

FISHING IN TREES

Phil Hodgson



Christmas Day, 2011; Mandy and myself, together with Dave and Janet Makin were heading north through Scotland and pulled over for the night in our two camper vans in a parking area near Loch Tummel. The four of us had been for a woodland walk. "What a great place to stay!" Dave said, throwing a "ball on a string thing" into the woods for Tod the dog. "Damn!" he exclaimed several throws later as he looked forlornly up into the branches of a pine tree. The ball on a string thing, skilfully crafted from a golf ball and lots of string, was hanging tantalisingly from a branch above his head. Tantalising if you are a 20 foot giant; frustrating if you are five foot three Dave. Fifteen minutes spent throwing sticks proved fruitless. "I'll get my fishing rod", Dave said. Unfortunately his biggest rod was not long enough...then, "Good job I've got some gaffa tape" as he taped

a smaller rod to the big one. The new super rod was still too short to reach even when Dave stood on the wooden picnic bench conveniently located a few yards from the tree, but rather inconveniently bolted down so we couldn't move it any closer. I carried on throwing big sticks upwards in the encroaching gloom. I abandoned my rather random throws when it became too dark to see the big stick I'd just tossed skywards falling straight back down towards my head. Tod the dog stood to one side looking bemused at my pointless stick throwing and at his master messing with fishing rods half a mile from the nearest river. More gaffa tape. The new super extended double rod now had a big branch taped to the bottom, and it reached. Unfortunately the top end was too flimsy to dislodge the hanging ball. It hung there, swaying gently as it caught the light of our headtorches.

I heard some voices. "Psssstt", I said to Dave, "someone's coming". Dave continued his nonchalant rod waving in the branches of the tree. I saw a couple with a dog approaching. "It looks like the fishing warden", I joked, "he'll probably want to see your "tree trout" licence". The couple were obviously perplexed by our activities. "What are you doing?" the lady asked. Somewhat sheepishly we explained our predicament. They looked at each other and quickly hurried away. Dave's continuing fishy probing dislodged only the odd pinecone.

"Hang on", I said, "I've got an extending decorating pole in the back of the van, "let's attach that to the big rod". Not questioning why anyone would take such an item camping, (I use it to wedge open the tailgate), Dave started to try and unstick the very sticky gaffa tape attaching the flimsy rod to the bigger one. Then, in a sudden flash of unusual genius, Dave jumped up, "I've got a tow rope in the van". He grabbed it and, having attached a large twig to it, tossed it up towards the offending branch. It pulled up short. "Ahaaa!" I shouted, "if we fasten it to the end of the big rod with its pine branch and decorating pole extensions it should do the trick". Our team effort, Dave throwing while I handled the rod with all the skill expected of an expert fisherman, at first provided disappointing results, (my fishing skills are renowned – having only managed to catch one decent fish in several years of trying). The rope now reached easily but Dave's throwing prowess was a little off the mark. Then...another throw; the rope and stick glided through the air and wrapped neatly round the branch. "Smashing!" said Dave. We could now shake the ball on a string thing off the branch. "Give it a pull" I said, passing on the rod. He

shook the branch, gently at first and then more violently. The ball thing didn't budge. He pulled harder. We heard a distinctive "Ploooooop" noise. We looked up. The ball was still hanging from the branch and next to it now dangled a rope with the end section of a fishing rod attached...way too high for us to reach.

As our hysterical laughter subsided we considered how we might recover the stranded items. It was too steep to drive the van closer. The tree trunk was too smooth to climb and, despite having a decorators pole I didn't have any decorators ladders hidden in my van. "We need a noose", Dave exclaimed. Wondering why the loss of a ball was such a life or death event I watched as he fashioned a gaffa tape loop and attached it to the decorators pole. "Loop it round the end of the hanging rod" he explained. I hoped I could reach. I reached up on tiptoes and tried to snag the rod as it swayed around in the wind. Suddenly we both jumped. "Kerrplop". The ball on a string thing had suddenly fallen at our feet having detached itself with little help from us. "Whey hey", we shouted, but, we still had to save Dave's embarrassment next time he went fishing. You can imagine the comments: "Hey mister, have you lost your rod end?", or "Your rods a bit small mate, tee hee".

The loop finally caught. I pulled it delicately. Nothing budged. I pulled harder and suddenly the stick and rope and rod end plunged down from above. "Yippee", we cried, "we've invented a new sport". So give it a go: Fishing in trees...it's the new fishing, it's fish friendly...and even I can catch something.

LE TOUR D' ANGLESEY 2011

September 2011 Derek Donohue

The day dawned at Tyn Twr with Bethesda immersed in a miserable drizzle as we roused ourselves for the first Tour d'Anglesey. Phil had planned the route, keeping mostly to quiet country lanes: 100 miles around the island of Anglesey. As we ate our high calorie breakfast in the hut the drizzle turned to steady rain. Conversation turned from ragging Jeff Lea about his first mountain marathon (Mandy and Jeff were putting their kit together for the RAB which was starting in Bethesda that morning) to the question of what kit to wear. At last, fully kitted out, we posed with our bikes for a group photo: Phil, Richard, Dave Makin, Dave Reynolds, Chris and Tash, Martin, Marcel and me.

The route took us to Bangor, over the Britannia Bridge onto Anglesey, and then followed a clockwise circuit of the island, taking in the South Stack Lighthouse visitor centre, Holyhead, Amlwch and Penraeth, before returning to the mainland and back to the hut. Phil had programmed the route into his trusty GPS, attached to his crossbar by means of a high tech device which looked suspiciously as if it was made from a roll of electrical tape. To be honest, although we gave Phil a bit of stick when we went wrong a few times, the day would have been tedious without it: stopping to look at the map every 5 minutes. If you don't know Anglesey then make a date to go there. The coastal scenery is superb, and the island is criss-crossed with hundreds of narrow, almost traffic-free lanes.

The first hour or so was very wet and windy, and I was wondering how cold we might all be by the end of the day. There was talk of a weather forecast which had promised sun at 10 am. Needless to say, 10 am came and went, but by 11 the clouds were clearing and the sun was drying us out. The first stage went well, the peloton speeding past RAF Valley and Treardurr Bay, and we were in good time arriving at South Stack for lunch, apart from Marcel who was suffering from occasional mechanical problems and was worried about what he'd committed to. (Phil had told him the ride was an easy 60 miler!)

The second stage, to Amlwch passed some tremendous coastal views and took in the superb Cemaes bay with its wide, sandy beach. There is not much going on in Amlwch itself, but down the hill is the fascinating Amlwch Port which was once a centre for copper exporting. We had tea and tiffin at the Heritage Centre overlooking the port, and prepared ourselves for the final stage

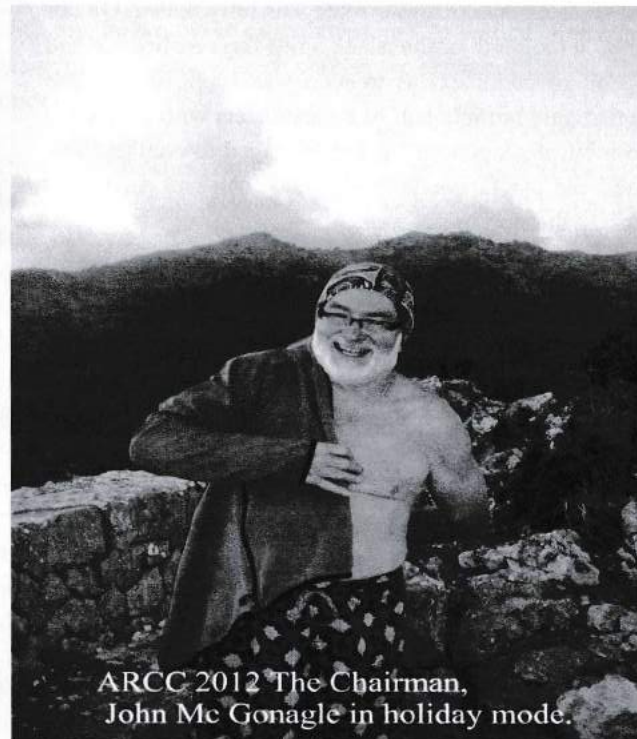
The last few miles on the island found some of us reaching into our energy reserves, but on the very steep climb out of Bangor it was clear a race was developing: it was only later I discovered it was a race for the first shower. Seeing the front riders make the break I summoned all my reserves and set off in pursuit. With a couple of miles to go I could see Dave Makin had dropped back a bit and I decided to try and catch him. Dave then looked back and saw me and I knew I was beaten, but I carried on pushing myself to the extent that I rode right past the front of the hut without realising. I then had an embarrassing 10 minutes cycling around the town trying to identify a road or building from the previous night's arrival in the dark. Eventually I found the hut and was by now the last to arrive back; not a very dignified ending to an otherwise awesome day.

I think we all did well, but my congratulations go to: Tash and Marcel on their first century rides and to Dave M for insulting me more in one day than most people do in a year (and I had never met him before!). Special thanks to Phil for the planning, and for guiding us round.

I had a superb day and I feel I have made some great new friends. Roll on Le Tour d'Anglesey 2012.

SUPER NOVA – SPITS 'N GIGGLES

Graham Dawson



ARCC 2012 The Chairman,
John Mc Gonagle in holiday mode.

It was Friday 14th Oct, the penultimate day of our ten person strong holiday to Pollenca, Mallorca. We were a mixed group with different interests and abilities, sex and ages (including a heavily pregnant lady!). This day saw four of us, myself, Alex (your club webmaster), Tim and John (your club chairman) set off, on our own version of an alpine start (about 10am) for Mallorca's climbing Mecca, the huge amphitheatre of Sa Gubia. This is situated about 15 miles

due north of Palma and about 40 minutes drive from our rather splendid villa – with its own pool!

We eventually parked the car next to the restaurant Can Penasso, and loaded up with rucksacks and gear, for a half an hour walk in the now blazing sunshine, down a narrow track passing olive groves and a horse ranch. About half way down the track, the crag came into view – we were confronted with a rib of rock like a huge shark's fin, illuminated in the now near midday sun, it was quite a sight! After another ten

minutes or so we found ourselves sweating up a track under a canopy of trees, covered in piles of long, recently cut grass, that was akin to walking on an ice rink. Upon reaching the crag we consulted the guidebook and deliberated where our routes started. Tim and John were going to climb the crag classic Albahida (Gubia Normal) with a grade of 4+ or VS 4b for all you British purists – and Alex and myself, Super Nova – Spits ‘n Giggles graded at 6a or E2 5c. We proceeded to divvy up the gear, Tim and John would need a full rack, their route required trad gear as it only had a few bolts, Alex and myself, just some extenders as our route was fully bolted. On our previous excursion to La Creveta, in the north of the island a few days earlier, we had realised that there had been a bit of confusion as to who was supposed to have brought what gear, and that we had only brought half of the extenders with us that we really needed – Doh! But with a bit of adaptation we had managed to cobble a few more together, and so Alex and I bid our farewells to Tim and John and headed 50 yards around the corner of the rib to the start of our route.

We were greeted there by a horrific stench and large pile of human excrement – mmm lovely! As you can imagine a few choice words were uttered, mainly directed at the ‘assumed’ dirty foreigners. We set about the usual routine at the start of any long climb, of gearing up, which consists of shoehorning yourself into your rock boots, straddling your harness, strapping a plastic lid to your head and taking the obligatory wee (well away from the start of any route, I hasten to add). We had agreed that I would lead the first pitch (6a) and Alex the alternate, until we reached pitch 4 where I would do a double lead as this was the only other 6a pitch on the route, the rest being 5+. I packed all my belongings into my rucksack and prepared to set off, taking extreme care not to step in the pile of **** as I went. What I was greeted with, was a lovely, sharp, grippy limestone and several quite fierce, fingery and bold moves, not the gentle start I had been hoping for. After about 6 bolts the ground got easier, but the rock turned very loose and friable, just as the bolts got spacier. After about 30ft of this I reached a tree with a couple of bits of old tat on and assumed this to be the belay. I checked around for somewhere to hook, or thread a sling, only to find that everything I pulled on, felt like if I used it, it would bring down half the crag, “Safe”, went the cry (I hope was the thought!), “taking in”. Alex, now on belay, climbed up to join me at the tree, confirming how loose it had become, and that he also had been hoping for a bit of a gentler start, “that was hard”, he commented. So, handing him my remaining quick draws, he lead on, now on pitch 2. After he had climbed for about three bolts, he shouted down, “Graeme”, “yes mate”, I replied, “I think I have found the belay point, there are two ring bolts and a decent

ledge up here”. “Ah, that makes sense” I said, “I thought this one seemed a bit dodgy. I’ll tell you what, belay me up to you and I will carry on through so that we are back in sequence for pitch 4”. After climbing up to Alex, I proceeded to lead through, now actually back on the start of pitch 2, graded at 5+. This pitch was really nice, the holds became juggier and more plentiful and the angle began to ease back slightly. After setting up belay, Alex climbed to join me and dropped a bombshell. He was climbing ok he said, but he didn’t really feel like he wanted to lead, so if it was ok with me, he would be quite happy just to second. Reluctantly agreeing and more to the point, not having much choice, we exchanged quick draws and I took to the rock once again.

Pitch 3 – 5+. This pitch turned out to be as good as the second, again with plenty of juggy holds to go at. About half way up, I heard a familiar voice, and about twenty foot below me Tim came into view sat on a large ledge, belaying John. I shouted down to Alex to tell him if he leant out a bit he should be able to see Tim, to which the reply came – “blimey, what a cracking pair of legs he’s got!” As it happened Alex hadn’t suddenly got a new found attraction for the same sex, (though, at the time of writing, he is currently young free and single, for any of you lovely ladies out there that might be interested!)) but what he could see were not Tim’s legs, but the legs of a very attractive Swiss girl who happened to be sharing the ledge with Tim whilst abseiling off another route with three of her friends. It also turns out that they are the very same bunch that we had met at La Creveta whilst climbing the other day – small world! So leaving Tim exchanging pleasantries and Alex fantasising (hopefully not about Tim’s legs!), I carried on climbing a rather pleasant pitch until reaching the next belay.

Pitch 4 – 6a. “Mmm, this looks interesting mate” I commented as I prepared to set off again. The line traversed out left, passing though an overhanging corner, then picked its way delicately up a vertical wall on small but positive holds, whilst becoming very exposed in the process and dropping almost 400ft below my feet. I reached the belay by a small tree, feeling elated! I was climbing well, and the route was turning into a classic. The other good point, was that this belay was the first one not to be a hanging belay, therefore giving me some time to take the weight off my now becoming ‘very sore’ feet (mental note – invent a pair of comfortable climbing shoes and go and see the dragons!). It was about this point that the realisation of why I climb came to mind, not for the sore feet, they are just a hazard of the sport, but for the fact that – the sun was warming my very core, the view was breathtaking, the

climbing, awesome, and best of all you get to share the moments with some of your closest friends. It has certainly got to beat scratting around in some grotty Lancashire quarry thinking that you're going to die!

Pitch 5 – 5+. The angle on this pitch eased back slightly on the previous, more reflecting the grade. The elation of the last pitch soon dissipated as my feet once again began to scream at me to remove them from their vice. The climb continued, trending out leftwards, following an overhanging crack, until the bolts seemed to disappear. “Can you see where it goes mate?” I shouted. “Erm, I think it crosses the crack and goes back out right over the overhang”, Alex replied. Leaning out as far as I could, I just about managed to get a glimpse of the next bolt, high up right, as Alex had said, over the overhang. Bloody-hell, this looks a bit serious, I thought. As it turned out, it wasn't quite as bad as first anticipated, I had to make just one blind move pulling over and around the overhanging crack to reach a good hold and easier ground, still though, very bold for a 5+. “I've got to say, I'm loving this route mate”, I shouted. “The terrain and climbing are fantastic!”

Pitches 6 and 7 – Both 5+. The climbing on these pitches continued as it had for most of the way. The rock just kept on giving. There were good holds exactly where you wanted them; the footholds were in abundance and the friction great. It was probably one of the first times in my climbing career that I have been disappointed to finish a multi-pitch route. I could of quite happily done it all over again, although my feet would tell you a different story and were most appreciative when I finally removed them from their instruments of torture.

After a couple of minutes sat at the top, drinking in the view, Tim's head suddenly appeared, and judging by the enormous grin on his face, it seemed as though he had enjoyed himself as much as I had. The first thing he did after making himself safe was remove his boots, grimacing and breathing a sigh of relief as he did so. We proceeded to recount our tales of daring do as we shared a belay and brought up our fellow climbers. About ten minutes later, all four of us were re-united at the top of what for me anyway, had been one of the best days climbing for a long time – in my top 3 for sure!

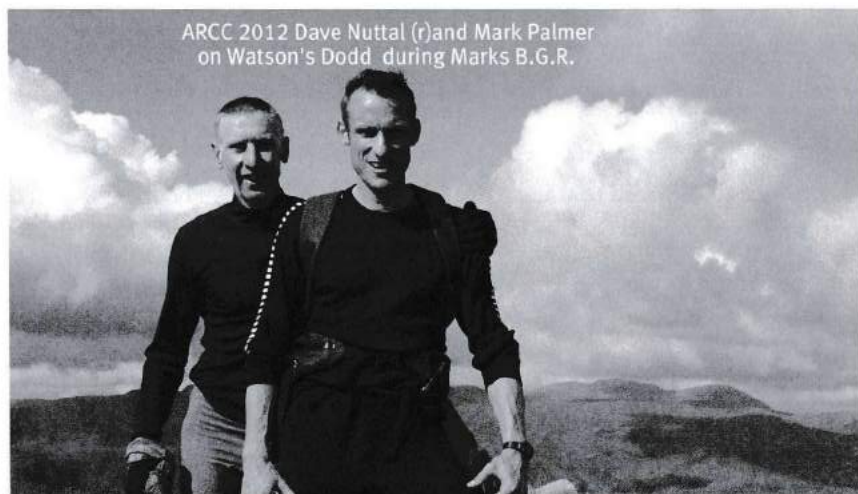
Unfortunately, the day didn't end there. We still had about another 100m or so of scrambling to get to the 'real' top, and had it been windy, I think we all would have wanted to have roped up again - Striding Edge eat your heart out. Once we got there

we quickly devoured the remainder of our sandwiches and water and packed up our gear. It was at this point that John decided to get changed into 'something more comfortable' – so whilst showing off his perfectly formed belly he donned a phycadelic buff and the most hideous pair of Bermuda shorts you have ever seen, to which the best quote of the holiday then followed – “now you know where Father Christmas goes on his holidays!” which I'm sure would be better appreciated had you been there, but believe me had us all in fits of laughter. Spits 'n Giggles by name, Spits 'n Giggles by nature.

The walk off the top seemed to take an age but actually only took about an hour. The track snaked its way off the back of the crag in a series of switchbacks which became a little tiresome after about the 30th, especially as it had now gone dark and we were late for dinner. By the time we reached the car, and more to the point the bar/restaurant, there was only one thing on our minds – BEER! “What the hell, we are late anyway, what difference will another half hour make?” So we ordered cuatro cervezas grandes por favor and sat outside and toasted the perfect end to the perfect day

SUB FIFTEEN HOUR BOB GRAHAM ROUND

Mark Palmer



ARCC 2012 Dave Nuttall (r) and Mark Palmer
on Watson's Dodd during Marks B.G.R.

Most days in the fells are memorable, even the cold and wet ones are cherished in an insane way. Occasionally we are rewarded with an exceptional day when everything is perfect, the weather, the company and boundless energy. I was extremely fortunate that my reward came on 11th June 2011.

The dawn had already arrived as we departed Moot Hall at 4am. The overnight rain clouds were gradually dispersing to reveal patches of blue sky, whilst the cool morning air was welcomed as we made our ascent of Skiddaw. I had planned an 18:30hr schedule that would give my support teams and myself a comfortable day out on the fells, but secretly felt I might have a 17hr round in me.

With a Borrowdale trio of Steve Birkinshaw, Paul Cornforth and Chris Steel we were soon crossing the first summit of the day two minutes down on schedule, fast starts have never been my strength! The low cloud hanging around the tops was of no hindrance to Steve's navigational skills and Great Calva was bagged

ahead of schedule. I'm not fond of the open grassy moorland between Calva and Mungrisdale Common and was glad to reach the trod leading to Blencathra. All that separated me from my porridge was Halls Fell ridge and in the daylight it proved to be no problem.

A quick change of shirt and partners and we were heading up Cough Head. My Clayton duo of Dave Nuttall and Mike Wallis were not familiar with clockwise rounds but had little difficulty in adapting as we made good progress over the Dodds and up to Helvellyn. Reaching the top at 0840 ensured we had the mountain to ourselves, which is always a pleasure. With Nethermost and Dollywaggon ticked off it was a fast descent to the west side of Grisdale Tarn to start the climb up Fairfield. With summits 14 and 15 also safely in the bag it was time for a PJB (Peanut and Jam) buttie at Dunmail.

Leg 3 has always been a favourite of mine, I have supported attempts in both directions and reccied it on numerous occasions. Climbing up Steel Fell with fresh shoes and socks it felt like an old friend. My fresh support legs belonged to old friends too, Andy Schofield and Tom Brunt. The clear visibility made navigation easy and sightseeing ideal, although the pace and concentration required for the rocky terrain allowed little time to enjoy the panoramic views. I felt strong on the climbs and comfortable on the descents, summits came and went until we were just 3 other people on a crowded Scafell Pike. With Broad Stand scaled and Scafell peaked we headed down to the Wasdale Valley, another favourite of mine.

I was now 2 hours up on my schedule. This was a big surprise for me but an even bigger one for my support team who had just arrived. Having supported countless runners before, this professional outfit soon had me fed, watered, cleaned and on my way with team 4: Ozzy Kershaw and Tim Whittacker. I had heard stories of Wasdale being a graveyard for many BG attempts so was glad to get the climb up Yewbarrow out the way. Reaching Red Pike at 1500 hrs it suddenly registered that I was now 11 hours into my BG; I had 3 legs in the bag, a comfortable 2-hour cushion and was still feeling relatively good. Perhaps a 16hr round was within grasp. That thought safely tucked away we push on to Steeple. On route to Pillar Mark Roberts and Mike and Hazel Robinson join us. They had planned a Wasdale rendezvous but arrived after my departure, undeterred they raced after me, Mark straight up Dore Head and the Robinson's

up Wind Gap. Efforts like this and the support throughout was enormously humbling and formed a big part of my BG experience. With Pillar now a distant rock we ascended Kirk Fell and now my legs were starting to notice the steep climbs. Mentally I boxed this feeling and tuned into the wit and wisdom of my support team and before long Kirk Fell was just another mountain to view from the rocky lump of Great Gable. For me this was the end of leg 4, from here it was a homeward run back to Keswick. Running on enthusiastic encouragement from support team 4 we had soon knocked off the three remaining peaks of the penultimate leg and were heading for the slate mines.

Honister crew were ready and my transition into dry top and trail shoes was complete before I'd finished my soup. I had mixed feeling as we climbed out of the valley, relieved to be on the final leg but sad that my fantastic day in the fells was drawing to an end. The good weather that prevailed was also ending as dark clouds loomed in the west. However, with fresh banter and subtle words of encouragement from my two anchormen, Ben Abdelnoor and Paul Cornforth, Dale Head was behind us and we were running across to Hindscarth with only Robinson remaining. And so at 1759 I touched my 42nd peak, big smile, and big emotional gulp! With Paul finding all the grassy lines off the summit we had rapidly descended into the Newlands Valley. The rain finally came but did little to dampen the high spirits as we hit the tarmac, mission almost complete.

Crossing the River Dewent I asked Paul if "a sub 15 was possible". The informed reply was positive but came with conditions.

"Yes, but you need to pick the pace up!"

The fantastic effort of my support teams throughout the day was inspirational and without them I would not have had such a perfect day. And so for them I gladly picked my pace up, touching Moot Hall at 1859 to complete my 14:59 Bob Graham Round.

No man is an island and I am extremely grateful to the following for giving up their time and energy. Without them I would not have had such a successful day.
On the road – Jane & Richard Leonard, Janet & Dave Makin, Tony Shanley and Jeff Lea.

On the mountain - Steve Birkinshaw, Chris Steel, Paul Cornfort, Dave Nuttal, Mike Wallis, Andy Schofield, Tom Brunt, Ozzy Kershaw, Tim Whittaker, Mark Roberts, Mike & Hazel Robinson and Ben Abdelnoor.

COIR' AN UAIGNES

There is a place I wait to walk,
Bealach Coir' an Uaigneis,
Until I go through with you
At my side, my dear one.
For, how could I set foot in there now,
In the hollow of the Loneliness?

The mind is full with so many thoughts,
Memories of simple games played.
Sunlight shone on mountain tops
And snow fell on the big hill.
To laugh and roll about like children,
Not flinching when a hand is put near.

The Comforter will guide you now,
All creation wrap around your heart.
Hurt, which was made by others,
Be taken away by trust.
Travel in peace and hope, my future,
Smiling on your journey under stars.

Anne Wallace

THE 26 LAKES, WATERS AND MERES ROUTE

This route was devised and first run in the early eighties by two friends and club-mates: Peter Schofield, a Life Member of that illustrious club, Horwich R.M.I. (Railway Mens Institute) Harriers; and Leo Pollard the founder of the fell running section within the Achille Ratti Climbing Club. In the intervening thirty years or so, and before the two completions this year, only two further successful attempts have taken place. The first of these was by Alan Heaton of Clayton Le Moors Harriers and the second by Joss Naylor both again, in the early eighties.

Joss's attempt included Kentmere Reservoir. This body of water was excluded from the original attempts because it's not named as a Lake, Water or Mere on the edition of the map that's displayed in the lounge at Bishop's Scale, Langdale and upon which the Lakes, Waters and Meres Route is based.

THE 26 LAKES, WATERS AND MERES RUN

Dave Makin and Andy Pooler

On the 11th July 2011, Dave Makin and Andy Pooler, two members of the Achille Ratti Climbing Club. Together, completed what was only the fifth circuit of this Lakeland route. The route involves visiting all the 26 Lakes, Waters and Meres, shown on the One Inch Ordnance Survey Map of the English Lake District displayed in the lounge at Bishop's Scale, Langdale. (The body of water shown as Kentmere Reservoir on later editions of the map is un-named on this edition.)

The route takes in all 26 of the Lakes, Waters and Meres covering approximately 100 miles with 22500 feet of ascent.

Leo was delighted that we'd taken on his challenge to celebrate the 30th anniversary of his successful route and after 28 years since the last attempt.

The route visits each in turn reading across the page.

<i>Loweswater.</i>	<i>Crummock Water.</i>	<i>Buttermere.</i>
<i>Ennerdale Water.</i>	<i>Wast Water.</i>	<i>Devoke Water.</i>
<i>Goat's Water.</i>	<i>Low Water.</i>	<i>Livers Water.</i>
<i>Coniston water.</i>	<i>Esthwaite Water.</i>	<i>Elter Water</i>
<i>Grasmere.</i>	<i>Rydal Water.</i>	<i>Windermere.</i>
<i>Skeggles Water.</i>	<i>Haweswater.</i>	<i>Small Water.</i>
<i>Blea Water.</i>	<i>Hayeswater.</i>	<i>Brothers Water</i>
<i>Ullswater.</i>	<i>Thirlmere.</i>	<i>Derwent Water.</i>
<i>Bassenthwaite Lake.</i>	<i>Over Water.</i>	

LEG 1 Loweswater-Wast Water

The car journey to the start was quiet, not the normal atmosphere for an Achille Ratti weekend run. We arrived at Loweswater at 8.30am, found a place to park, got out of the car and touched the water.

After 2 years of planning and many recce days we were finally on our way. Now full of anticipation at the prospect of the 2 long days ahead our mood lightened as we began. We left Loweswater on a warm and sunny Friday morning which was shortly to turn into a hot summer's day and our first challenge of the day was to pass the highly recommended Kirk Stile Inn (the first of many inviting pubs will we would pass over the course of the next hundred or so miles).

We were accompanied on this leg by Sean Makin, Cath Shanley and Arthur Daniels and soon we were making good time along the sides of Crummock Water and Buttermere. Our 1st big climb of the day was past Bleaberry Tarn and contouring around the summit of Red Pike where Cath and Arthur left us to enjoy the descent into Ennerdale.

Sean took the map and led us off the tops following a good grassy line to Ennerdale Water. In order to minimise our climbing we'd opted to go for the route up the valley bottom to Black Sail Pass and this seemed to go on forever but brought the benefit of an easy climb over Black Sail Pass and an easy runnable descent into Wasdale Head. There we met our support team for some refreshments. Janet provided us with delicious home-made soup and tea which gratefully devoured and she loaded us up with sandwiches and drinks for our onward journey.

young Dave and James eager for a play encouraged us to take the steep grassy descent down to the south-eastern end of Hayeswater – not the best route for sore feet and probably not our wisest decision of the day.

A steady trot down and Brothers Water was soon ticked off and a combination of gentle running, walking and an ice lolly in Patterdale brought us, via Ullswater, to bacon butties and tea in Glenridding car park served by Janet and Jo Lee. We were feeling pretty good now as we knew we had one last big climb to complete and only another 25 miles to go. Feet were well tended to in Glenridding and fresh socks brought some welcome relief.

LEG 5 Ullswater – Overwater

We left Glenridding around midday suitably refreshed and full of tea and began the climb of Sticks Pass with Jeff Lea, Tash Fellowes and Tony having replaced James and Dave. A long, slow climb up Sticks Pass was followed by a good fast (or felt like fast!) run off to Legburthwaite and soon we were at Thirlmere. A brief stop where we collected Martin and Arthur and off we headed for Derwent Water. We'd assumed that our legs would be tired by this point and any saving in climbing would be appreciated so we headed along the A591 towards Castlerigg. As it happened our legs were in a good state and with hindsight the climb up and over Brackenrigg might have been the better option – perhaps next time!

As we made our way down through the woods, Derwent water soon arrived and we managed to pick our way through the tourists in Keswick to head out along the River Derwent towards Bassenthwaite Lake. Unfortunately the path leaves the river and there is no alternative but to use the busy A591. As if by magic Tony appeared in a lay-by with the van to drop Cath off to run the last few miles with us. We got to the shore of Bassenthwaite and were met by our support team who were enjoying a picnic near the beautiful church of St Cuthberts and then off we went to find Over Water.

Unfortunately Over Water is still about 5 miles distant and the country lanes seem to climb constantly. This is not ideal when you've got your head around the fact that your practically finished the day.

We got a view of Over Water about half a mile from the finish and managed a good run into the finish where a good crowd had gathered to watch and cheer us in.

We must say a big thank you to everyone at the Achille Ratti Climbing Club for their help and support before and during the day. Also our thanks to the owner of

the land around Over Water who kindly gave their permission for us to access the water and without whom the completion of the route would not have been possible.

Ad Altoria

Dave and Andy.



Dave & Andy at Thirlmere during their Lakes, Waters & Meres Photo Sean Makin



Photo Mick Mc Govern

L to R: Andy Pooler, Leo Pollard, Dave Makin The three ARCC contenders to have completed the Lakes, Waters And Meres Route run.

MOUNT FOURCHON

Pete Cavanagh

Exactly two years previously, at the beginning of May, I was sat on the balcony looking out across the Arve valley towards the Pointe d'Areu. The snow was rapidly disappearing below 2000m but the tops of the mountains looked superb against a brilliant blue sky. It was not surprising that I could hardly believe the weather forecast which was predicting snow down to 500m over the next few days. Would this jeopardise our planned ski tour to the Hospice of Grand St Bernard and an ascent of Mont Fourchon that John and I had been planning for some time?



The next day was overcast but Philippe, a friend and local guide arrived and we decided that we would go, reasoning that, even if the weather deteriorated, we could probably make it to the Hospice, even if we were unable to climb Mont Fourchon, our objective for the following day. As we left Sallanches the drizzle started and the magnificent panorama of the Mont Blanc massif was obscured from view as we drove towards Chamonix. Driving over the Col de Montet we were in a sleety mist which cleared on the long drop down to Martigny. Driving up from Martigny we passed the sight of an enormous avalanche that had swept

down some days earlier right across the main trunk road linking Switzerland to Italy between the towns of Orsières and Liddes, causing significant damage. The rain started again and as we climbed up through the six kilometre long 'paravalanche' (covered section of road to protect against avalanches), above the Lac des Toules, it was snowing heavily. Looking out of the side of the 'paravalanche' you could see the snowflakes becoming bigger and thicker as we gradually climbed up to Bourg St Bernard.

We left the main road, which continues to the Grand St Bernard road tunnel, by way of a sharp exit which led to the car park at Bourg St Bernard. A number of cars were parked there, presumably from other parties who had been up to the Hospice. The single telephrique which served the ski area of Super St Bernard had now closed, as it turned out for the last time, as it was not to reopen the following season. Indeed, in March this year, a father and son had gone to the car park expecting to use the uplift but, on finding it closed, had wandered off to find somewhere to ski and had been caught in an avalanche and had both been killed.

We all got out of the car and agreed that Mont Fourchon was definitely out but that we would try for the Hospice. The normal route follows what in summer is the old road, climbing gradually uphill, until it bears off to the left to climb up and through the appropriately named Combe des Morts. As we set off we were skinning up through four inches of fresh snow, unable to see much at all except for the poles at the side of the road that indicated the route that the road takes. Later, we would admit that we all had reservations about if we should have set off in such conditions.

As we skinned up we got into that mesmerizing rhythm, in time with the noise from the skis sliding forward and the click clack of the bindings as the heel of the boot lifts and falls, allowing the forward movement. The rhythm allowed our minds to wander as we slowly gained height, only being broken by the occasional violent gust of wind that blew wet snow into unprotected areas and made us realise how poor the conditions were. Several other teams that had left the Hospice that morning, passed us on their way down with just a brief wave to acknowledge us. After about an hour and in thickening mist, we paused to take stock of the situation. Suddenly we were all aware of a deep rumbling noise. After some anxious glances it was with some relief that we realised it was the noise coming from one of the shafts which provide ventilation to the Grand St

Bernard road tunnel which runs hundreds of metres below, carrying the heavy freight lorries between Switzerland and Italy.



Conditions were deteriorating further with the snow becoming heavier and visibility reducing, when, out of the mist, two figures appeared descending towards us. They turned out to be two members of the religious order from the Hospice who, having managed to ski down through the Combe des Morts, strongly recommended that we descend as conditions were becoming too dangerous. We didn't need much persuading and after taking off our skins started to descend. The ski tracks of the two individuals were already obliterated, with them nowhere in sight. On the way down we noticed several small avalanches that had sloughed down across our route of ascent and we were relieved to get back to the car which, by now, had a good eight to ten inches of fresh snow on its roof. In retrospect, we shouldn't have set off in such conditions but every trip into the mountains brings more experience and more learning. Mont Fourchon would have to wait until next winter!

The next winter came but at the time we could all meet up, early May, the weather was even worse than the previous year and the attempt had to be postponed.

This year, the Tuesday after Easter proved to be a time when Philippe and I could try again. However, the weather this year had been warm and we were concerned that there might not be the overnight refreezing of the snow that would make our ascent of Mont Fourchon straightforward and, more importantly, the ski down pleasant and safe.

As we left the car park at Bourg St Bernard, we had to carry the skis on our sacks for about fifteen minutes as the snow plough had already started to clear the road. From the abandoned snow plough, we skinned up in perfect weather admiring the surrounding peaks and realising the potential dangers that would exist to the route in heavy snow and poor visibility! We passed the ventilation shafts, whose noise had caused us concern on our previous attempt and soon reached Le Tronchet. In days gone by this had proved an effective shelter for travellers caught out on the route and still contains an emergency telephone, wood burning stove and seating. A plaque on the outside depicts some mountain travellers requesting St Bernard to guide their steps. Shortly after leaving Le Tronchet, the climb leaves the route of the summer road and enters the Combe des Morts. Passing through the Combe it is clear to see how it gets its name, as for a short section, it is threatened from steep slopes on either side. Towards the end of the Combe des Morts the route steepens and there is a short steep climb up to the Hospice that requires a couple of kick turns to change direction, thus reducing the steepness of the climb and enable a series of rising zigzags to be made to the Col de Grand St Bernard.

The route crossing the Col de Grand St Bernard has been used since pre Roman times and travellers had always been at risk from thieves and bad weather. Napoleon marched his army of more than 46,000 over the col in May 1800. At the start of the 11th century the Archdeacon of Aosta, Bernard de Menthon originally from a family from Annecy, arranged for the first hospice to be built for the protection of travellers and a Hospice has been present there ever since staffed by Augustine monks. The Hospice continues to offer accommodation to the present day and travellers arriving under their own steam can stay overnight, with accommodation, evening meal and breakfast costing about 40 euros.

The Hospice was much larger than I had imaging it to be, two large imposing building several stories high, with a covered bridge joining the two. The summer road goes in between the building and under the bridge, but today this

was still under more than a metre of snow. We went inside, leaving our gear in the ski cellar. The interior corridors of the Hospice have vaulted ceilings, off which are rooms large enough to accommodate 30 to 40 people and these are now often used for conference purposes. At the far end of the corridor on the bottom floor is the imposing 'Eglise' with its impressive frescos and organ. Being Easter, the Hospice had been full the previous week and various displays on the Easter message were in evidence. We made our way to the dining room where we were able to have a welcome bowl of hot soup accompanied by bread and cheese.

After our lunch we decided to take a look at our proposed route for the next day and skied along the side of the lake behind the Hospice, crossing the border into Italy. At the far end of the lake is a statue of St Bernard de Menthon. His imposing statue points the way back to the Hospice. We descended to a point under the Tour des Fous which is where we would start our climb up the following day and whilst mapping out our route met two Slovenians who were descending from Mont Fourchon having had a late start and having found the heat tiring.

Returning to the Hospice we spent the rest of the afternoon visiting the museum which, through a series of different exhibitions tells the history of the Hospice as well as giving much information on the geology, flora and fauna of the surrounding area. Following dinner, we attended a presentation about the background to the Hospice which included an early black and white film show. This depicted life at the Hospice in the early part of the last century. Access to the hospice was more difficult in those days with horse drawn sleds being the main means of transport. Being cut off from road access for eight months of the year meant that the resident monks had to be self-sufficient in all respects. The monks also had an important role in mountain rescue. Indeed, the famous St Bernard dogs were kept there, where they were used as both guard dogs and, many years ago, mountain rescue dogs. The film showed some amazing scenes of the monks skiing down to rescue avalanche victims, their long black cloaks billowing behind them as they skied on long heavy wooden skis with enormous wooden staffs which they used as ski poles and also avalanche probes. Unfortunately, many rescues were only to recover dead bodies, all shown in graphic detail! The problem then was what to do with the bodies given the isolation and altitude of the Hospice? The solution was that one of the buildings

below the hospice was used as a morgue. Again the film showed graphic detail of corpses in states of decay. The morgue was eventually bricked up in the early part of the last century with the remains of about 200 bodies inside.

The next day following an early breakfast, we left the hospice just as it was getting light and retraced our route of the previous afternoon. There had been an overnight refreezing and we put on both skins and ski crampons in order to make the ascent. The climb to the summit of Mount Fourchon is not very far, being about 600m metres of height gain over a distance of about 3km. After leaving the Hospice, the route skirts around the side of the lake crossing into Italy and then descends before turning right up into an obvious small valley towards the Fenêtre de Ferret. At about 2550m the route turns to the left and climbs up for another 450m, following a bowl towards the summit ridge. At the left-hand end of the ridge is the unmistakable summit of the Pain de Sucre with the summit of Mont Fourchon further to the right. We gained the ridge and followed it, more steeply now, to just below the summit. The last 25m are climbed without skis and the summit is gained. The blue skies and sunshine of the previous day had disappeared and we climbed up with varying degrees of cloud rolling in, obscuring our views and, as so often in the mountains, giving the route a more serious atmosphere. Unfortunately, when we reached the summit we were in the cloud and after a brief pause to capture the moment on camera, we descended back to the skis and started to ski down. The art of ski touring, especially in the spring, is to climb up on refrozen snow and then to ski down just as the surface of the snow is becoming soft. We were probably a little early as the snow was a little icy as we skied down but pleasant all the same. Two hours of skinning uphill takes only a short time to ski down and we were soon back in the sunshine. We put our skins back on for the climb back up to the Hospice passing the statue of St Bernard for the last time. Crossing back into Switzerland we skinned along the side of the frozen lake and were soon at the Hospice. All that was left to do now was to ski down through the Combe des Morts and then follow the road for as far as possible, skiing on thinner and thinner strips of snow until we reached the snow plough which had, by now, managed to clear a little more of the road.

Pictures supplied by Pete

and the first few drops of rain fell. This soon increased and it wasn't long before everyone was putting on cags. Due to the deteriorating weather conditions the decision was made by all runners to abort the additional 9 mile loop (some of us had made this decision several hours earlier). After everyone had their fill of cakes and tea the final stage commenced which was to ascend the footpath to Sticks Pass and follow the ridge over Helvellyn past Dollywagon, down to Grisedale Tarn, up Seat Sandal and back to the hut.

Dave Makin, James Lurati, Jeff Lea, Dave Reynolds and I trotted ahead during the initial road section, expecting to be joined by the others once we hit the mountain path. We waited but no one turned up – what had happened?? Dave Reynolds soon told us that there had been a mutiny and Sean Makin, Andy Pooler, Tony Shanley and Jo Lee had decided to head up the valley so that time in the pub could be maximised. What is the Achille Ratti coming to in the 21st century? – this would not have happened in the old days (apparently...).

The five of us set off up the path and we soon broke up into two groups – the other four, being far stronger than I, left me to plod up at a rather steady pace. I caught up with Martin and Nicola part way up and told them that the decision had been made to head straight back to the hut due to the bad weather. “We’re not” they replied, “we want to do the lot”. Now that’s more like the Ratti spirit of old.

I continued with the plod up to the top of Sticks Pass and found Dave Reynolds waiting. The others were up in the distance somewhere and were not to be seen again until we all regrouped at the hut. Dave and I continued at my steady pace in worsening weather. We caught up with the McGonagle group and later, whilst ascending Helvellyn Low Man, caught up with Mick McGovern. Mick had not been at the last butty stop and we were surprised to see him this far up. “Oh I missed the butty stop, I’ve plenty of food with me”, was his reply when we asked him how he had made such good progress. It briefly crossed my mind that the catering team might still be waiting for him at St John’s in the Vale, but I didn’t think any more of it at that stage.

Mick’s note; I didn’t miss it on purpose and was mortified to find that the butty-stop crew waited a further 4 hours for my arrival. A sound ear-bashing has been administered to me by them and offers of basic navigation lessons have been made.

After Helvellyn Dave and I continued along the path via Nethermost Pike and Dollywagon (alright we did skip past the summits, but the weather was diabolical) and dropped down to above Grisedale Tarn. A final plod up Seat Sandal and a trot down the Bob Graham descent saw us back at the hut.

Dave Makin and his team had finished some time earlier and were just about to jump into the car to go to the pub at Grasmere – rumour had it that the short cutters were already there. I immediately noticed that the catering car was not in the lay by and there was no sign of Ann, Nicky and Paul. Could they still be sitting in the car park at St John’s in the Vale waiting for Mick McGovern I thought?? We had left there about three hours ago; it seemed an awful long time to be sitting in a car in the rain. After a quick discussion with Sue and Ben Carter I jumped in the car and hurtled down to the butty stop. There in a quiet corner was the silver Mazda Estate which belongs to our chairman. Inside Paul, Ann and Nicky were looking a bit cross. “Where is Mick McGovern?” they asked. “Oh, I passed him near the top of Helvellyn about two hours ago. He didn’t stop here because he got lost and he had plenty of food with him” I replied. Once the blue air had cleared we started up our vehicles and headed back to the hut. I wasn’t present when the catering team initially met Mick, but I can imagine what was said or what was in their minds if they didn’t actually speak it. Mick graciously accepted that he was in the wrong and that he should have reported to the catering team whether he was hungry or not.

By 19:00 hrs everyone except Martin and Nicola had returned to the hut. We had made a reasonable dent in the barrel and dinner was served. The spud pie and mushy peas followed by crumble and custard was superb. Part way through the meal Martin and Nicola returned. The weather had got the better of them and they hadn’t completed the whole route, but they had walked quite a bit further than the rest of us – well done!

The rest of the evening was spent finishing off the barrel with the usual banter passing between all there. After midnight the first of us began to retire and numbers dwindled until the last few remained in the early hours. A cook it yourself breakfast of bacon, sausage and egg was provided for the Sunday morning. I had to escape early to take my son to a football match so managed to miss the cleaning of the hut.

cake, flapjack, biscuits, hot tea and cold juice. "Yummy" said Dave M as he washed it down with lashings of tea.

We meandered (at not far off race pace!) along the quiet country lanes round the back of Skiddaw losing yet another three riders as Martin, Dave R, and Peter raced ahead and missed the turning to Lorton. (Obviously an excuse to miss out the second big climb of the day over Whinlatter). Thinking that Red Bank was the only steep bit left between us and Langdale we hammered up and over the pass to meet up with the walkers, and the Mobile Tea Emporium at Braithwaite. However, we'd reckoned without the sadistic intentions of course designer Brian. The ride up to Castlerigg stone circle is a killer when you've got 70+ miles in your legs.

Our three missing riders eventually caught up with us having circumnavigated Cockermouth at least three times. By now we were at the end of what must be the flattest six mile length of road in the Lakes; round the back of Thirlmere. What a lovely ribbon of tarmac, it's crying out for a Ratti Time Trial (watch this space!). Dunmail succumbed with ease and we raced down to Grasmere. Red Bank now loomed before us, the last climb and the one we'd all been dreading, particularly as the road was wet. This nasty bit of road soon claimed a few victims with Martin's sideways nosedive being the most spectacular when he got terminal wheel spin on the steepest bit.

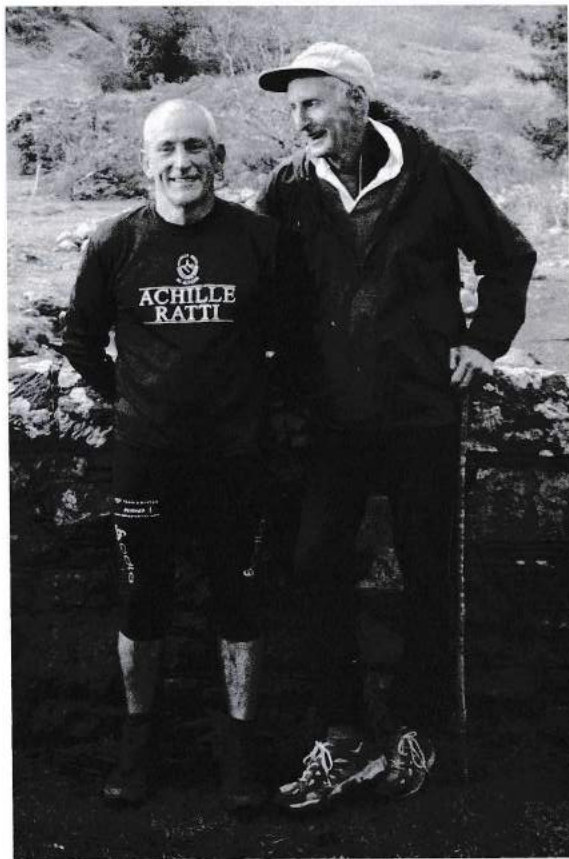
No regrouping at the top of this climb... the next stop was the Wainwright. Dave M and myself were first out of the blocks but I hate to admit that Dave beat me there (a good job really as I'd forgotten to take any money☺). He did however take a dubious short cut. Those drinking outside must have wondered what was happening when Dave M, aka the Red Rock Ramrod, screaming down the road towards the pub, gave the finishing salute more closely associated with the Manx Missile.

On the following page is a copy of a Log Book entry made by Ruby and Tom Makin, both junior members, it's taken from the Log Book in the family quarters at Bishop's Scale. Editor

Ruby Makin + Tom 21/4/12
Today my uncle Dave (Makin) did the
Joss Naylor we walked up to stay head
down to see him finish leg 3, and
chase to the last leg number
4. We walked up there with our parents,
Jack and Emma Lloyd and their dad,
and Mick Howard as well as Todd
and Deger both Dogs. We waited there until
they came he said that he had
been a bit sick. Also, Tony and Ozzy
were meant to be on leg 4 but
they never showed up (luckily they
met up with them in the middle)
So Tash had to carry on, when we
got down we went to the pub
for a quick drink before going
to Joss Naylor's house to have
for them. Joss came out and had
a chat with Leo Pollard because
he used to be a legend at running
as well. When they came down we
walked to the bridge and I walked
near the bottom of the hill
and ran the last bit with
him. Then we had loads of pictures
and all said well done, then
we went to the Old Bungen
gill for a ~~patte~~ pint. ☺
Well Done!
Uncle Dave!
☺

DAVE MAKIN'S JOSS NAYLOR CHALLENGE

Dave Makin



The challenge was inaugurated by Joss Naylor in 1990 as a fund raising event for the over 50's. In addition to completing the route, successful contenders must raise at least £100 for a charity of their choice. Joss's challenge involves climbing 30 tops, crossing some 48 miles of mountain terrain and ascending 1700 feet. The

route starts in Pooley Bridge, Ullsewater and finishes at Greendale Bridge, Wasdale. Each age group has a specific time limit varying between 12 and 24 hours.

I set off from Bishop's Scale at 5.50am for the drive to Pooley Bridge with my navigator Phil Hodgson and helpers Dave Jackson and Andrew Bibby. Leaving a vehicle at Kirkstone, chief vehicle logistics organiser, Tony Shanley joined us on the journey.

Phil set off 1st to head up to Arthur's Pike and at 7am Dave, Andrew and I set off with Tony running ahead to open the gates at the start of the leg. As we started to climb Tony left us to drive back to Kirkstone to meet us at the 1st changeover.

Despite the ground being very wet underfoot we reached the first summit in good time. The visibility was good and the weather cold and breezy. We continued the route towards High Street making up time on the way.

We were met at Kirkstone by my wife Janet and her driver for the day Mick Howard. I received a great welcome from Achille Ratti members, Leo Pollard, Sheila Anderton, Martin and Nicola Kirkman, Jeff and Lynn Lea. Accompanying me on the next section were navigator Colin Jones and helpers Robert Green, Dave Jackson, Chris Lloyd and Mark Jackson.

Chris and Mark set off up Red Screes whilst Dave Jackson and I enjoyed tea and bacon and egg butties. Once refuelled Colin, Robert, Dave and I set off up the hill with the weather remaining fine but cool. We were continuing to make good time, still feeling good we headed off for Hart Crag and Fairfield. It was a good descent off Seat Sandal led by Robert with my other helpers providing water and snacks and keeping my spirits up.

At Dunmail, the Joss Naylor Challenge co-ordinator Monica Shone had arrived to wish me well on the remainder of my run. Also waiting for me were my helpers for the next leg, navigator Tash Fellowes and supply carriers James Lurati, Jo Lee Dave Ralphs and Andy Poole.

I arrived at Dunmail as it started to rain. As I sat down Leo produced an umbrella which he held over me to keep me dry. "Is there a towel for Dave?" Mick asked. As I had forgotten to pack one Janet wrapped me in our dog's towel

much to everyone's amusement.

I was served hot soup and sandwiches and changed into a dry top ready for the climb up Steel Fell at the start of leg 3. Climbing Steel Fell I started to feel unwell which continued for most of the leg. When I reached High Raise, Martin and Nicola were waiting with grapes and fruit salad which gave me a huge boost. On we went to Rossett Pike where Arthur Daniels and Pete McGonagle were waiting with haggis crisps "These will sort you out Makin" said Pete, which they did as I soon began to feel much better. Leaving Rossett, Arthur gave me a one of his special barley sugars to give energy on the climb ahead.

Over Bow Fell and Esk Pike, Tash chose some great lines by the time we reached the top of Great End despite the mist being down we had a good descent to Sty Head.

We were met at the stretcher box by a posse of Ratti members: Sean, Janet, Tom and Ruby Makin, Chris, Jack and Emma Lloyd, Ian and Rose Costello and Mick with dogs Todd and Dodger.

At Tony's suggestion Ian and Rose had carried up a whole watermelon and proceeded to slice it up on the stretcher box – it was delicious!! As I set off Ruby gave me her fruit pastilles to give me energy for the last leg.

As Tony had been stuck behind a 'Sunday driver' on the drive to Wasdale he had made his way up to Beck Head to meet me and Ozzy Kershaw who had made his way to Gable to check the best line for the descent. At Beck Head more club members were there to greet me namely Jeff, Lynn and Phil.

Tash had carried on as navigator up Gable with James carrying water for leg 4. I was also accompanied by Mick on the climb.

Reaching the summit we met Ozzy who took his new line down to Beck Head where we met Tony dressed as usual in his 1970s running kit.

We were by now down on time "We should have been on Steeple 12 minutes ago" Tony told me. I picked up my pace and started to claw back some of the time. Descending Steeple with Oz, Tash, James and Tony, I then ate some food

whilst climbing Haycock. More time was made up running across the Pots of Ashness which was very wet and boggy. Climbing Seatallan strongly and a good descent down Middle Fell led us down into Greendale.

As I reached the finish, Joss Naylor was there to greet me and to shake my hand. I touched the bridge in a time of 11 hours 35 minutes right on schedule. What a fantastic day on the hills.

Many thanks to the Achille Ratti and to everyone who assisted me on the day – I couldn't have done it without you.

Ad Altori



Joss Naylor and Dave with his helpers on his successful Jos Naylor Challenge.

GEORGE PARTRIDGE

Andy Marshall

One of the true veterans of Achille Ratti is George Partridge. Now 83, George has been a member for most of his life. He says he got into climbing after a trip to North Wales in 1945. The area had just been demilitarised after the Second World War and George, along with his mate went to Snowdonia. The café that many Achille Ratti members have surely sat in many times at the top of Snowden had apparently opened just the day before. "We got soaked through, but I loved it". He was hooked.

George joined what became Achille Ratti in 1946 and apart from a short break for national service in the fifties, has been a member ever since. In that time George has climbed all over the country and beyond, and many of the climbs, many times over. He has climbed Snowden over a hundred times now, something he describes as "a few". As well as Wales, George also loves climbing in Scotland and particularly on the Isle of Skye. He has also climbed Ben Nevis on three occasions.

The climbing that George did in the early days had very basic equipment, compared to the purpose built footwear and gear of today. He talks of climbing in an old pair of boots with nails hammered through the bottom and of pulling a pair of socks over the boots to create what we would think of now as climbing boots. This all seems far too dangerous, but he talks of them with a great nostalgia. Although he does openly admit the modern equipment is much better, albeit too expensive.

According to George, the lead climber never fell off in those days, this being due to death if you did. Although he has had some falls as lead man, "I didn't hurt myself though, as I always fell on the number two!"! As George became older he progressed to fell running, something he also greatly enjoyed, taking part in the Welsh 1000 metres four times. Once in the seventies he was following behind a Sherpa, who was doing the run in his bare feet!

George, like many senior members of the Achille Ratti club, refers to the club as a "mountaineering club", rather than just a "climbing club". "It's for people who just enjoy being on mountains, whether that's climbing them, running in the fells, or simply walking through the valleys." Although after a life like George's, you'd probably have to move the mountain itself to keep him off them.

EDITORS NOTE

Andy is a first year student studying journalism, he isn't a club member but asked if he could interview George after my telling him some of the stories of George's mountaineering life. It's Andy's first attempt at a live interview and he has since said that he isn't at all happy with quality of his interview or of the written account. But in spite of that I think it worth reproducing as it gives a small insight into George's exploits.



Beckstones in winter 2006

Photo Mick Mc Govern