

ACHILLE RATTI CLIMBING CLUB



1993
JOURNAL

ACHILLE RATTI CLIMBING CLUB

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CONTENTS

Page

1.....Introduction.....Derek Price

2..... Minutes of the AGM

10.....Arkle and Fionaven - Far Northern Magic.....Ted Maden

14.....In Praise of Paddling.....Jennie Massie

15.....Langdale Hut.....Anon

16.....Tyn Twr - The Birth of a Hut. Chapter VII....John Foster

18.....An Extract from an article by Quintin Hogg

18.....Visitorial Remonstrance.....Anon

19.....A Love Story - A Day on Beinn Eighe.....Alex Brownlow

21.....Walking Downunder.....George Partridge

27.....Nearer to Achille Ratti.....Joyce Kent

28.....Remembering a Great Pope.....Fr.J.G.Cremona

30.....Tales of Mountain Rescue - Number 1.....John Foster

34.....Can Ski.....George Partridge

39.....Danny Hope - Fell Runner.....Anon

40.....Junior Meet - 18/19th September,1993.....Ciaran Limmer

42.....Kids and Caves.....Tristram Limmer

43.....New Year at Langdale.....John Braybrook

44.....A Tour of North West Hardangervidda,Norway..David Hugill

47.....It's Sometimes Hard Being a Woman.....Dot Wood

54.....Part Two of Dot's Story.....Terry Kitching

57.....CAFOD Grisedale Horseshoe Race.....Peter McHale

58.....General Information

60.....Obituary

61.....1994 Meets Card

INTRODUCTION

Despite the difficulties of extracting contributions I have managed to struggle again into the next edition. I try above all to secure accounts of interesting activities and I appreciate the literary efforts of "The Few". Perhaps I am being too ambitious and should be satisfied with quality rather than quantity, though it does sadden me when I hear verbal accounts of the almost breathtaking exploits of members whose reluctance or lack of confidence or whatever, prevents them from allowing the rest of us to share in their mountaineering experiences.

However, I am proud to be associated with the articles in this journal. The variety of activities gives an indication of the high standard and diversity of the interests in which our members are now involved and I thank those who took the trouble to record their adventures.

Ad Altiora

Derek Price



AA box 487 Now a listed building

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON SATURDAY 20TH
NOVEMBER 1993 AT CHAPEL STILE VILLAGE HALL

62 Members were present at the meeting, which was attended by Monsignor Slattery, our President.

Apologies for absence were received from Angela Soper, Dot Woods, David Ogden, Margaret Price, Bernard Hayes and Phil Hindle.

Minutes of the previous Annual General Meeting were read and approved.

Chairman's Report:

This is the first time that we have had the AGM and the Club Dinner on the same day. The main aim was to free a weekend in our hard pressed calendar and to give ourselves a little space. Also, it gives members who may have travelled a long way a chance to enjoy the dinner and the opportunity of attending the AGM, which otherwise would have meant two journeys for some people.

It has been another busy year with a full calendar of events plus the extras thrown in between, like hastily put together meets for small groups, supporting the Three Shires and Langdale Horseshoe fell races, throwing in a couple of orienteering events and so on. All these events encourage camaraderie amongst the members and of course increase hut usage.

A few words about hut maintenance. Barry Rogers has completed the pointing and painting at Dunmail and is still working at Tyn Twr and I am sure that those who have seen his work will be pleased with the results. The generator is installed at Dunmail and the housing almost finished. This has been a major outlay but it now means that we can get on with further improvements, particularly in the kitchen. I have recently spent many hours in various records offices and libraries trying to find some written evidence regarding the age and history of the Dunmail building or Raise Cottage, as it used to be called. Sadly, apart from the odd bits of information we were already aware of, I drew a blank at every port of call. One interesting fact revealed is that whilst the hut is probably in the region of two hundred years old it is not a listed building, but the AA telephone box, number 487, sited by the boundary wall, is!

Our efforts to raise money for CAFOD continue, the Grisedale Horseshoe fell race being another great success with 178 runners competing, thanks to Peter McHale's organisation. The total raised from the event is £1529.95 (8.1.94). The Bishop's Walk had a boost this year with 410 adults and children taking part, more than double last year's numbers. Sixty or so members and several children sat down for an excellent meal provided by Margaret Price, Sue Carter, Alwyn Cooper, Maureen Pitchford and chief wine steward and taster, Wilf Charnley. It was a successful day topped by a very pleasant social 'get-together'.

Our two junior meets this year were a success and increasing in

popularity thanks to Micky Pooler and Dot Wood - the last at Bishop's Scale had a turn-out of 17 children. The children are the future of the club and it is good to see that rarely a weekend goes by without the family quarters being occupied.

Since the last AGM the club has lost two stalwart members, John Gilmour and Peter Durkin, and I think that as both made such useful contributions to the ARCC a few words on each would not go amiss. John Gilmour was one of the original catholic boys who used to visit Langdale and Buckbarrow in the early 1940's with Father Pearson, who was to become Bishop Pearson and founder of the club. Later, after the purchase of Dunmail in 1949 and Bishop's Scale in 1954/55, John was a leading light in the money raising programme. He never lost interest in the club and would constantly remind me, the last time at the 1992 dinner, of the debt we owe to our founder, Thomas Bernard Pearson, and that members should be continually reminded of this. Peter joined the club in 1961 when some would say it was in its heyday. Unless you arrived at Bishop's Scale on Friday you were likely to have to sleep on the floor, but this was really because there was not many more than half the bed spaces that we have today. It is true that more people went on the rocks then, but there was little choice to do anything else as many of us had hitch-hiked to get there in the first place. Fell running was almost unknown to us, orienteers a tribe of people living in Norway, canoeing was for Eskimos and mountain bikes not even on the drawing board. Peter had witnessed these different changes over the years and had strong views of what the club was about. He had been impressed by its origins, believed it to be catholic with both a large C and a small c. A Christian club, he saw its strength being with the families. Strangely, he hated committees and would not serve on one even though he acknowledged their importance, but he made up for this by being a great supporter of club events and a person on whom we could all 'sound out ideas' on. May John and Peter rest in peace.

One of our major weaknesses over the years has been our negligence regarding keeping club records and I believe we are now suffering from this. For instance, I have been asked how long the gap was from coming out of the old Langdale hut to moving to Bishop's Scale, if there was a gap, and who was living in or using Dunmail when we bought it. Plus umpteen other questions we are unable to answer because we were too busy doing other things to keep records. The first journal, published in 1946, gave a certain amount of information, but since the next publication was in 1988 we have rather a large deficiency. We of course have had newsletters since 1961 but they were aimed at keeping members up to date with club activities, and being on loose sheets of paper were often lost or torn. This is the main reason why I wanted to introduce three newsletters per year plus an annual journal for recording members activities for the year, this way the club's history would be wrapped up in the journal. The quality of the journal depends on the support from members and since at the moment I have only two major articles and two short reports, things are not looking too good for the 1993 edition.

I cannot believe that our members days on the rocks and hills

are so dull and boring that nothing happens that is worth writing about. It amazes me that our membership is still growing if the hills and mountains appear to offer so little. Of the 32 members who have provided articles for the past five journals only ten are regular suppliers, the other 22 are one-off articles, surely there must be a few more willing contributors out of 700 members. However, I am determined not to let the journal die, since I believe it will be the source of history in years to come, and if I don't get new articles I will bore you with re-writes from early newsletters.

1994 Meets. A meets card for 1994 is being prepared. If anyone wishes to plan an event will they please contact Alan Kenny with details and dates.

Finally, I would like to thank the Management Committee for their work and support during the past twelve months. You have all seen what has gone on in the huts in the way of improvements, the activities on the hills and so on. These do not just happen, they have to be organised and planned and I am very grateful for the committees help and support, I also extend my thanks to other members who have assisted in the various events. Many are aware that Christine Benjamin has gone on walkabout in Australia for several months and will not be standing for office this year. I think our thanks for her help over the past six years should be recorded.

And my last words are these. In the 1992 journal I asked meets organisers to nominate someone on the meet to supply a report for the 1993 journal. Can I now ask them to tighten the screw on whoever they nominated.

Secretary's Report:

John Meredith reported on his correspondence with the National Trust about its proposal to let Buckbarrow and in particular the concern which he had expressed, upon behalf of the committee and the club, about the National Trust's proposal to take steps which ran contrary to the stated intention to retain the hut for its Trust's own staff (which had been the basis for refusing an extension of the club's tenancy). The Trust had replied that the change of direction had been brought about by financial constraints.

He also went on to report upon the estimate received early in the year from the National Trust of the cost of carrying out most of the items of work which would be required as a pre-condition of the club taking on a tenancy at Beckstones. Whilst details of the cost of electrical work were still outstanding, he confirmed that the estimate of the cost of other works, which would be required to be borne by the club, exceeded £10,000.00 and, faced with that cost and the fact that the proposed rent is £2,500.00 per annum (over three times the current rent) the committee had done nothing whatever to speed up negotiations with the Trust, considering it preferable simply to continue with the existing arrangements as long as the Trust will let us.

Referring to Derek Price's concerns about the gaps in the club's archive, John Meredith drew attention to the fact that at the 1991 AGM he had made an appeal for archive material, that at the 1992 AGM he had thanked John Gilmore for responding to the request by providing old photographs and information and that, in his report this year, Derek Price had read an obituary to John Gilmore.

Treasurer's Report:

Mike Lomas circulated a detailed written report and expanded upon a number of aspects as follows:

All huts except Bishop's Scale made a loss on the year although the overall deficit of £13,665.14 was to be expected due to major work at Dunmail.

Whereas subscriptions have provided 55% more income than five years ago, income from hut fees has increased by only 13% compared with five years ago and turnover has increased by only 8% over the same period.

No further explanation of the deficit need be sought than by comparison of the increase in income for 1992/1993, over 1991/1992, namely 2.3%, with the increase in expenditure over the same period, namely 46.5%.

Mike Lomas emphasised that the deficit, arising as it largely did from the commitment to proper maintenance and improvement of our properties should be viewed as an investment rather than a loss. During the period of deliberate restraint in 1989/1990, only £3,375.00 had been spent on repairs to and maintenance of the club's huts as compared with £23,729.00 in 1992/1993. Mike confirmed his view that for 1993/1994 the level of spending in this category should reduce significantly.

Special events such as the dinner, sponsored walk, the running of the Three Counties Tops race and the CAFOD race have been at a net cost to the club of £1,163.00 in the financial year.

The club's insurance arrangements will be reviewed during 1994.

Individual Huts:

Bishop's Scale - a net profit of £1,416.00 in 1992/1993 compared with a net loss of £3,112.00 in 1991/1992.

Beckstones - a net loss of £3,694.00 in 1992/1993 compared with a net loss of £714.00 in 1991/1992.

Dunmail - a net loss of £13,806.00 in 1992/1993 compared with a net profit of £1,610.00 in 1991/1992 (explained of course by the heavy expenditure).

Tyn Twr - a net loss of £2,341.00 in 1992/1993 compared with a net loss of £3,271.00 in 1991/1992, continuing a trend towards, if not reaching, profitability.

In response to a request from Mike Lomas, the meeting approved the re-appointment of Brian Cheetham as the club's auditor.

He confirmed that with effect from the 30th September 1993 the club had de-registered for VAT purposes. This will result in a VAT saving of about £3,000.00 per annum but the Customs and Excise will claim back some of the VAT claimed on capital items (such as the Dunmail generator) and the club will of course have to bear the extra cost of VAT on fuel, a major area of the club's expenditure, when it is introduced in April 1994.

Rounding off, Mike emphasised that it is no use having a "wish list" unless we produce the income to do something about it. We obviously cannot rely on our capital reserves indefinitely and he commented upon his view that the staged increase in overnight fees upto a figure of £2.50 with effect from 1st January 1994 represents excellent value for money and one means of attempting to produce the income necessary to fund the club's future plans.

Arising out of the Treasurer's report, John Foster complained about the increase in fee levels, comparing them to the price of a pint. In response, Mike Lomas commented that, for most members, the overnight fees, providing accommodation, hot water and cooking facilities, were a minor part of the cost of a weekend, when most members spent substantially more on petrol and many spent more in one evening at the local pub.

John Foster drew attention to the heavy cost of electricity and water heating; the management committee stressed that this area of expenditure had been high on the agenda at recent meetings and was being actively looked at. Leo Pollard commented that, to the extent that the club's expenditure was being increased by inefficient plumbing and heating systems, those in the club with relevant "know how" had an obligation to help out. Pat Margiotta commented that, when members were invited to working weekends, it would assist if some indication of the types of jobs required were specified as this would help those who might be able to help with specialised jobs to make a more effective contribution.

Membership Secretary's Report:

The club's current composition is as follows:-

	Catholic	Non-Catholic
Life Members	106	20
Full Members	325	179
Graduate Members	27	8
	---	---
	458	207

Thus, the total membership of the club is 665, continuing the upward trend of the previous two years.

60% of full members now pay their annual subscriptions by

direct debit and Nev Haigh appealed for as many as possible of those members who do not pay by direct debit to begin doing so, because of the greater ease in administration and reduction in his workload.

Nev Haigh went on to request that members should be careful, when inviting friends or others to join, not to use old application forms which may have wrong fee details and which make no requests for photographs. He confirmed that he would be happy to send up-to-date forms to any members who request them. He also requested that, when entering into correspondence and inviting a response, members should send a stamped addressed envelope to ease the club's financial cost.

Hut Warden's Reports:

Bishop's Scale

Alan Kenny reported that the hut had been well used, including increased use of the family quarters and that arrangements for the introduction of economy 7 meters were in hand.

Beckstones:

Frank Whittle reported that usage was down, that improvements, mainly to the heating arrangements, had been completed and that no major expenditure was now contemplated (whatever the National Trust might think).

Frank reported that because of damage done by the National Trust Acorn Groups, he had changed the locks and had supplied a list of damage to the National Trust.

Use of the hut by visiting clubs was down.

Dunmail:

In the absence of Dot Wood, who was in Nepal attempting her second 20,000ft peak, the report was given by Jim Cooper who stressed that the report represented his opinion but not necessarily Dot's.

Re-pointing to the external walls and re-painting the external wood and drainpipes have been completed. A new pedestrian access and re-building of part of the boundary wall have also been completed. Problems with the drainage have been identified and alleviated, at least temporarily, (by giving Dot drainage rods and instructions how to use them). Continued regular maintenance is essential, filtration of the water supply may prove necessary and frequent internal re-decoration continues to be essential. Rod Grimshaw has built the generator housing and assisted in many ways and Jim thanked those who had helped during May's working weekend.

As in August 1993, no outside clubs will be permitted to book the hut in August 1994 since it will again be restricted to use

by club members and their guests and Jim advocated that members should come along and enjoy Dunmail's unique atmosphere. During the period since 1st January 1993, the hut has been in use for 130 of the 279 available days.

Tyn Twr

Anne Wallace reported that 60% of the hut's income came from outside bookings and 40% from members and their guests. Hut usage was about 43% from bookings and 57% use by members and guests.

Anne reported that mains powered smoke detectors had been found disconnected on a few occasions, possibly because of being set off by water vapour from the men's showers. She confirmed that the problem generally caused by condensation could be much reduced by installing an extractor fan.

Anne reported on the ideal weather conditions enjoyed by those participating in the long walk, taking in the Welsh 3,000's (19 walking, running and 7 helping to provide food and checkpoints).

Re-pointing almost completed and water supply is now connected to a new water main. Anne went on to report on various improvements to the facilities and equipment at the hut.

Anne confirmed that there will not be a Bethesda by-pass built.

Arising out of Anne's report on the long walk, John Foster criticised the small level of participation and the proportion of participants who were helpers. Mike Lomas forcibly attacked any attempt to discourage those who helped at any of the club's events, emphasising that we need all the helpers we can get.

Election of Officers and Committee Members:

John Meredith was re-appointed club secretary, proposed by Leo Pollard and seconded by John Hope (no other candidate).

There were two candidates for the post of ordinary member made vacant by the fact that Christine Benjamin completed her term of office. John Foster was proposed by Bernard Potter and seconded by Dave Armstrong. Bill Mitton was proposed by Arthur Daniels and seconded by Peter McHale. Bill Mitton was elected.

Any Other Business:

Ken Godfrey praised the effect upon Dunmail of the introduction of electricity, which he described as fantastic. He went on to comment upon the high quality of the re-pointing work done by Barry Rogers.

Monsignor Slattery proposed a vote of thanks to the management committee, which appeared to be seconded by the applause from the members present.

John Foster referred to the parable of the talents as clear

biblical support for the acquisition of a Scottish hut. In response, Derek Price commented that the acquisition of a Scottish hut would be a very heavy item of expenditure which he did not feel could be justified by the level of use by members and which he would not be prepared to support if its use would, in practice, be largely for the benefit of other clubs.

As there was no other business the meeting was closed.



Dunmail with the new generator housing.

ARKLE AND FIONAVEN; FAR NORTHERN MAGIC

Ted Maden

Fionaven, in the Far North of Scotland, just misses Munro status but in every other respect is a superb mountain. An opportunity to climb it came my way at the end of March after a short working visit to Aberdeen. Snow showers had swept the Highlands for two days, but as I drove to Inverness the sun shone from a blue sky. I continued up Strath Oykeell towards Assynt. Suddenly Suilven, Cul Mor and Canisp appeared like white phantom battleships beyond the brown sea of moor. That afternoon I traversed Quinag. The air was crystal clear and a few inches of fresh snow lent brilliance to the scene. Beyond the deep trench of Loch Assynt the serrated ridge of Suilven dominated the middle distance, with Coigach and An Teallach far to the South and Ben More Assynt nearer to the South East. Northwards the mountains stretched to the end of the land; surely that distant white one, higher than the rest, must be Fionaven.

I spent the night at the Achmelvich Youth Hostel near Lochinver, where boys from Oakham School were doing their Duke of Edinburgh Awards. The keener ones were proud to be in such a wild area and pitied less fortunate candidates who had to make do with civilised places like the Lake District!



THE RIDGE OF ARKLE AND LOCH STACK

In the morning the weather was brilliant and I decided to go for the traverse of Arkle and Fionaven. I called in at Lochinver for film; the village was so quiet that I almost collided with a lorry that unexpectedly appeared at the village store.

With regard to choice of route, "The Big Walks" describes Fionaven and Arkle as a North to South traverse, but the return after the traverse to the starting point on the Durness road seemed problematical. The SMC Corbetts guide offered a different option: both peaks could be climbed from the deserted croft of Lone at the Southern end of Loch Stack, with a common approach up a stalkers path to a col. I decided to combine the two ascents starting from Lone so as to return to my starting point at the end of the day without a lengthy road walk. That, anyway, was the plan.

It was almost 11am when I left the car at the start of the estate road to Lone. I had eight hours of daylight (the clocks had not yet gone forward). While jogging towards Lone in bright sunshine I met two walkers coming the other way. They said Fionaven was a long way so I decided not to mention that I planned to do Arkle first!

After Lone I took an alternative route up Arkle rather than the Corbetts Guide approach via the col. I followed an obvious slanting heathery ramp on the Southwest flank overlooking Loch Stack, thence to a gully and so up towards the Northwestern, higher, summit. This route is logical and is well seen in photographs of Arkle, but is almost trackless and evidently not much used. It provided a delightful way by gurgling streams and then up scree and snow patches to a cairn on the skyline, and then double-take. The actual summit was still almost a mile away to the Northwest. Careful scrambling along an almost knife edge quartzite pavement, followed by a broader plateau, brought me there. It was 1.20pm and the limited hours of daylight were intruding on my thoughts. Fionaven occupied the middle distance across a formidable, deep loch-girt glen. The only reasonable route was to backtrack along the Arkle ridge, descend to the col as I had planned, and thence gain access to the Fionaven main ridge. It was a considerable horseshoe. By eyeball I reckoned four hours to Fionaven's highest summit and this proved to be accurate.

I traversed back to Arkle's Southwest summit and easily descended the upper slopes towards the col, footsteps in intermittent snow patches marking the way, probably formed by the couple I had met earlier. But the col was an extensive, exasperating jumble of awkward quartzite ridges grained diagonally across my line of progress. As I was in running shoes I had to take extreme care on this rough terrain while time slipped by and my hopes of reaching Fionaven ebbed away. After what seemed to be an age the quartzite gave way to wet snow-covered grass with hidden streams; even that ground was easier than the quartzite. I reached the lowest point of the col and continued up a grassy slope on the other side to a lunch spot where a seven minute break afforded the only real stop of the day.

It was now 2.40pm and the main ridge of Fionaven was out of sight behind nearer ground. I considered abandoning Fionaven and instead climbing a rounded hill called Meall Horn, clearly visible and nearby to my right, before returning to Lone in plenty of daylight. However, from where I set off again a long grassy ramp led up and leftwards towards Creag Dionard, the Southeastern summit of the Fionaven massif. I continued stubbornly up this, noting that the sun was no longer shining, high cloud had moved in from the South. By 3.40pm I was on the remote top of Creag Dionard, now looking across at the Northeastern side of Fionaven main ridge, the opposite side to that seen from Arkle. The distance still looked considerable but the intervening ground was a joggable plateau, the turning point of the day!



THE SWITCHBACK RIDGE OF FIONAVEN

By soon after 4.00pm I had reached the first summit on the main quartzite ridge of Fionaven. Then came the memorable ridge, a superb high switchback, exhilaratingly poised between long scree slopes to the left, Arkle across the deep glen, and snowfilled cliffgirt corries to the right intersected by long, lateral ridges, Ben Hope far to the East, no sign of civilisation, a supremely wild and desolate place. Caution and frustration gave way to confidence and determination. After some scrambling over intermediate tops a beautiful snow crest with just the right

consistency for easy progress brought me to the principle summit, Ganu Mor at 5.15pm. A chill wind had been blowing from behind me on the ridge. Turning back into it and fighting back to the col before darkness now seemed daunting and possibly unwise. Moreover ahead lay the second highest peak, Ceann Garbh, which I could now see to be a very fine one. I pressed on and reached its summit at 5.45pm. With about 75 minutes of good daylight left I had burnt my boats for returning the way I had come. But now the Laxford Bridge to Durness road was visible across the moor below, with the sea gleaming at Kinlochbervie beyond and the Cape Wrath wilderness to the North. I decided to head for the road. After a snowy descent from Ceann Garbh, a trackless moor and a final leap across a stream I reached it as dusk began to fall. I was some fifteen miles by road from Lone.

I hitched a lift in the first passing car, but only as far as Laxford Bridge. Then I walked and jogged the remaining six and a half miles along the Lairg road, passing from moonlight into the shadow of Ben Stack and along the shore of Loch Stack. A star played hide and seek between high cloud layers above Meallan Liath Coire Mhic Dhughail, a remote peak (of lengthy name) on the distant ridge between Fionaven and Ben Hee. It had been a magic day.

IN PRAISE OF PADDLING.

Jennie Massie.

Whether we are climbers, walkers, fell-runners or merely like pottering about we all get something from our contact with the mountains. Why do we do it? There are probably as many reasons as there are people out there and given any average day in the Lake District that could be a fair number including a pretty large section of the people I mentioned above. It might also include the sort of head bangers who relish being out in all weathers and get their enjoyment from howling gales and rain down their necks. For all that I'm pretty safe in saying that one thing that most of us have in common - if nothing else - is a dislike of cold and rainy weather.

My desire to climb on wet and greasy rock has certainly declined over the years. I can't imagine anything better than a good day on dry rock, whether it is the golden honeycomb texture of the Basteir Tooth in the Cuillins, rather like climbing on the centre of a crunchy bar, or the rounded grey bulges of Derbyshire gritstone that look so deceptively easy and short and keep you struggling for hours or the smooth sweeping limestone cliffs of the Severn Gorge crowned with beech and oak woods and looking over the blue distances to Wales. All these are my idea of happiness. Your caggy sits at the bottom of your rucksack and the sun is warm on your back as you climb. What more could you want beyond the company of someone you know and like to share it and a good meal to look forward to at the end of the day.

A jug of wine, a loaf of bread
And thou, singing beside me in the wilderness
Then wilderness is Paradise indeed.....

I'm certain that Omar Khayan would have shared my appreciation of good weather. Could you write poetry on a typical wet Sunday in Langdale? Well then, I will admit there is a certain charm in putting on all those layers of waterproof clothing and issuing forth with map and compass to test your navigational skills but a little of it goes a long way as far as I am concerned. By the time you have trudged up the hill via the peat bogs and brimming becks only to be met by cloud base zero, wall to wall clag, iron grey, impenetrable and hurtling past at a rate of knots for the third day running....What can I say that would be printable?

Personally I dig my heels in with loud squelching sounds and refuse to play. Apart from the water that finds its way down your neck and into your boots the rest finds its way down the hill into becks and rivers which foam and rage over rocks on its journey to the sea. And here is the answer to what to do when conditions aren't suitable for climbing. Here is a new, different way to get cold, wet and frighten yourself to death. It's called canoeing and I wish I had discovered it at a less advanced age because it really is fun. Most climbers can take to it like a duck to water (sorry) because in many ways it utilises the same skills of balance and judgement.

The next question is how to get started? The best ways are either to join a local club or do a basic course at one of the approved centres which will give you the opportunity to try out a variety of boats and learn the basic skills needed. Don't be put off by all the recent publicity surrounding the accident at Kimmeridge this year. Canoeing is a safe sport and there are few accidents compared to mountaineering or skiing. And don't believe that the be all and end all is eskimo rolling. Most canoeists of my acquaintance set off with the intention of staying more or less above water and with little desire to go swimming with or without their boat.

Once you have done the basic course and can get your hands on a canoe and a roof-rack there are so many really pleasant things to do. If you park at the steamer point on Derwentwater near Keswick there are islands to visit and you can picnic at St.Simon's Crag. Or it is possible to park at the roadside at Grasmere and paddle the lake - more islands to land on or you can go down over the weir and run the river to Rydal. Another favourite is to put in at aptly named Muddy Layby in the Langdale beck near the turning for Coniston and drift down to Brathay Pool and across Windermere to Waterhead.

One of the bonuses is that it is such a quiet way to travel that you see all sorts of birds and animals from Kingfishers and water birds of all sorts to deer and if you are very lucky otters as you drift gently along.

I have been told that there is a sign at the entry to a famous American park that says, "Take nothing but memories. Leave nothing but footprints". In my canoe I can do better than this. I can travel silently by my own means, enjoy the beauty and peace of the waterside and leave no trace of my passing.

At any rate it gives me a reason for liking rain. And it certainly beats climbing in the cold and wet.

Langdale Hut:- A complaint is registered on members leaving unwashed cups, plates and pans. Recent weekends have yielded an enormous amount of unwashed pots and pans. These have been cleaned by the last few members remaining ably assisted by guests. One guest reports on having washed at least 24 cups on the last day of the weekend. The imagination boggles at the thought of one member alone having used as many cups. None of us wants 'dish-pan hands', and some members apparently don't intend to acquire them.

Extract from Newsletter number 2. March, 1961.

Nothing's changed in thirty-odd years!

John Foster.

Chapter VII.

That first half of Tyn Twr was a cosy wee hut, which some folks liked because it was small and compact, forcing members together. It had the minimum necessities, somewhere to cook, eat and sleep, a flush toilet and an open fire to sit round in the evening. But with no drying room or shower, and only one toilet, the sooner we could expand into the other half the better.

Meanwhile, the fact that it was open for use did not satisfy the committee. It was decided that an official opening and blessing was needed and the date chosen was 14th March, 1970. So many members wanted to attend that the hut could not accommodate everyone, and some stayed at the Douglas Arms and other places locally. On the Friday there was a very heavy snowfall which laid a good covering right down to the A5. But the Saturday morning dawned with a clear blue sky, so that when Bishop Pearson collected Bishop Petit in Wrexham and drove along the A5 to Bethesda, the hills were looking their most beautiful under their brilliant mantle. Bishop Petit ceremonially unhooked a sling and snaplink across the front door, following a blessing and a few prayers, and the hut was declared open.

Usage slowly grew as members made the effort to find the hut, and many climbers who had previously only climbed in The Lakes thrilled to routes on new crags and buttresses. Hard men who had grumbled about its location came to realise that Gogarth and Tremadoc were almost equidistant, and with most other Welsh rock in between, decided it was in fact ideal. For walkers too there were new hills in the Carneddau and scrambling on Tryfan and the Gliders, as well as the renowned Snowdon Horseshoe (my first day on the Welsh hills, 40 years ago).

Having a tenant next door was handy for someone to keep the key, and maybe he thought that entitled him to live rent free, for he began to fall behind with his payments. The agreement we had inherited was that he paid the rent, which was very low, every six months. I think he only made two or three payments, so that by 1971 he was over two years in arrears. In being so he played right into our hands. Our Chairman of the day was a solicitor who had acted for the club in the purchase, but in this case he said he would instruct a solicitor in Bangor as this might soften the blow. We didn't want headlines in the local paper saying, "English Climbing Club Throws Out Welsh Family". A letter was sent in May stating our intention of applying to the court for a possession order on the grounds of non-payment of rent. But he didn't wait for the summons.

In the week after Whit there was a mid-week committee meeting in Preston, and Nev Haigh reported that he and his family had stayed at Tyn Twr the previous weekend, he had noticed our tenants bringing out broken bits of furniture and old clothes, and burning them in the back garden. He felt certain that they were preparing to leave. I had planned to go to Bishop's Scale

the following weekend, but I turned the Landrover around and went to Tyn Twr instead.

Sure enough the bird had flown when we arrived. His door was open, leaving our key hung on a nail inside. So I had a very immediate problem, to find someone to keep our key, and I decided to approach our nearest neighbour. I had to knock two or three times on the door of the house on the end of the old school before it was eventually opened by an old Welsh lady who seemed pretty bad on her legs. I knew I had to be at my most diplomatic, that if I did not gain her trust and sympathy I would still have no one to keep the key. Suspicion at first of this English stranger softened when I explained that our recent tenants had paid no rent for over two years. All they had said to her was that we had told them to get out.

To my great relief, she agreed. So began our relationship with the Hughes family next door. Mrs. Hughes was indeed pretty housebound, so I began to call in for a chat whenever I was there, discussing anything and everything, even Chairman Mao. When she died, her son Ffrancon took over her role, and I think I can call him a friend. He was certainly a friend to our club, looking after our interests in more ways than most members realise. Long may it be so.

We now had room to expand, but it wasn't urgent to do so. The hut occasionally filled up, but it was never desperate. What was immediately useful was the extra parking space. But from the side of our kitchen window a hedge stretched out to the wee slate shed in front of our coke shed. So that had to come out, but it seemed a tough job. It was not a privet hedge, but a row of large bushes, rhododendron and other unknown species. Even in those days, I wanted to preserve them, and decided to replant them along our boundary wall with the school yard. But they were going to take some digging out. Here again my old Landrover earned its keep (it did much useful work for the Achilles Ratti over the years). In low ratio, with a chain round each bush in turn, it soon yanked them out, like an old fashioned dentist. A horticulturalist would have been horrified, but they were immediately reinterred along the wall, and only one failed to recover.

The single doorway between the kitchen and our present dining area, like the one between the men's toilet and the lounge, had been bricked up. This came out easily enough, so we now had through access. I knew how I was going to lay out the rest of the hut, but as already mentioned, there was no urgency except for additional toilets. These I decided would be where the mens toilets are now, in what had been our tenants kitchen, diagonally opposite ours. One working weekend (they never seemed ending) some members volunteered to build the partitions, and I handed over the job of extending the drains to an old mate from childhood, Tony Welding, a civil engineer with our local council. I took pipes down on the roof of the old battlewagon, someone dug a trench, and Tony laid the pipes with his usual precision. The thunder boxes were installed and a water supply connected. Bingo; we could now act in unison instead of consecutively.

I leisurely carried on with the conversion of the other side whenever the weather was poor, and went up the hill when it was fine. That was the way to enjoy it, none of the previous rush. I extended the ring circuit first, and then rewired the lights. I had just started on building the bunks, in the autumn of 1972 I think, when Derek Price, the secretary, dropped a bombshell. No, it wasn't an increase in hut fees, but it put me off climbing for nearly a year. You'll have to wait for the next journal to hear about that though.

An extract from an article by Quintin Hogg.

Ball-games are all right for those with keen eyesight. Man is naturally a predator, and so, I suppose, hunting, shooting and fishing respond to some deep need of human nature. Competition in various sports of speed and skill no doubt provides a splendid outlet for our aggressive instincts. But the sea, the mountains and the wilderness provide a charm and a challenge which, for me at least, are the greatest of pleasures. For me it is the mountains. The exquisite views, the photography, the flowers, the wild life, the companionship, the bodily well-being, the emotional and intellectual preoccupation with purely physical problems, all this is thrown in as a bonus. The real thing is the mountain themselves, in wet and fine, whether the ice forms treacherously on the rocks, or the granite is sensuously warm to the fingers in the sun, whether you are crunching happily up in the early morning on the points of your crampons, or staggering horribly down in the afternoon slush of an August snowfield, whether you can see 100 miles or six inches, it is sheer joy to be in them, a pleasure as satisfying in retrospect or anticipation as in the enjoyment. And there is no sense of guilt or satiety attached.

Visitorial Remonstrance

Ye rash men who go up the Glyders,
Not one of you ever considers
If you see a thick fog when
You start from Lake Ogwen
Your wives may be changed into widders.

A LOVE STORY : A Day on Beinn Eighe

Alex Brownlow.

We filled our sacs with the necessary gear for a winter day on the hill and said "Goodbye" to Herbert William, my car given to me by Herbert William Cranston, my Grandfather. The cloud was low, but occasional glimpses of the tops could be seen through the cottonwool like mass. I couldn't be bothered. I was sick of the weather, we had driven for seven hours to my favourite place in the whole world, and all it had done for the last three days was rain. Today we had decided to take a chance, or at least Stu had, as usual I was being dragged. I just can't see the point of struggling up mountains to see nothing except more rain and cloud.

We trudged away from Herbert, he became smaller and smaller until he was just an insignificant yellow spot in the distance. We walked up the pass and round to the triple buttress of Beinn Eighe. I am sure it is a stunning sight if only I could have seen it. We took a lunch break, not a second too soon for me, but in minutes it was over and I was forced to pull on my sac again.

We scrambled up the slope to Ruadh Stac Mor. Depression really set in, we were perhaps 25 feet below the top of the cloud. The bright light above could almost be touched through the hazy mass. The day was getting on, Stu and I were on our fourth argument, we could see nothing. I wanted to go home.

"I hate this" I screeched, in my usual aggressive manner, "I never want to do it again".

We plodded along the ridge to Bein Eighe itself, still the only view I could see was the back of Stu's gortex, I could look at that in the tent.

We dropped off Beinn Eighe and began slogging up towards Sgurr Ban, when Stu suddenly shouted, "Hurry up Fatty, it's going to drop below us!" His stride seemed to lengthen as did his smile as he sped ahead onto Sgurr Ban.

I tripped, stumbled and struggled, my breath ragged, after six hours of misery, I bloody wasn't going to miss this. I reached Stu, my heart beating fast and then missing a beat, as I saw the most beautiful sight I had ever seen. The mountain tops all around us were popping out from the clouds. They were stunning, their orange and brown colours rich against the white of the cloud. If there is a heaven we were there.

All the struggle, the arguments, the aching feet were forgotten. I was no longer tired and hungry. It had been worth every second of it.

Stu and I looked around, trying to capture and absorb these sights that one can only hold in the mind. Photos would not do it justice. It was late afternoon, after 4.00pm. The only other

people we had seen that day had already got off the hill. This was our view, mine and Stu's, we were the only ones there.

We carried on along the ridge, a silence between us, but a stronger bond had formed, we were both content. We reached the end of the ridge at 6.00pm. It had been a wonderful two hours. The cloud had dropped slowly and then vanished leaving only the orange glow of the dropping sun, mixing the silver light from a full moon. The combination of the two was magnificent, casting lights over the hills.

We half ran, half walked down the scree towards Kinlochewe, and reached the road at 7.30pm. It was dark now, but the full moon gave enough light to guide us along the road. We had perhaps a 9 Km walk still to do back to the car park, but we calmly strolled along hand in hand, reminiscing about the days adventure.

Then to top it off, a pick-up truck stopped, it had been the first car that we had seen. The old guy offered us a lift in the back. It had no tail board and was filled with fish crates, but it was luxury. We climbed in and clung for dear life. The icy wind whipped my hair again and again into me eyes as I held on. I was freezing, but it was the best, most perfect end to a day I could have wished for. The mountains were lit by the moon and I was there, in my favourite place in the whole world in the back of a fish truck, with my favourite person in the whole world, Stu.



Above the clouds on Beinn Eighe

WALKING DOWNUNDER

George Partridge.

A year back I was fortunate in being able to visit New Zealand over Christmas. Working in Malaysia put me half way to 'Downunder', a mere ten hours flight to Christchurch. No doubt it was 'Pom' arrogance on my part thinking I could visit 'Oz' on a U.K. passport and certainly the Quantas staff at KL's Subang airport relished informing me that I required a visa to enter Australia, adding with a smile "unless you are a member of the British Royal Family; you're not Prince Charles sir?" Happily they very efficiently re-organised my flight connection which overcame the visa problem. I had planned a two night stopover at Sydney on the way out and was due to visit Melbourne on the way back.

Thus I arrived in Christchurch on a Saturday evening two days earlier than planned. The following morning after Mass at the Church of Christ the King, I made a call at the Christchurch Information centre for information on accommodation, travel, maps etc. Here I had a useful chat with a Conservation Department warden, who was a keen walker and climber, and this was a great help in deciding areas to visit.

Christchurch is often described as "the most English city outside England". It is very compact with a population of about 300,000. The city has a delightful river, the Avon, meandering through the centre. Walking around the city is a real pleasure, mildly complicated by the river, you seem to meet it which ever way you go. Avon incidently derives from the Scottish Avon, not Shakespeare's Avon.

South of Christchurch lies the port and town of Lyttelton, hidden by the Port Hills, these curve around Lyttelton Harbour and are the rim of the Lyttelton volcano active some 12 million years ago. The harbour is the drowned crater of the volcano. These hills between 1400'-1800' high provide a splendid and rewarding walk; the Crater Rim Walkway. This walk gives magnificent views over Lyttelton Harbour, and the Banks Peninsula to the south and to the north and west over the city and Canterbury Plains to the snow capped Southern Alps 70 miles beyond. At its eastern end in the Tor's Scenic Reserve there is rock climbing on volcano outcrops, one crag was rather reminiscent of Almscliffe.

As I was visiting Melbourne on my return trip, I had to obtain a visa from the Australian High Commission in Wellington. I travelled north along the east coast on the Pacific Coast Express to Picton, then by ferry over the Cook Strait arriving in Wellington about 18.00 on a Wednesday evening. I dropped off the visa application at the Australian High Commission the following morning. "Your visa will be ready Monday" they said. With four days to wait I opted for a visit to the Tongariro National Park, an area highly recommended by the guy in Christchurch. I found there was one train daily calling at the National Park, this was

the Wellington-Auckland Express leaving at 19.30, arriving 01.05. I booked a seat and phoned a backpacker hostel somewhat nervously explaining I was arriving at National Park at 01.10 Hrs! "No problem, we'll leave a light on".

I spent the day sightseeing around the city which is hemmed in by steep hills around a magnificent harbour and in the evening I took the Northener, the Wellington-Auckland Express, to the small settlement of National Park. The guard came and woke me as the train pulled into the station and I stepped down into a crisp black night, a sky brilliant with stars and a temperature of 0 degrees C although this was mid-summer. When booking by phone I had been told; "walk out of the station for 100m turn left, proceed to the next T junction, turn right, proceed about 400m, look for the light that will be left on in your room, DON'T KNOCK".

I had quite failed to realise just how dark it would be and there were no street lights, but I did have an head torch and I did find the promised light. New Zealand abounds in "Backpacker" hostels providing excellent value accommodation. I stayed three nights in Tongariro Park, two at National Park and one at Whakapapa Village which is the Headquarters of the Park Authority and the main centre for the Park. The area is dominated by the volcanic peaks of Tongariro 1968m., Ngauruhoe 2291m., Ruapehu 2797m. and Te Heuheu 2755m. The North Island's premier skifield, the Chateau or Whakapapa skifield is on these last two mountains, the normal season is mid-June to September, but skiing was in full swing now at mid-summer, the second summer in succession this had occurred apparently and hardly surprising in view of the previous nights temperature.

This whole area is still actively volcanic, the most recent eruptions being in '69 and '75 on Ruapehu, with minor activity annually at Crater Lake just under it's summit. Ngauruhoe a symmetrical volcanic cone, is a popular if laborious ascent over volcanic rubble, great in descent but hazardous as loose boulders tend to trundle down its steep slopes.

The classic tramp around here is the "Tongariro Crossing". Described by Sir Edmund Hillary as "the finest one day walk in New Zealand". On my last day in the Park, a Sunday, I joined an organised Park party for this trip which crosses between Tongariro and Ngauruhoe. The walk can be taken from either end, but transport is essential to and from the relatively remote road ends and the organised trip provided this plus company and an informative commentary, and all for a modest fee. We started from the roads end near the Mangatepopo Hut, a shelter at the south end of the track, starting in bush and scrub and climbing past Soda Springs to an old crater bed about a mile wide, and the snow level, then on up through a tangled volcanic landscape to around 6000' between the shoulder of Ngauruhoe and Tongariro to the Blue Lake, gently steaming and sulphurous, all quite odd in a blizzard. Tongariro blew its top away a few million years ago and is now regarded as dormant but it's chaotic summit plateau has hot springs, smoking fissures and many strangely coloured lakes. Sadly visibility was very limited by thick cloud and snow at this level. The volcanic ash was great for descending, so

very easy on the knees, like a very fine soft scree and led down to steep tussock slopes and the Ketetahi Hut and the Ketetahi Hot Springs. The whiff of sulphur and clouds of steam proclaim the springs which gush out of the hill from a shallow ravine on the side of Tongariro. Here many were bathing in the steaming pools whilst an equal number were sheltering from the rain in the hut just a few hundred feet up the hill. Such contrasts are one of the joys of travel. A sign on the track below the springs warns "steam can create a visibility Hazard".

In a beautiful setting between Ngauruhoe and Ruapehu are the upper and lower Tama Lakes, two crater lakes, a superb day walk climbs to around 5,500' on a ridge to almost 1000' above them. Happily this was on a day of reasonably fine and clear weather giving excellent views to the cone of Ngauruhoe with only Ruapehu in cloud, and a short diversion on the return takes one to the spectacular Taranaki Falls, just half hour from Park H.Q. My one other day opened with gales and snow turning to sleet but followed by an afternoon of bright warm sun when I visited Silica Springs where the rocks are brightly coloured by silica and minerals in the stream.

My departure from Tongariro like my arrival was in the wee small hours, I boarded the 00.55 Auckland-Wellington express back to Wellington, arriving at 07.00 Hrs. Picked up the visa after breakfast and flew down via Christchurch to Queenstown some 700 miles away in the South Island arriving about 17.00 on a Monday evening.

Queenstown is possibly the most popular resort in New Zealand, very much a tourist centre. It is also the centre for some of the classic walks of 'Fiordland', the Milford Track is certainly the best known of these, so popular that tight control is exercised on the number of walkers allowed on the track and you have to obtain a permit which allows entry to the track on a specified day and no other. Control is possible as it is necessary to enter and leave the track by boat and advance booking is essential particularly in December. There are however a number of other tracks, and probably the best of these is the Routeburn. I found that I could combine the classic tourist trip and cruise the Milford Sound then be dropped off at the western end of the Routeburn to join a guided party starting the walk a day later.

This left me with Tuesday free to ascend Ben Lomond, a splendid hill above Queenstown, a trifle higher at 5780' than the Caledonian original, giving a fine walk and excellent views across Lake Wakatipu to the Remarkables and the snow peaks of the Mount Aspiring Park to the north. I was very pleasantly surprised by the hot sunny weather at Queenstown, 25 degrees C, in contrast to that at Tongariro in the North Island. Surely some six degrees closer to the Antarctica it should be cooler here?

Milford Sound was quite breathtaking, fulfilling all that one hears of it. I regretted not walking in on the track, clearly that is the most satisfying way to approach this most spectacular of fiords. The return day trip by road from Queenstown entails some ten hours on a bus and must be a little tedious, however I

avoided this as I was joining the Routeburn party the next morning at the Main Divide. I left the bus at Lake Gunn, about an hour from Milford and quite close to the Main Divide at the west end and start of the Track. The great attraction of the organised trip was that accommodation and food (and beverages) together with any other gear needed, cag, sac etc. were provided. It was also Christmas Eve, and "Christmas comes but once a year" so I went for the good cheer as the proverb says. My companions comprised just two Americans and our guide Dave.

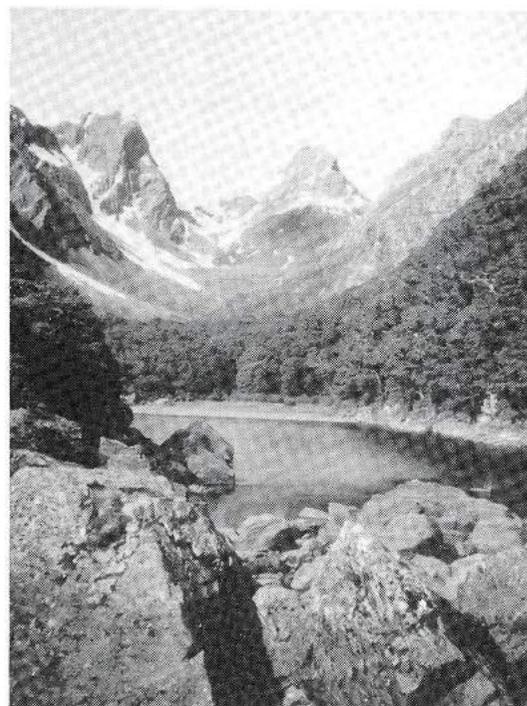


Routeburn Track. Key Summit on the Routeburn - Christmas Eve.

Whilst awaiting the arrival of my companions for the next three days I was able to observe the Kea, the Kea is a large parrot. It has green feathers, is noisy, cheeky and quite fearless and has a strong beak. It also has an evil reputation for attacking and killing lambs and is unpopular with farmers. In the car park at the Divide Shelter were two Kea demonstrating just how nasty they can be, they had virtually stripped the foam seat of a new BMW motorbike and were now pecking out the rubber surround and mounting to the windscreen of the one parked car. Rucsacs, tents and even boots are choice delicacies to a Kea.

The track starts from the 'Divide' which is on the Milford road, with a gentle climb to Key Summit at about 3000'. The track is cut through bush and forest, the most prolific shrub being a white Hebe, the small leaved variety you get in the garden in the UK. Initially I thought it was a garden escape, but it is a very common shrub and there are many further varieties of hebes indigenous to New Zealand.

A fairly gentle one hours walking leads to a Park hut at peaceful Lake Howden and a lunch stop. Two other tracks branch off here, the Greenstone and the Caples and both can be combined with the Routeburn to make a longer round trip. A further three hours passing under the spectacular Earland Falls brought us to the first nights shelter, a very comfortable hut at the beautiful Lake MacKenzie set in a wooded valley dominated by two splendid rack peaks, Ocean Peak and Emily Peak. From here the track climbs out of the bush and around on open shoulder of the mountains high above the Hollyford River valley to the Harris Saddle and an emergency shelter at about 4000', the highest point on the track. This section of the track is very open and can be difficult and dangerous in bad weather, hence the emergency shelter on the saddle.



Lake MacKenzie. Ocean Peak and Emily Peak.

We happily were blessed with superb weather and enjoyed the most glorious sunshine, certainly it was the warmest Christmas Day I've spent on the hills. Leaving the sacs at the shelter we climbed to the top of Conical Hill, 5120' for a superb panorama of the mountains of the Aspiring National Park. This section and the descent to the Routeburn Falls hut is through the most spectacular alpine scenery, with snow and rock, tarns and waterfalls everywhere. The Falls hut is just below tree line, beside the falls and filled with the sound of running water. Our guide Dave served the most excellent Christmas dinner to round off a great day. We had been blessed with two days of brilliant weather and our final day on the track made me appreciate how fortunate we had been.

I awoke to the sound of hammering that turned out to be rain drumming on the hut roof and descent through the forest to Routeburn Flats and finally out to the end of the track at Bryants Lodge at the road head was very wet indeed, just like the wettest of Scotlands west. The track follows the river which was fairly roaring down fast and frightening but fortunately provided with the most sturdy footbridges. From the road end at Bryants a mini bus service runs on request the 18 miles to Glenorchy and it is about another 26 miles to Queenstown.

The settlement at Glenorchy is at the head Lake Wakatipu in the midst of very big lonely hills, reminiscent of parts of Scotland but much bigger and vaster. The lake is some 54 miles long and almost 3 miles wide with Queenstown at its mid-point. Glenorchy is also the starting point for the Dart-Rees Track which takes a circular route through the hills at the head of Lake Wakatipu.

I left Queenstown the following morning travelling by bus to Mount Cook for a few hours sightseeing before continuing to Christchurch and taking a flight to Melbourne.

My two weeks had given me just a glimpse of some of New Zealands magnificent mountains and landscape, I hope to be able to return and explore a little further. Always a little further!

My Routeburn trip was with Routeburn Walks Ltd.

In UK write to:- New Zealand Travel Service,
94 Fulham Place Road, London W6 9PL.

NEARER TO ACHILLE RATTI.

Joyce Kent.

It started the first time I went to Bormio, a smart little Roman town in the Italian Ortler Alps, where the Swiss, Austrian and Italian borders meet. Here, is the very beautiful Stelvio National Park, the biggest national park in Europe, completely unspoilt, full of flowers, birds and wild-life and where there are very few English visitors. The park signs at the start of the tracks announce, 'Beware of Spontaneous Flora', the mind boggles, what does she get up to?

We drove up the steep-sided Val Furva to the mountain village of Santa Caterina. Then leaving the tumbling river and climbing higher, past the tame marmots playing amongst the gentians and eidelweiss, we walked up the Valle dei Forni to the Rifugio Branca at 8,500ft, built on the edge of the moraine above the Forni Glacier. A superb view above the glacier snout to Pizzo Tresero and round to Monte Cevedale. The air crystal clear, marmots whistling among the rocks, warm sun and gentle breeze fluttering the Italian flag on its pole. After soaking it all in, we went inside for an aperitif. But before that, there on the wall, was a large, framed photograph of our Achille Ratti, with a candle burning and a bunch of wild flowers on a ledge beneath. I was amazed, and my companion was delighted at the expression on my face. I was introduced to the guardian and his wife, who told me that Achille Ratti had spent a lot of time in the area and was responsible for most of the early exploration, he used to stay there frequently, but in the old hut, and this was before their time. We celebrated with vino and torta, and now they wear our Golden Jubilee T-shirts.

A couple of years later, I was invited to stay at San Bernado, the mountain house of one of my new Italian friends. It is up above Ponte in Valtelina, just on the Italian side of the Swiss border, 40 Km west of the road and railway which run from St.Moritz, south-east to Tirano in Italy, and north-east of Lake Como. There had been heavy rain in July, and a huge landslip in the Adda Valley had destroyed villages and formed a lake 13Km long, and the road had disappeared under millions of cubic feet of rock and mud. We were delivering a puppy which was to be trained as an avalanche rescue dog, and to get to Tirano had to go via the unmetalled, very scary, Gavia Pass. I was grateful for the early training of our Hardnott Pass.

After a long day, we arrived at San Bernardo, twenty-three steep hairpins on a single-track road, up and up through the woods, and then a green lane which petered out on a high alp. There were fluffy-eared alpine brown cows with soft eyes, and three chocolate box chalets with a tiny chapel near-by. We walked to the chapel in the long shadows and cool of the evening, the blue snow-capped mountains opposite, above the haze in the valley bottom. A bronze plaque on the chapel wall announced that here, Achille Ratti spent his time as an escape from Rome,

relaxing and exploring in the mountains. It was a weird feeling, this club of which I'd been a member, since being a teenager was connected to this place. The explanation of the name of the Club, given so many times, over the years to so many different people, really meant something. I sat on the grass, I was bemused.

Everywhere I walked that few days, I felt as if Achille Ratti was so close, he was linking my arm. We climbed Pizza Scalina and Monte Disgratzia and he came too. We looked down into Val Ratti and explored the beautiful woods and alps and he was with us, it was weird. Then on Sunday, Loredana's parents came up from the valley to give us a real Italian, family lunch... Her brother came from Milan, and the big, pine table was outside with a snow-white cloth and wine glasses and all and it was wonderful. We served ourselves and were ready to eat, and then Laurie's Dad was demanding Papa's knife. I presumed he meant some knife of his own, and out of the draw to the disgust of his children, came, an old bone-handled knife with the thin, steel blade sharpened to a bow shape. This was the knife that Achille Ratti "Papa" used, when he sat at that same table for a meal, when Laurie's Dad was a little boy.

So once again, the English Catholic Climbing Club story was told and wondered at, and I cut my food and ate my lunch using "Papa's" knife.

I still feel amazed. And the twists of fate that took me there?

I am aware that many of our 'newer' members will not be familiar with the life of Achille Ratti, so to support Joyce's excellent article I have copied this extract, written on February 10th, 1989, by Fr. Joseph Grech Cremona, from a Maltese newspaper. D.W.P.

REMEMBERING A GREAT POPE.

Today marks the fiftieth anniversary of the death of a great Pope.

Achille Ratti was born at Desio near Milan on May 31 1857. He was ordained priest on December 20th, 1879.

When he became Prefect of the famous Ambrosian Library at Milan in 1907, he met Fr. Angelo Roncalli, who was later to become Pope John XXIII.

He was also the friend of St. John Bosco., St. Frances Cabrini and Blessed Contardo Ferrini.

Pope St. Pius X named him Vice-Prefect of the Vatican Library in 1911.

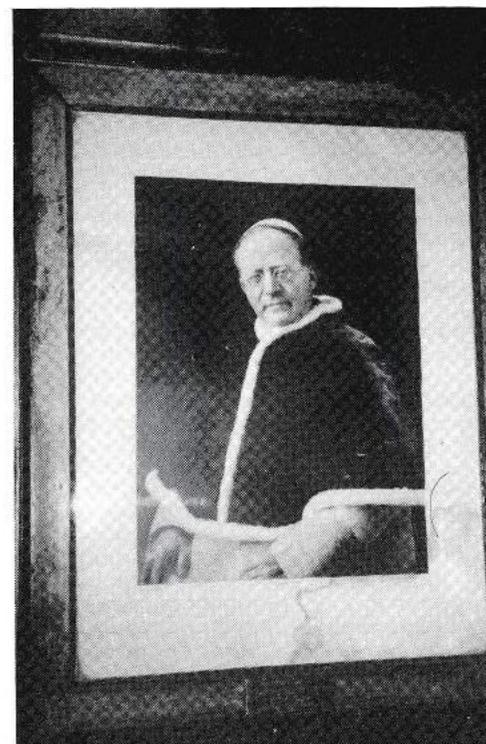
He was consecrated titular Archbishop of Lepanto and stayed in Warsaw even through the Bolshevik invasion.

In 1921 he succeeded Blessed Cardinal Andrea Carlo Ferrari as Archbishop of Milan and was soon created Cardinal.

Only eight months later, on February 6th 1922, he succeeded Benedict XV and chose the name Pius XI.

He instituted Mission Sunday as well as the Feast of Christ the King. Of his encyclicals one may mention those on Christian Marriage, Catholic Education and 'Rerum Novarum', the social question. He also installed the Vatican Radio.

Pius XI died just 50 years ago and lies buried in the crypt of the Vatican Basilica. He was undoubtedly one of the greatest Popes of our century.



This photograph of Achille Ratti was taken from the original hanging in the Rifugio Branca by Joyce Kent