Sanday and Canna, and beyond them across the Little Minch, South Uist in the haze. To the south of Rum are the low lying islands of Muck and Eigg, with the famous Sgurr quite clear. Further on across the Ardnamurchan Peninsula, the peak of Ben More on Mull was quite clear. To our left the main ridge of the Cuillin continued, over Sgurr Dubhna da Bheinn, An Caisteal a'Garbh Coire, Sgurr nan Eag, Sgurr a' Coire Bhig to Gars Bheinn

(like the guards van) on the tail end of this magnificent train of mountains.

We ate our lunch on the summit of the Eastern Buttress of Sron na Ciche, and I was feeling quite tired by now; but our day was far from done, and I plodded off along the track onto Sgurr Sgumain. Liz was now out front being very patient, but I could go no faster. Over the top she had to wait for me as the descent to the pinnacle is quite rough and loose. As I faced the Bad Step at the south west ridge of Alasdair, I remembered the hefty climber on and M.A. course (not mine) in 1964 who fell a couple of hundred feet from it into Coire Lagan and whose battered body I had helped to carry back down to Glen Brittle.

But we were avoiding that, and I dropped off the ridge on the Coire a'

Ghrunnda side for about 50ft to a large recess. Liz competently followed me up the steep but easy chimney at the back, and we were on the final open flanks about 200ft below the summit. A few minutes later we scrambled onto the top of Sgurr Alasdair, named after Sheriff Alexander Nicolson of Husabost (on Loch Dunvegan) who made the first ascent in 1873. I don't remember checking the time, but it must have been about

6 o'clock by then I had been so slow I was pleased to have got there, but I was also feeling sad as I was certain I would never get there again. For the

last time I gazed on the surrounding peaks which I had known so well and for so long.

About 200ft away just across the Great Stone Chute was Sgurr Thearlaich, commemorating Charles Pilkington, who once held the Lakeland fell record and who with his brother Lawrence, made the first ascent of the Inaccessible Pinnacle on 18th August 1880. It was only folk like that who could afford the time and money to come and do useless things like climbing on the Cuillin, while my ancestors were slaving away hewing coal down their pits to feed the glass furnaces.

I was feeling terribly weary now, but I knew the worst part of the day was about to commence. I finished the last of my food and set off over the broken rocks while Liz was still eating, but she had caught me once again by the time I reached the top of the Great Stone Chute. Memories of the friends I had been there with and the M.A. and H.F. parties I had led down that long scree run (at least 1,000 ft), sometimes taking less than 10mins. But no more, my knees were so weak now that I knew the descent would be HELL, and so it was in capital letters, slipping and sliding more on my arse than on my feet. Nothing to be done but stiffen the jaw and carry on.

The tail of the scree ran out and I could hobble normally once again, but I was desperately tired now and weak with hunger. Liz began feeding me

her reserve dried apricots as I tottered down the rough track from the lochan to the lower coire; she was dawdling about 100 yards in front when a couple about 40 came past looking very fit. They looked curiously at me, and I said "Ow do" but when they reached Liz they asked if I was injured, I must have looked so haggard. She told them my knees were knackered and I had a kidney transplant. I must have won their sympathy for when we eventually reached the campsite they took us up to the hut in their car.

The light was fading by then it was gone 10 o'clock, and I had been out over 12 hours and was shattered. It took two cups of tea in the hut before I had recovered enough to drive back to the croft and scrape together an evening meal. I was almost on my knees as I made the last climb of the day up to my bed.

In previous years I had wondered how I would face up eventually to making the decision that my hill days were over. Would I hesitate, and think "Well, maybe!" There was now no doubt this was it. When the pain becomes greater than the pleasure, it's time to call it a day, a very fitting day it was for my 'farewell' to the Cuillin.

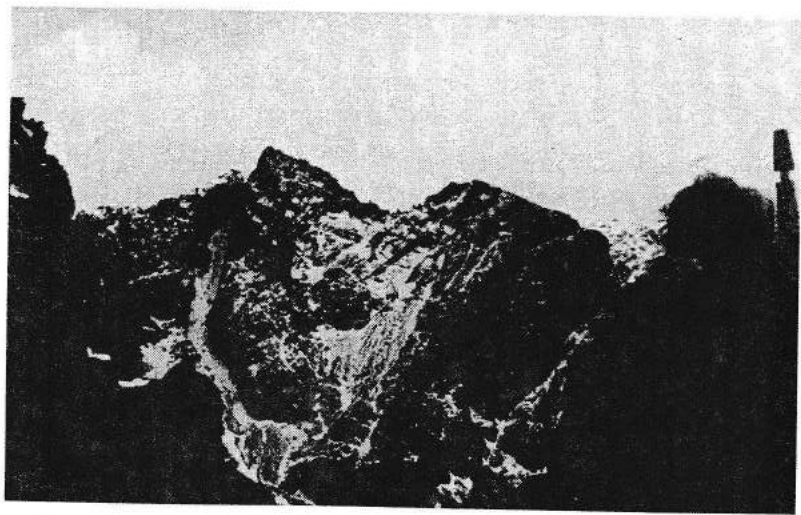
I remembered my first visit to Skye on a fortnights leave from the R.A.F. at the end of June 1957. As I rode my Triumph Thunderbird down Glen Brittle I gazed up at the Western buttress of Sron na Ciche and realised that there were acres of

rock up there, with 1,000ft long routes. I had found the 'promised land'.

I was with Tom Carroll then (six months after he had survived that Christmas night on Carn Dearg), and Dave Holden, Chas, Burman another Langdale lad whose name I can't recall and Joyce and Anne Chaddy (do you remember Danny Chadwick, the big lad with the great beard who was a regular in the pub in Elterwater, his sister?) The Cuillin is beyond reach now but the memories will always remain.



Liz on the top of SGURR ALASDAIR with the central section of the Black Cuillin behind her and the Inaccessible Pinnacle on the left.



Pete Cavanagh on Sgurr. Easter 1975, looking across Coire Lagan towards Sgurr Alasdair and Sgurr Thearlaich, with the Great Stone Chute between them. Sgurr Sgumain on the right.

Forwards Backwards or Stagnation?

Our club was very fortunate that at its inception in 1942, it inherited a ready made hut in Langdale from its precursor, the Blackpool Catholic Boys Association. In fact the decision to form a climbing club was taken in that hut by Fr. Pearson, who had set up the C.B.C. in the mid thirties, with his friend Arnold Lunn. It was the latter's suggestion that it be named Achille Ratti after Pope Pious XI, who as a young priest had been a noted member of the Italian Alpine Club.

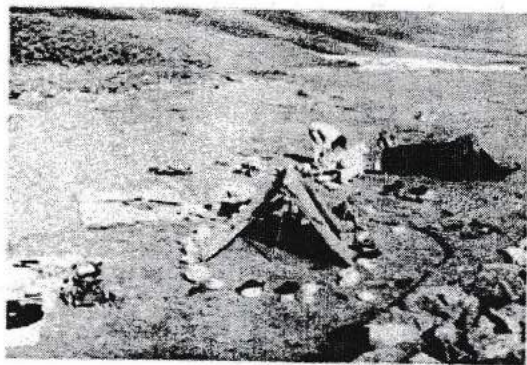
What the initial membership was I have no idea, but there was certainly a lot of confidence. Only two years later Fr. Atkinson, the parish priest in Ambleside, found that the farmhouse of Buckbarrow Farm at the bottom end of Wasdale was empty and negotiated with Mr. Gass the farmer, for the club to rent it for £52/yr. Another two years later, in 1946, with membership standing at 100, the confidence was such that the club decided to buy its first property, the old Isolation Hospital at the top of Dunmail Raise, for £799. With an estimate of £648.17s for external repairs and interior fitting out, this had necessitated a loan of £1,000 from the Lancaster Diocese. A statement issued by the Management Committee at the time begins 'It is very obvious that the Achille Ratti Climbing Club has come to stay.' and that with all the confidence of youth of a club that was barely four years old, and yet which already had three huts.

I cannot with any certainty say what club membership peaked at, but in 1950 it was 160. Then the blow fell in 1951, Cyril Bulman, the owner of the New Hotel and from whom the club was renting the Langdale hut for £22/yr. decided to repossess it. He wanted to convert it to a retirement flat for himself and his wife, leaving the running of the hotel to his son John and his sister, but he did promise Bishop Pearson (elevated in 1949) that if he was disposing of any property in the valley he would give him first chance.

For rock climbers, Langdale is the finest valley in Lakeland, with its multiplicity of crags both high and low and routes of various grades. Buckbarrow was thought of as a fine hut, but very

limited unless you had your own transport which few members could afford in those days. (I bought my first motorbike in November 1951 a 350 BSA for £20, which was a year younger than myself.) The best thing about the Dunmail hut was that it was on a main bus route, and so the easiest of access but it was in the wrong place for the rock climbers, and membership began to drop steadily through the early fifties.

Meanwhile I and my mates having served our apprenticeship and become experienced fell walkers, were beginning to venture on to the easier routes on the Langdale crags. We mainly stayed at Hammarbank the large house in extensive grounds between the road from Windermere and Bowness where they join on the way to Ambleside. This had been donated to the Lancashire and Cheshire Association of Boys' Club in 1946 by Lord Peel, and to which the Boys' Club in our home parish, St. Marys (Lowe House) in St. Helens, began to use for our annual weeks holiday in 1947.

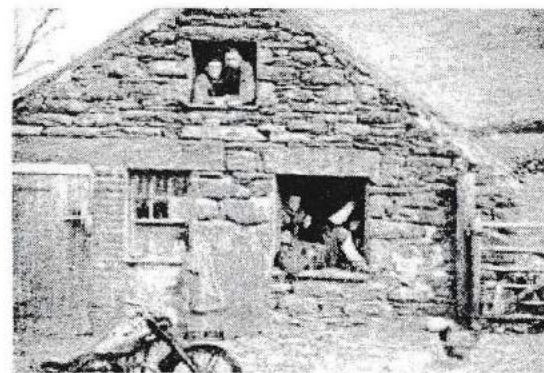


July 1954 a wet camp in in Mickleden

It provided luxurious accommodation in small dorms. with polished wooden floors full board and packed lunch on request, but it was too far from the crags. We hadn't enough motorbikes to carry everybody and using the bus to Ambleside and then up Langdale was too tying and slow. So we began to camp up Mickleden, right

below Gimmer Crag and Bowfell Buttress, but our U.S. Army bivvy tents were inadequate for Lakeland weather, which never seemed to play the game fairly. We need a club with a hut up Langdale was the consensus. We had heard of this Catholic climbing club which had a hut up Dunmail Raise, but we were not interested, for the same reason that the Achille Ratti was losing members. Not in the right place.

It was the same when we camped by Llyn Ogwen, Welsh rain being just as wetting as Lakeland. Then we heard that Big Willy at Gwern-y-Gof Ysaf farm (3 ml. west of Capel Curig) let climbers use his barn for a bob a night. There was even a free standing petty with a flush toilet, and a stand pipe to get water for cooking (washing wasn't fashionable). With a weatherproof slate roof and solid stone walls as a base so near to the rock, we were quite content.



Whit. 1955 stone tent at Ysaf farm. Golden Oldies may recognise Tony Welding, John Liptrot, Tom Conway, Terry Welding and John Thorpe, plus my 350 Ariel.

By 1955 there were only about 60 members left in the Achille Ratti, paying £1/yr. subs. and 2s..6d /night when they stayed in the huts, with the rent on Buckbarrow taking £52 of that. The confidence of 1946 was eroding and it was increasingly doubtful if the club would be able to continue. Not a penny had been repaid to

the Diocese. Then came an offer which the club could not afford, but which if it was to survive it could not refuse. Cyril Bulman having retired from the Hotel now decided to retire from farming too. The farm house at Rawhead had been sold to F&R.C.C. in 1945 and he now decided to put the rest of Rawhead Farm up for sale for £2,000. The property consisted of the great barn itself, a chicken shed (now out family quarters) and a smaller barn 100yd up the road (which we have converted to our chapel), and 110 acres of fellside. True to his word he offered it to Bishop Pearson first.

What would you have done, if your income was £60/yr. and you were offered a house for £2,000 do you think you could have afforded it? But this wasn't a house it was an empty shell with an unknown amount needed to make

it habitable. Bishop Pearson was a man of faith and courage and he said yes, but he knew that a membership of only 60 was not enough to support such an investment. So was launched the greatest advertising campaign any climbing club has ever mounted. I and my mates were actually at Hammarbank that August in 1955 when the news broke. There were the headlines in the papers and not just the local papers and the Catholic press, but national dailies too.



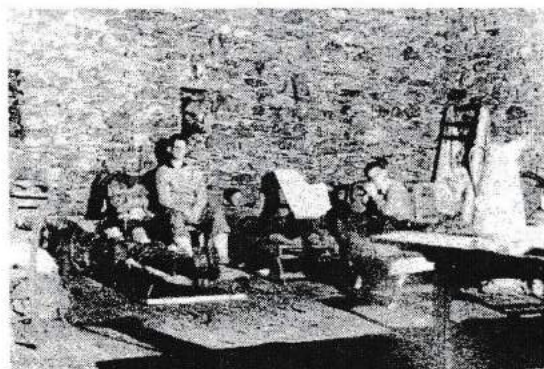
Aug. 1955 Four Musketeers ride out from Hammarbank to meet the challenge of Langdale rock.

“Bishop Buys a Mountain” “Chapel in the Hills” “Hostel Among the Mountains for Catholic Youth.”

When we realised it was the ideal location we joined straight away and came back to stay in the barn (which had been simply fitted out for temporary use) in the last week of September. It was, what is now the women's dorm. in which a Black Prince gas cooker had been installed, with a single gas lamp on the wall above it supplied from a 32lb. butane cylinder. There were half a dozen single iron beds with mattresses, a trestle table and a few chairs. The final piece of equipment was an Elsan in the chicken shed to which access was gained through a hog hole in the far corner of what became the men's dorm. (it now forms a cupboard in the family quarters.)

We climbed in White Ghyll on Pavey Ark and Gimmer Crag but the weather was mixed and we couldn't risk getting really wet with no means of drying. The only waterproofs available at that time were ex W.D. gas capes, proof against mustard gas and Lakeland rain, but you still got steamed up and damp in them.

One day a tall figure appeared among us wearing a fawn raglan mac. which was open and it was only when we saw the red sash that we realised who it was. A group of 8 joining a membership of 60 was a big boost, and the Bishop had felt it worth coming up from Blackpool to meet us. We were very impressed, apart from at confirmation we had never been so close to a Bishop before. We were even more impressed when we realised he was in a 3 litre Austin Healey. It made my old motorbike seem like a rag and bone outfit. He too seemed impressed at the routes we had been doing so all in all a satisfactory meeting.



Sept. 1955 Rawhead Barn (Bishopscale) Tom Finney showing off his nailed boots, Terry Welding, myself, Tony Welding and Tom Conway's feet.

That year attended by Bishop Pearson, the committee agreed to the proposal by J. Gilmour, seconded by M. Pooler, suggesting that we go ahead and buy Tyn Twr for £1,500; the purchase to be financed by the sale of life membership and interest free loans from members. Purchase was finally completed in October 1967. The acquisition of what eventually became Bishops Scale proved to be the catalyst which caused a rebirth of the Achille Ratti Climbing Club. We must have been the first of the many, for in the next six years the club membership

doubled, trebled, quadrupled, and the majority of the new members were rock climbers. With not a fell runner in sight apart from Gerry Charnley (and some runner he was) the sixties and seventies were definitely the peak years of the Achille Ratti as a climbing club and since then we have been in slow decline.

But expansion was not quite complete it was on a beautiful weekend in May 1963, after a typically wet Easter camping near Capel Curig that I mentioned wistfully to Terry Hickey, (then hut warden) outside Bishops Scale that we could do with a hut in North Wales. It wasn't a proposal just wishful thinking, for I knew that we not only had the debt on Bishops Scale, but also still the £1,000 on Dunmail. One of Terry's favourite sayings was 'We cannot stand still we go forward, or we go back.' Without saying anything to me he proposed at the next Management Committee meeting that we should establish a hut in North Wales.

The response of the Committee was not that we must spend money on the present huts first or pay off the outstanding debt (which was still appreciable), but to tell me to start looking. The confidence and farsightedness of 1946 and 1955 was still strong, I wonder how much remains today? So it is Terry Hickey and not me who is the real father of our Welsh hut.

I searched for three years and at Easter 1966 I found Tyn Twr. There were some red herrings that summer but at a committee meeting in September

There is no doubt that our club owes a tremendous amount, not just to the courage and foresight of Bishop Pearson, but to the loyalty and confidence of the management committee which gave him their full support in 1946, 1955 (the biggest gamble) and again 1966. Yet only 16 months after the decision to buy Tyn Twr, that loyalty was put to the test once again with Bishop Pearson on the hunt for a hut in Scotland.

Extract from ARCC committee meeting 3/1/68.

Any other business.

Information had been received from Bishop Pearson in connection with a climbing hut in Glencoe that would be available

for purchase in the near future. The possibility of acquiring this hut was not discussed in detail. More information would no doubt be forthcoming.

I was sitting next to Terry Hickey as the chairman read out the Bishops Letter and he groaned 'Not just yet'. However at the next meeting on 20th Feb. 1968 Bill Carter reported
Glencoe – The Bishop had contacted the Chairman in connection with the property for sale in Glencoe to say that the price asked was prohibitive.

So our Scottish hut was postponed. The process of getting planning permission for Tyn Twr and other necessary agreements was long drawn out and it was 8th Nov. 1969 before Tyn Twr was ready to be opened for general use by our members. Thus in its first 'be even quicker when the 'Cumberland Gap' (between Carlisle and Gretna) is raised to the same standard. 27 years our club went from having one rented hut to four huts, only one being rented and that is where we have stuck.

In its early years Tyn Twr was well used with many hard routes being climbed on Gogarth Cloggy and at Tremadoc, and the first 14 peaks long walks (with Tom's Teastall on Foel Grach.) During the 80s and 90s we have been in a slow decline as a climbing club with that bulk of our membership which joined as 20 year olds in the rapid expansion following the establishment of Bishops Scale having now reached their 60s.

Just how true this is, was brought home to me recently when I came across the first two log books for Tyn Twr, up to Oct. 1981. The long lists of impressive routes V.S. and X.S. (no E grades then), which many of our members climbed. There were familiar names, the most prominent being Joe Tasker (whose body now lies somewhere on Everest) others I haven't seen for years.

We always have had problems retaining climbers and I see in the F.& R.C.C. list of members at least a dozen whose early hill days were in the Achille Ratti.

We have maintained our numbers at between six and seven hundred for about 20 years, which means that the bulk of our members are 20 years older and much less active. The pensioners

section grows almost daily and I expect a big clearout in the next 10 years or so (I doubt if I'll see the end of this decade) Our urgent need for fresh young blood should be obvious and if we are to maintain the traditional structure of the club it is climbers we need most. For many don't remain so for the rest of their days, tending to metamorphose into runners and orienteers, bikers and canoeists, as the responsibilities of family and jobs take their toll. So why is our club with its present four huts not attracting many climbers? There must be a parallel with the early fifties.

In the days before the M6 it took me 4 hours on a Friday evening in summer to get to Ambleside as I had to drive across country to Penwortham, queued to cross the bridge then through Preston, Lancaster, and Kendal and at every village strung along the A6. Now living 3 miles from the M6 at Orrell, I can be in Crianlarich in four hours and Glen Coe in less than five.

Since I took early retirement 17 years ago I have been warden at the Alex MacIntyre Hut in February. At first it was always Scottish clubs which used the hut at weekends, while English clubs (and Irish groups too) booked the whole week. In the last two Februaries I have noticed English clubs too coming up for weekends now the M74 is such a magnificent road .

If we are to attract young climbers today and keep them rather than let them drift away to other clubs with Scottish huts, we must set up our own hut north of the border as soon as we can. We have been left behind since we were beaten by Fell and Rock in our bid for the old police station in Kinlochleven. The Rucksack Club (membership 400) have set up their hut Craig Allan just across Loch Linnhe from the MacIntyre hut. The S.M.C. (also 400) have opened the Raeburn hut between Laggan and Dalwhinnie to add to their existing 3 huts and then last year the Naismith hut at Elphin near Ullapool. A year last September the Climbers' Club, which has overtaken Fell and Rock in membership (now 1500) opened its first Scottish hut at Roy Bridge and last November I heard that Fell and Rock were in the process of acquiring their second Scottish hut at Aviemore.

I would gladly swop everything we have spent on our huts in the past 10 years for a Scottish hut, as I am so convinced our club's future depends on it.

We need new members more than we need new toilets.

It has been pointed out to me that the recent improvements to our huts which benefit me just as much as everyone else, but I am not our club's future, I am it's past and so are many of you reading this. In any case nothing we can do to our existing huts can equal the excitement and stimulus of a new hut in, a new area as the following incident in the early years of Tyn Twr shows.

On a brilliant Saturday morning over 30 years ago I was driving the Landrover up the A5 to Ogwen with half a dozen members in the back, all climbers. Looking across the Nant Ffrancon at the great slabs on the lower slopes of Carnedd-y-Filiast, Mickey Pooler asked if there were any routes on them, when I replied that there were, but belays were rather sparse he said 'Isn't it great it's like starting climbing all over again.' That I have never forgotten as it justified and made worthwhile all the effort in setting up Tyn Twr. I would be just as happy to set up our first Scottish hut too but my days of working on huts are almost at an end. All I can do now is keep my eyes open for something suitable and if our committee can match the courage and foresight of earlier years and decide to buy it then I still make good my promise of £1000 towards the purchase price.

We have no time to waste. In the past 5 months Derek's death was just the first of four climbers with whom I have enjoyed hill days. Only one was older than myself. For many of us now it is not so much the Traverse of the Gods as the Twilight of the Gods. As Gotterdammerung slowly descends on the Achille Ratti I wonder is it too late to shake our club out of its complacency! The crisis is not as severe as in 1955 for I don't doubt that our club will continue. But extrapolating the decline of the past 20 years, I fear that A.R.C.C. may eventually come to mean the Achille Ratti Country Club with Bishopscale known as the Langdale Hilton.

If you are in tune with our founder's intention that our club should provide the same facilities among the Scottish mountains as it does in The Lakes and North Wales write to the Committee and say so. DO IT NOW it is no use just sitting and wishing, and if you can afford a donation say how much you will chip in when they deliver the goods.

In this our 60th year let us once again live up to the admonishment of Bishop Pearson who wrote in our 1946 Journal "It is up to the enterprise and spirit of the members to see that it develops into a saga of adventure and progress. There will be more difficulties, but our lessons of the hills would be superficial if we had not learnt that the spirit of the hills is to overcome obstacles and to venture new and better things"

I can only say AMEN to that.



The motto at Buckbarrow was, "Bishopscales's only for smoothies".

All a climber ever needed was a place to cook eat and sleep and a fire to sit and natter by. (but who carried the can?)

JOHN FOSTER

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The mountaineer who seeks nothing but fame, and to make and break records, is forced to abandon the mountains when there are no more worlds to conquer and when his youth and strength abandon him.

But he who loves the mountains for themselves and for their eternal beauty will never grudge them their everlasting youth. He will turn to them again and again, knowing they will never fail him. And when he can no longer do more than lift his eyes to the hills, he will still find that the promised strength is unfailing, not strength of body, but of spirit, garnered from long days spent in nature's tranquillity and peace.

D.W.PRICE.

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