

**Achille Ratti Climbing Club**



**2000  
Journal**

**ACHILLE RATTI CLIMBING CLUB**

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

**Chaplain** Rev.Stephen Ashton

**TRUSTEES**

**GEORGE PARTRIDGE  
DEREK PRICE  
RT. REV. MONSIGNOR SLATTERY**

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**Chairman** David Ogden  
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**Dunmail** Michael Crawford 102 Beaufort Ave. Bispham Blackpool  
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## 2000 Journal

### Introduction

In the 1993 edition, I mentioned the difficulty in encouraging members to provide articles for the Journal and I also suggested that I might be being too ambitious and ought to be satisfied with quality rather than quantity. This year I am happy to report success in both areas, from John Foster's excellent article on George Graham of the RAF Mountain Rescue, to ten year old Alexandra Sullivan's report on the Bishop's Sponsored Walk - all exciting reading. I have the impression that members have enjoyed writing their articles, after all, the year 2000 is something special and I appreciate the efforts made. I have said on many occasions, that with the talent we have in this club, producing a journal of quality with interesting articles should require little effort, and this journal is evidence of that.

You will note from the Management Committee list that changes have been made regarding Chairman and Vice-Chairman. I wish both David and Leo success in their new positions and feel confident that the new leadership will continue to expand our activities on the hills and mountains and furnish us with high standards of hut facilities for the benefit of members.

Finally, the improvements at Bishop's Scale are well on the way to completion. Dunmail continues to be popular with visiting clubs and may be taking on a new role in the near future. Tyn Twr is about to be updated and modernised, and, we have signed an agreement with the National Trust for a 21 year lease on all of the Beckstones property. Also, the new Probationary Membership has made an improvement to recruiting, so the future could be very encouraging.

Ad Altiora

Derek Price

December 2000

**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held in the Chapel at Bishop's Scale on Saturday, 25<sup>th</sup> November 2000**

1. **Number present:** 58

2. **Apologies:** Roy and Dorothy Buffey, Sharon Gaitskill, Mike Lomas, Miriam Warren and Bryony White.

3. **Summary of the minutes** of the AGM held on Saturday, 27<sup>th</sup> November 1999 read by the secretary.

4. **Matters arising:** John foster queried the statement that new probationary members would be entitled to "full benefits" of full members apart from voting at the first AGM. Did this mean that they could propose new members. Derek pointed out that any member could only do that when they were full members hence the problem doesn't arise.

5. **Chairman's Report.** Welcome once again to the ARCC Annual General Meeting. A special thank you to our President, Monsignor Slattery for making the effort to attend. I am aware that these meetings tend to drag on and will therefore confine my report to what I consider is of interest to the members. And so on to my twelfth and final report.

**The Chapel.** Since the death of Fr. Frank Hughes it has not been possible to have a regular weekly Mass. However, whenever we can, for example tomorrow, we will continue to use the Chapel as a Mass centre. May I remind you that the Mass for deceased members is tomorrow at 11.30am.

**2000 Journal.** Many thanks to those members who have sent articles. There are some first class reports from gifted writers. If there are more due, please let me have them in the next week or so, or otherwise we are out of time.

**Club Events.** Whilst most of the mixed activity meets were successful, the climbing meets were poorly supported. Possibly next year a meet weekend will include all activities, including climbing. However, the Long Walk was a great success as was the CAFOD Race. The Bishop's Sponsored Walk appears to be at an end with only 87 walkers this year. But we intend to give it one more chance by making it the CAFOD Sponsored Walk, which may encourage more interest from the schools. This we would organise and make the necessary contact with the schools.

**Around the Huts.** I will just outline the work in the huts and leave the details to the wardens.

Beckstones. Improvements are continuing. The toilet and shower area is soon to be re-designed and brought into the 21 century. Joyce will give you detailed information on this.

Bishop's Scale. Massive improvements have taken place which are of benefit to all the members.

Dunmail. Continues to be a bread winner with one or two surprises.

Tyn Twr. Front bay now fitted other improvements due to start, i.e., complete refurbishment of mens toilet and shower area, electric wiring check and some changes in the kitchen.

**Winter Meet.** A reminder that the Meet is 3 - 9<sup>th</sup> March 2001 at the Ullapool Youth Hostel. Please contact Ken Jackson for details. 01706 229364

**History.** When I took over the Chairmanship of the Club in the late 80's, it had, under the leadership of George Partridge, been a period of stability where each of the huts that we owned had been encouraged to improve their facilities and develop activities. Sadly, within months of me taking the Chair, the Buckbarrow Hut lease was not renewed by the National Trust, apparently they wanted it as a base for their own worker. An offer by the Trust to rent a property close by was rejected and eventually, after constant pestering, Beckstones was offered and accepted. From January 1<sup>st</sup> 2001 an agreement for a 21 year lease for all the Beckstones property, including the boffy has been accepted by both parties. So for that period of time, our wishes for a base in the west are fulfilled.

What I have tried to do in recent years is to encourage the updating of the properties that we own, and I am happy to report that it is happening in all our huts. It is essential that our properties are kept up to date, not only for the comforts of existing members, but also to attract new members - the young people of the millennium are much more choosy than we were. At the same time we must encourage organised activities both in the British Isles and abroad and it was good to see another organised meet in the French Alps this year.

I would like to thank the M/C for their support over the years. Things don't just happen. It is organised by an unpaid volunteer, whether they be Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, Membership Secretary, Hut Warden, Members Representative or Maintenance Officer. We owe a lot to those and also to other unsung volunteers who are always there to assist. The ARCC is a unique organisation and we should all be proud of it.

Finally I must thank my wife Margaret and my family who have had to put up with my moans and groans but have always been there to support me.

6) **Secretary's Report.** The secretary dealt mainly with BMC matters as he receives lots of correspondence from them.

a) The Bill for the Right to Roam and Access to Open land. He has written a few times on behalf of the Club to his local MP Derek Twigg, who supports the Bill, to ask him to keep up the pressure so that it becomes law. He has passed his replies on to the BMC so that they can be used as back-up to this pressure. Their magazine "Summit" would keep members updated on any developments.

b) After initial teething problems we should all now be receiving a copy of the magazine "Summit".

c) During the year we received information concerning the Wolf Reforms regarding changes to the Civil Justice System. This is about insurance claims in the event of personal injury. We have sort advice from John Meredith on this and he has given us lots of good sound advice. Basically what we need to do is have an accident book in all the huts to report any accidents that occur and any involving personal injury should be reported to the BMC Insurance Brokers, Perkins Slade, whose address is on the notice board. Many of these things seem to create more problems where previously none seemed to exist.

The secretary concluded by thanking Mike and Jean Lomas for all their printing and dispersal of the Club minutes throughout the year. It is a great help and is very much appreciated.

**7) Treasurer's Report.** In the event of Mikes illness the financial statement and accounts were prepared by Jean, Mikes wife. In view of the circumstances we can only give our heartfelt thanks to Jean for such selflessness.

The accounts are prepared on the basis of receipts and payments.

a) The receipts included subscriptions, hut fees, special events, Bank interest, the Co-op, and miscellaneous which totalled for the year 99/00 - £43,525.

The payments included Hut Transactions, special events, bulletins, journals, Admin expenses and miscellaneous which totalled for the year 99/00 - £43,525.

b) The Cash and Bank Reconciliation for the year ended 30.9.00 was itemised. It showed the Balance brought forward, the surplus, the various bank balances less un-presented cheques, plus other balances such as the Langdale Co-op no. 125 and Halifax Building Society and all this totalled £64,604.76.

c) There was an attached memorandum accounts giving details of hut transactions. This showed for each hut the fixed expenses such as rent, rates, insurance, water testing; the variable expenses such as fuel, repairs, major work; the total expenses and the income from hut fees. Only Dunmail showed a surplus of £7,746.01, the other huts showed deficits, Beckstones of £1,195.38, Bishop's Scale of £9,851.46 and TynTwr of £1,750.04.

**8) Membership Secretaries Report.** The membership as at 1st October 2000 is

Full Members	553
Life Members	104
Probationary	12
Total	669

The total membership is 13 up on last year.

It is encouraging that more junior members are applying for full membership than in the past. The junior membership is at present 103.

Out of the 553 full members 72% pay their fees by Direct Debit. This, except for a hectic week in October makes Anita's and my life a lot easier. There is the occasional "glitch" for which I apologise, but generally the system works well.

Lastly, I would like to thank Anita for all her hard work and help on behalf of the Club.

#### **9) Hut Warden's Reports.**

a) **Beckstones. (Joyce Kent)** All the meets and events held at Beckstones this year have been well attended, except the December meet last year when Terry, Dave Hall and I were there on our own.

This was the Buckbarrow Ex.Hut Wardens Meet.

The Summer Meet when plenty of walking and climbing was done, and a lone biker went biking. Frank Lord presided over the B-B-Q and they all managed to wait until I returned from the ill-arranged Management Committee Meeting in Langdale.

The September Meet was led by Faz and was successful too.

On Christmas Eve last year we had the obligatory power cut, and our hearts sank, with memories of rotten turkeys not too distant, but we were lucky, lights were restored soon afterwards, and festivities continued for the next 10 days, with different people coming and going. I particularly enjoyed it, because for the first time I didn't have to go back to work, because I have just retired.

Mrs.Brakewell at the farm, who keeps the key for us, is elderly and had been very seriously ill. When she peeped out her window at midnight on New Years Eve and so our Millennium fireworks, she said it put her well on the road to recovery.

During one week in March lots of unoccupied properties in the Duddon and Eskdale Valleys were cleared by burglars. But we were lucky. I was impressed with Millom Police, they telephoned to check if we were OK.

The Working Weekend in March was well attended, we nearly didn't have enough beds for everybody.

Terry made a built-in extra bed in the members room and also made a corridor divider there.

The rest of us cleaned the whole hut, and one sterling guest cleaned all the windows inside and out. The lounge and kitchen and one bedroom were painted, more ceilings were draught-proofed and fallen wood outside was cleared up and made into kindling. We all sat down to our usual slap-up dinner on Saturday evening and Sunday saw us finishing off and tired out.

The Hut takings are down this year due to the deteriorated water supply. We started to take tap-water from home, because we couldn't face using even boiled water from the cottage. It took some time and lots of 'phone calls and meetings with the National Trust before they would accept that little red worms, little white grubs, peat flakes like tea-leaves and thick sludgy brown water and the broken collecting tank in the top field were not acceptable.

Now we have a big new tank round the side of the cottage, new tanks in the loft and a UV/filtration plant outside the size of a cruise ship engine room. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> October the Council tested the water and it passed.

We now have PURE CLEAN WATER. This system is a temporary measure only, the NT have applied for permission to sink a borehole to provide a completely new supply for us as the fell stream is not acceptable.

The 21 year lease has been signed, we also have the bothy next door. It is very small, a combined kitchen/lounge, bedroom and toilet and shower room and will be used for Family Quarters, not as a private weekend accommodation on a first there basis.

We have some new mattresses to replace the old ones, a new fridge-freezer and Terry is about to start work on both the bothy and the upgrading of the toilet/shower area in the cottage. The existing washroom will be ripped out and separated toilets and showers installed.

There has been talk of a jacuzzi and all manner of aromatherapies, that is just in their dreams, but it will be a 1000% improvement on the existing facilities.

So that's about it for this year. I have to thank Terry particularly for all his hard work and support, thank all the same people who attend the working weekends each year, and thank Frank and Barry for checking the hut when Terry and I were away on our respective trips. We look forward to seeing more members again now that we can drink from the tap and the water is pure enough to put in our whisky.

b) **Bishop's Scale. (Arthur Daniels)** Attendances have been down this year as compared to other years. Various jobs have been done throughout the year. Now attention needs to be given to improve the lounge. Arthur asked if anyone has any specific ideas for this he is perfectly willing to listen to any suggestions. The family quarters also needs to be improved and this will receive attention this year. There are some Oak trees that have fallen down on the land at the back of the hut, one falling across a wall, so Arthur would like a working weekend in January so that these can be cut up and removed. Joyce thought that as they are Oak, they may be able to be sold. Faz, said that he would make enquiries about selling the wood if, at all, it was worth it.

c) **Dunmail. (David Ogden)** The hut continues to be very well used with very few free weekends.

Much of the work that I said was under way last year has now been completed.

This includes:

the porch on the Grasmere side  
the replacement windows  
treatment of wood worm  
improvement to the bunks  
improvements to the water collection and overflow.

In addition about half the interior has been repainted.

Work at present in hand includes the improvement of the drainage in the wood around the water tank and the thinning for the trees planted some years ago.

The hut is now in need of more internal painting. This will go ahead as soon as a suitable gap in use can be found.

I am hoping to have a work weekend in the new-year to complete a number of small maintenance jobs and to replace the servery work top.

The foam mattresses are now in need of replacement. We are now looking into replacing them with ones that will meet the new fire protection guidelines. The new mattresses will have wipe clean fire resistant covers. It is possible the similar mattresses will need to be provided in our other huts.

I expect the accounts to show a significant surplus for the hut during last year. It should be possible for Dunmail to make sufficient surplus to cover the increased rent we are to pay for Beckstones. I feel that this gives Dunmail another positive role in addition to that for providing a service to youth and other less fortunate clubs.

We have had a proposal from a mobile phone company to site a transmitter on the hut. They are asking us to give them a ten-year lease for a proposed rent of £500 per year. If this proposal were to go ahead the major advantage for the club would be connection to mains electricity which the phone company would require to power their equipment. We expect the phone company to pay for a supply company feed to the hut.

The Management Committee has approved the proposal in principle and Derek and myself have met with the people from the company on site. Present indications are that they wish to proceed with the proposal. We have received drawings of the proposed layout for our approval.

I would like to thank on your behalf all those members who have assisted with the running of the hut particularly Mick Crawford and my wife Joan who looks after all the bookings.

Matters arising. Arthur asked about any emissions from the proposed radio mast. David assured us that it would be safe. Margaret Price thought it was somewhat contradictory to the "Great Outdoors" ethic but the financial benefits were more expedient. A ten year lease is proposed and David gave the pros and cons of the planned agreement. Ken Jackson asked whether they had anywhere else in mind if we turned them down. David said that they really need our spot at Dunmail.

d) **Tyn Twr (Anne Wallace)** Some money had been spent on the hut in repairs and maintenance. Alau has had scaffolding in to fix the chimney pots. He has put a cowl on one so that should stop smoke from the fire blowing back down into the lounge. The chimney above the kitchen needs pointing.

Alau's brother put a new bay window in the lounge. We have had a few problems with the outside lights.

Hut use by members is up. You can always phone Anne to find out if a visiting club has booked the hut on a weekend when you want to go. Bookings by visiting clubs were up last year. Finally, Anne gave a plea to contact her when the coal store is low so that she can the key custodians to order more.

Matters arising. John Foster had a few points to raise. The man hole cover that John referred to last year he concedes should support 25 tons. The rotating cowl on the chimney is not working. An H-pot would have been the solution, which he suggested some ten years ago.

9) **Election of Officers.** Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Ordinary Member..

Whilst things were being prepared for the vote Monsignor Slattery gave a brief talk to the assembled members and thanked Derek the retiring Chairman, for all his splendid leadership over his twelve years of tenure of the office. He has worked tirelessly to move the club on and take it forward. The club had greatly benefited from his Chairmanship and the warmth of the applause from everyone present was proof of universal agreement.

The result of the voting was :  
Chairman - David Ogden  
Vice-Chairman - Leo Pollard  
Ordinary Member - Vacant

10) **Any Other Business.** As the new Chairman, David Ogden now took over the proceedings.

a) Barry Ayre, who has served the club in many capacities, thought that now was the appropriate time for him to step down as a Trustee of the Club and this would be considered by the M/C.

b) John Foster wanted the date on the plaque in the Chapel dedicated to Bishop Pearson changing from 1940 to 1942. He reminded those present that his offer of £1000 donation towards a Scottish Hut he proposed last year still stood.

c) Ed McWatt had two points to make. Any important matter relating to members e.g., election of a Chairman (if there are two or more candidates) or the closure of a hut should be put to all eligible members by postal ballot not at an AGM. The pros and cons of this were discussed and any change to a postal ballot would need a change of rules which would need changing at an AGM.

He also would like the venue of the AGM put back to Preston. The general feeling seemed to be more in favour of the present set up of the AGM and Dinner being on the same weekend in Langdale.

Andrew Stankiewicz said that it would be useful to have a statement about elections of Chairman, etc., and candidates could have a chance to give details about themselves and what they propose in the Newsletter.

The AGM/Dinner were combined because of lack of support in Preston and Faz pointed out that he lives a long way from Preston and having a separate AGM and Dinner takes up two weekends.

d) Helen Charnock asked if all the rules for joining the Club could be displayed in the huts.

e) Ken Jackson pointed out that under current building regulations local authorities can inspect any buildings more or less on demand. They have proposed that Health and Safety officers do this and this is almost unstoppable. This is something we need to keep in mind and not be surprised if they ask to inspect our properties.

f) Margaret Price proposed a big vote of thanks to Alan Kenny for all the work he has done for the Club as Hut Warden at Langdale and as Vice-Chairman. This was warmly applauded and she also proposed a thank-you to Dot Wood, the retiring ordinary member, for all the work she has done for the Club.

g) Dave Hugill reminded members that the Club Calendars were for sale and he would like to sell as many as possible.

David Ogden thanked all those present and the meeting was declared over.

### George Partridge

Around Easter 1947 was my introduction to the Lakes and the original ARCC hut beside the New D.G.

I had joined the Club the previous year but never been to any of the huts. The former Langdale Hut is today a very smart cottage at the rear of Stickle Barn, adjacent to Stickle Cottage. It was an out building of the New and was provided by courtesy of Cyril Bulman owner of the New and a good friend of the Club's Founder Member and late President, the Rt. Rev. T.B.Pearson who writing in the first Club Journal, 1946: "Mr.Bulman is our first honorary member, and shares that privilege with Arnold Lunn, and has been our source of sound advice and practical help"

The hut was featured in the Blackpool Gazette and Herald in 1942 as:  
"The hut is a stone building. It stands by the Dungeon Ghyll New Hotel at the foot of the famous Langdale Pikes, Great Langdale near Ambleside."



### The Old Langdale Hut

Only the upper floor of the present building was in use in 1947 and comprised a dormitory with 6 double bunks, kitchen, dining room and a parlour or lounge which also served for the celebration of Mass. The entrance was on the north, Stickle Ghyll side, up a flight of steps. The services were somewhat limited, the WC, a stone building in the trees at the rear of the New. No bath or shower but a brisk cool dip could be taken in the pool below the footbridge on the Millbeck. Farm path.

Whilst Cyril Bulman was then owner of the New he was also the landlord and manager of the Old, he was also the Valley Special Constable and a Magistrate, his manager at the was a Mr.Black. Hut regulars had a little ditty which went: "If Black says blacks white Black is right." Followed by: "and don't forget it."

I was dropped off the bus near to 4 pm and had been quite entranced all the way up the valley, for this was my first time to the Lakes. The winter of 46/47 had been particularly cold with heavy snow and the tops were still white and looked great. Leaving my sac at the hut I made straight for Harrison Stickle, by what seemed the most direct route, up the left hand side of Stickle Ghyll. Such energy and enthusiasm, were has it gone? Now I come to the Lakes hoping to rock climb and I was fortunate that a keen rock climber was staying on for a day after his mates departed. I regret I have no record of his name, no doubt it's in an old log book gathering dust somewhere. He was I think doing National Service in the R.A.F. In the true spirit of ARCC he kindly took me as his second and introduced me to Lakeland rock.

Scouts Crag was an obvious choice and in retrospect a wise one, to sample a second of unknown quality. Routes 1 and 2 were completed and my leader suggested we proceed up White Ghyll and its two slab routes. I had inherited a pair of old U.S.. Army climbing boots impressively nailed with copies of Swiss Tricouni, number 6's, anyone remember them? The U.S. copies however were poorly brazed and the serrated edge teeth tended to come loose on the base plate, not dropping out but tinkling musically on the march and at night an excellent display of sparks could be created on rocks or roads. My leader was uncertain of the suitability of my much prized boots for the slab routes and recommended I climbed in socks as I was not carrying plimsolls, the rock boots or PA's of the time, Woolworth's black gym models were the best. Route 1 was great but the descent in socks was painful and the boots went back on for Route 2 and the Chimney. I was grateful for this introduction to Lakeland rock, sadly my mentor departed on the following morning. In those early years rock climbing was the main activity at the hut and the majority of members climbed though at modest grades not comparable with today's standards. Of course the gear required was simple, boots and cheap gym shoes and a rope or someones to tie on to. If you could really splash out then a few ex. W.D. karabiners and some slings were useful and could be worn as much for show as practical use. A great merit was that there was so little gear to carry to the crag.

Another member at the hut was "J" one of the Clapham College lads, regular visitors at the huts during the school holidays. Brother Joe, head of the college was a keen and very good climber, he was also a brilliant organiser. He brought groups to the Lakes and later Wales and also organised the Club's own climbing courses, it was my good

fortune to meet him later that year and we became good friends and climbed together until he went to Nyasaland, Zimbabwe, in 1955.

"J" had been to Buckbarrow, the Club hut under Buckbarrow Crag in Wasdale with Joe's groups and suggested a trip over via either Sty Head or Scafell Pike to Wasdale. With hindsight I suspect "J" had done the trip only from Wasdale for he certainly knew the way was via Mickleden and Rossett, however we went via Stool End and Oxendale and into the cloud at about 1200 feet, doubts crept in as we climbed and reached open fell and we were quite lost, happily a clearing in the cloud we were between Great Knot and Cold Pike. We descended to the Wrynose Road and proceeded over Hardknott and down Eskdale to reach Buckbarrow around midnight. Happily five members, senior ones, it seemed to us, they were probably in their twenties, were still dining and generously fed us. I particularly remember the thick rice pudding produced from the oven of the fireplace range in the lounge/dining room.

With what now seems incredible optimism we determined to return to Langdale next day. I thinking "this time I'll navigate" pride indeed goeth before the fall! The following morning a late start and a visit to the Gasses at the Gill farm for a dozen eggs found us on the road to Wasdale Head about 11.00. Ascending Brown Tongue, the cloud level ought to have rung warning bells. Around Hollow Stones we were into the cloud but following the Lingmell track and after a little casting around in the snow we arrived about 2.00pm at the large summit cairn. Relieved or possibly stunned by such success I confidently lead off for Esk Hause, some forty or fifty minutes later a large cairn loomed out of the mist, it was all too familiar, full circle around the top.

Eyes now glued to the compass it was off again until in fading light we determined to see lower ground, no torches of course, and descended Little Narrowcove. Eventually below the snow level we bivied for the night under my ex-army gas cape, a standard hill waterproof at the time. We spent a cool but tolerable night. Now thoroughly dispirited I was not totally sure I had made Eskdale until we walked into Brothekeld Farm about 8.30 the next morning with enough cash for a hearty and much relished breakfast which cost all of two shillings and sixpence, each of course. It was a beautiful morning and looking back we should have headed back to Langdale over the tops or at least via Three Tarns. However, confidence totally dented, we wended our way back over Hardknott and Wrynose, after all we had been this way before and felt confident about the way!

Experience may indeed be the sum of past errors but those two days so long ago were just at the beginning of a learning experience that still continues, they did give it an excellent kick-start though.

Incidentally the eggs survived the return trip.

## THE BERNINA TRAIL

### A Walk around the Bernina Massif

Dorothy Buffey

For a number of years Roy and I have enjoyed doing a walk, usually a circuit of one of the G.R.'s. We rarely book ahead and we have never had to bivouac. Joyce Kent gave us a book of European Treks and the one which attracted us was the Bernina Trail.

On arrival in Pontresina we found the temperature to be very cold. (Our car was iced up in the mornings). A few nights earlier eight inches of snow had fallen on the campsite, so we already knew that there was snow where normally there would not be any. As it was summer we decided not to take axes and crampons as the snow would be "soft", so we took two collapsible ski poles each, which turned out to be very useful, especially on the steeper snow slopes and the boulder fields covered in snow. A decision was made to take one or two variants which went higher and all of these turned out to be very different from the route described.

Leaving the campsite at Pontresina we headed for the Rifugio Languard (Georgy Shutte - 20 beds - 3186 metres) no water available just melted snow. From the hut there is a short climb (15 minutes) to the summit of Piz Languard (3262 metres). An incomparable spot for views of the rising and setting sun, the Bernina Range at its most magnificent. At this refuge we were the only guests and the jovial warden (a former guide) made us most welcome. There we were warm for the first time in days. Each morning the guardian talked to the Steinboks which came to the terrace. (The guardian stated that they came if it was quiet and no noisy people about!)

Sitting in the sun we waited for the snow to soften then we descended through the snow and rocks to the Languard Valley. The long traverse of the snow covered valley provided us with crystal clear views as we made our way to the Fuorcla Pischa (2874 metres). This area is the heart of a reserve for the protected alpine flowers a botanical garden covering the slopes of Piz Languard and the Val da Fain. Descending steeply to the Val da Fain we saw more steinboks and once below the snowline many flowers were recovering from the crushing snow.

Upwards then to the Diavolezza (2973 metres, 186 beds) for the night finding it to be an hotel with many guides working out of there. The 'hotel's' terrace provided a breathtaking panorama of Piz Paln, the Bellevista and Pis Bernina.

Our next day was a descending one through snow to the Laf Nair and Lago Bianco at the foot of Piz Cambrena and Piz d' Arlas. The famous Bernina railway runs along the opposite shore. Our overnight stop was at the Hotel Belvedere Alp Grum, accommodation and restaurant are also available at the Alp Grim Railway Station. (Credit cards accepted here). The Belvedere's owner proudly displayed photographs of himself taken with Princess Anne, also with the Thatchers when he was a consultant to the "Olympic Committee" and did work with the British Army in North Wales. He also worked as a consultant with Joe Brown on the Sean Connery film "Five days one Summer."

### Alp Grum - Rifugio Bigname

A long day made longer by nipping to Poschiavo to the bank taking the train back to Cavaglia, followed by an ascending walk through the woods to Somdoss. That afternoon we saw in the air flumes of spindrift from the seracs which came off the Palu Glacier. We climbed up the Val Urse amid rock to the Pass de Canfinal (2628 metres) and our crossing into Italy.

Descending then through abandoned meadows abundant with gentians and marmots to Alp Gembre where shepherd huts had recently been renovated. Traversing the Cirque and its rivers (bridges over the larger ones many streams without) flowing in cascades from the tongues of the eastern and western Felloria cirque glaciers above. We then made our final ascent of the day to Rifugio Bignami (2401 metres - 60 beds) friendly accommodating guardians but a "cold" refuge.

### Rifugio Bignami - Rifugio Marinelle Bombardiere

From the hut we made for the Alpe di Fellaria, crossed the river and climbed out of the valley to the Bocchetta di Caspoggio gained by a short slabby rock section (10 metres). Descending the cirque glacier (well snow covered) to its lateral moraines, here taking the long winding path leading to the panoramic terrace of the Rifugio Marinelle Bombardiere (2813 - 180 beds). As we don't book in advance we were lucky to arrive early, it was Saturday night and the hut became full. This rifugio is only three hours walk from the nearest road and many families come up to spend Saturday night there and take part in the Mass held outside. (The guardian is a 'Sting' look alike).



Mass being said outside the Rifugio Marinelle Bombardiere

### Rifugio Marinelle Bombardiere - Rifugio Longoni

This was the wildest and most solitary part of the route. The visibility was not good, the cloud coming down as we left the rifugio. The route is not well marked and between these refugios we did not see a single sole.

It was raining as we traversed the cerque below the Scerren glacier crossing several rivers some with bridges and some without. We continued our descent to a junction in the paths. Here we climbed in cloud what seemed like a never ending valley to the Forcella di Eutova. The descent on the other side over a large boulder field covered in places by snow made the going quite awkward to the frozen lake. From here we took a signed path which although well marked was not well walked. The route being spectacular with the odd rocky slabby section. We finished up descending a lengthy ridge to the rifugio rather than ascending from the "road", arriving damp and weary at the Longoni. Here we were stuck for two days because of thunderstorms, new snow and rain at lower levels. The guardian was an Alpine guide owning an impressive Avalanche Rescue Dog. Behind the rifugio on a crag the guardian had bolted some routes with lower-off points. When asked there grade he stated 6c.

### Rifugio Longoni - Passo de Malaga

Initially we descended into Cirque di Tremoggia with its rivers and waterfalls to the Alpe Fora. Then followed a path at times difficult to distinguish, very overgrown and not well marked to the Alpe dell Oro. (The going through the forest was very wet after the overnight rain). Good views of the north face of Mnt Disgrazia. We then picked up the old military road which became a path to the Muretto Pass on the Italian/Swiss border. Then over much snow down Plan Cavin finally to Passo de Malaga and the road staying the night at the Youth Hostel.

As we were back in the realm of roads, motor cars and urbanisation we decided to forsake the walk along Engiadin Valley and took the bus back to Pontresina.

### Maps.

Engiadin Ota	1:60000 (Kummerley and Frey)
Carta Turistica Kompass	1:50000 (Bernina and Sodres)
Laudeskarte de Schweiz	1:50000 268 Julier Pass
	269 Bernina Pass
	270 Brusio
	278 Mat Disgrazia.

## COAST TO COAST WALK

### Paul Burrows

After countless Friday nights, over a pint, discussing the merits of the various long distance footpaths. A change in employment conditions (I came off shift work onto regular days) gave my neighbour Dave Duffy, and I, the opportunity to walk Wainwright's Coast to Coast route in the summer of 1998.

Being restricted to the dates, Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> July to Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> August due to Dave's works annual 'shut down' period, we devised a ten schedule, to commence on the Wednesday and finish on the Friday week. When our wives would join us a Robin Hood's Bay and we would spend the weekend in Scarborough as a treat for the wives for ferrying us around.

Both of us being members of the Youth Hostel Association, we made use of their pre-booking service to arrange overnight accommodation, one B&B, one Farmhouse, one Pub and the rest YH's.

So on the third Tuesday in July the four of us arrived at Bishop's Scale. Looking forward to a night at the 'Wainwright' (quiz night, and yes, we all recommend the shoulder of lamb) two of us giddy with excitement, and two looking forward to a long drive home and work the next day.

### Day 1. St.Bees to Ennerdale Youth Hostel - 19 miles

Wednesday morning dawned to a beautiful clear sky. The drive over Wrynose and Hardknott passes to St.Bees seemed to take ages, but at 11.35 'The Walk' commenced after the requisite paddle in the sea and 'photo' session. We reached Sandwith at 13.00 and stopped at the Lowther Arms for our first pint of the walk. (Stockport and Robinson's).

By Dent 14.00 the weather had changed for the worst, mist had rolled in, and it had started to drizzle. In the forestry plantation, due to logging activities we strayed from the path and met two parties who were lost. Joining forces, we eventually found the path again, and continued out of the plantation. Later, at the YH, we heard that everyone that day had strayed at that point, in someway or other.

We arrived at Ennerdale Bridge at 18.00 in torrential rain, and had a bite to eat, and a pint or two (Cupwinner's and Director's) at the Shepherd Arms. Thankfully, when it was time to leave, it was drizzling once again. But at Ennerdale Water, as darkness fell, the rain returned with a vengeance, and the path deteriorated into a scramble. Over two hours later, we arrived at the YH soaked, and shattered. (Ennerdale Bridge to the Youth Hostel is only five miles). That night we crawled into our bunks, the end of an eventful day.

### Day 2 Ennerdale to Grasmere - 19 miles

We left Ennerdale YH at 9.00 feeling tired, for it seemed, we had lain awake most of the night listening to the heavy rain overflowing the gutters and falling onto the plastic roofed bike shed below our window, sounding just like the drums of an Orange Order band. We were to have walked over Red Pike but the mist was too low. We walked up the valley to the Black Sail YH hut to find all the streams flooded. We followed them upstream, eventually crossing them, and then we scrambled on up and into thick mist, to find the Brandreth fence, dropping down to Honister Pass at 11.45 in glorious sunshine.

At the Scafell Hotel, Rosthwaite, we had a pint and a bite to eat and then walked up the Greenup Edge, 15.30, Helm Crag 17.10 and Grasmere at 18.05.

That night we drank at Tweede's Bar (Coniston ale) with Peter Pedley the post card photographer, whom we met at the Butter Lip How YH, the end of a perfect day.

### Day 3 Grasmere to Patterdale - 9 miles

Signing out of the YH at 13.05 we set off at a leisurely pace for Dave's right foot was troubling him. He had visited the local GP in Ambleside in the morning due to a couple of blisters becoming inflamed. I spent the morning strolling around Grasmere.

At Grisedale Tarn, Dave decided to take the lower path to Patterdale whilst I would walk over St.Sunday with Dave Owen, a lad we had met on the first day at the Lowther Arms, again at Ennerdale YH, and who had walked with us the previous day. The three of us met up again at the Patterdale Hotel and had a couple of pints of 'Doris 90', what a drink! By 5 o'clock there must have been twenty walkers sat outside, the weather was glorious (if you could only see the photos). By 6 o'clock the barrel of Doris 90 was empty and everyone started to drift away.

After tea at the YH, those that were walking the C to C, (we had met most of them at the Patterdale Hotel in the afternoon), decided to walk to the White Lion close by, to chat, and exchange notes, about the walk (excuse really). By the way some walked back to the YH, everyone appeared to have an enjoyable evening, or maybe they were just stiffening up?

### Day 4 Paterdale to Shap - 16 miles

The two Dave's and I left the Paterdale YH at 09.10 (Dave Owen was to walk with us until the last couple of days, changing his schedule to do so). Immediately rising towards Angle Tarn 10.00 and Kidsty Pike 11.20 Definitely the high point of the walk, the weather was fabulous, clear, no haze, you could see for miles. We ate are packed lunches on the edge of Haweswater, and then continued along the edge of the reservoir, to arrive at Burn bank at 14.20, the end of the Lakes. Continuing on, we passed through Rosgill Bridge and Shap Abbey, to arrive at Shap at 16.15. We soon found the New Ing Farm, and after a shower, and a change of clothes, we strolled into

Shap for 'a night on the town'. Shap on a Saturday night, or any other time, least said the better, we ended up (in more ways than one) at the Greyhound Pub.

#### **Day 5 Shap to Kirkby Stephen - 20 miles**

Sunday morning saw us 'running' out of Shap. All flat now, nothing of note until Oddendale hamlet 10.05, then a short stretch of moor, past Robin Hood's 'grave' to the Orton road. Left onto dirt track, past several farms to Sunbiggin Tarn 13.15, then along a stretch of road and onto the moor to Smardale Bridge 14.45. Leaving the moor, we crossed several fields, through an underpass beneath a railway line into Kirkby Stephen 16.15. After Shap a gem! A cultural oasis. We stayed at the redundant Methodist Church YH slept like a ----. That night I had my first pint of Black Sheep - it was not to be my last!

#### **Day 6 Kirkby Stephen to Reeth (Grinton Lodge YH) - 26 miles**

Leaving Kirkby Stephen by way of Frank's Bridge 09.10, we walked up onto the moor to the Nine Standards Rigg 10.25. Rain overnight had made it very heavy under foot. From there we took the original route to Raven seat 12.25. arriving in the hamlet of Keld 13.25, where we ate our packed lunches. Not a lot to say about Keld (no pub!). We left by way of a pleasant path along a river and valley, then continued up hill to reach Swinergill Mines 14.40, walking on, up and over to come down at Blakethwaite Mill 15.30, then up onto Gunnerside and through miles of old mine workings. There is an alternative river route, we have been told, which is two hours longer but is more pleasant, especially in bad weather. We reached Reeth at 18.15, there we had steak pie and chips and a pint or two of Black Sheep, with Bill Mitchel, editor of the Dalesman, who grilled us about the walk. We arrived at Grinton Lodge YH some time later all 'dun in'.

#### **Day 7 Reeth to Richmond - 10.5 miles**

We left Grinton Lodge at 09.30. Between Reeth and Richmond, is a lovely stretch of countryside, farms and fields, cows and sheep, again, if you could see the photographs. There is no need to rush; it was a rest day after all, so we strolled along, admiring the views. Passing through Priory, Marick, Marske and Whitecliffe Wood to reach Richmond at 13.00. We had a couple of pints of Camerons Ruby Red, and then booked into our lodgings, the Winsor House. Later we had a walk around Richmond and a few more pints of Camerons Ruby red. Then an early night. The end of another grand day.

#### **Day 8 Richmond to Osmotherley - 25 miles.**

We left Richmond 09.25, the weather, cloudy, and threatening to rain. This was to be a long day, eight miles of road to walk, but mostly through fields, along clay footpaths. Due to over night rain it was very heavy under foot; our boots looking like size 18's.

We passed through Colburn, Catterick Bridge, Bolton on Swale, Rawcar Bridge and Streetlam. At Danby Wiske, we had a right heavy downpour so we sheltered at the

Black Swan, so we thought we might as well have a pint, while we were waiting for it to stop raining. (Tapster's Old Bailey). When the rain had stopped, we continued on to Oaktree Hill, East Harlsey and Ingleby Cross to reach Osmotherley at 18.05.

We eventually found the YH (left out of lane, not right into village). After a bite to eat, Dave the 'Wimp' Duffy was too tired to walk into the village for a pint, (about a mile from the YH) so we had a 'mope' about the YH, and phoned our wives.

#### **Day 9 Osmotherley to Blakey (Lion Inn) - 21.5 miles**

We had planned to walk to Glaisdale, a further ten miles but Dave's foot was now troubling him considerably, so we rang the Lion Inn, at Blakey, and booked a room, Dave Owen was already booked to stay there.

We left Osmotherley YH at 09.35, passing through Beacon Hill and Huthwaite Green. At Carlton Bank 11.40 it started to rain. By Urra Moor the rain was horrendous, and mist had rolled in, so thick, it was like fog, you could not see beyond thirty yards. We trudged on through Clay Bank Top, Bloworth Crossing to arrive at the Lion Inn Blakey at 16.45 like drowned rats, cold and miserable, and totally 'dun in'. After a bath, a bite to eat, and an hour or so sat in front of a big open fire we began to feel a bit more cheerful. A few pints and we were thankful to crawl upstairs to bed, and glad to see the back of a truly dreadful day.

#### **Day 10 Blakey to Glaisdale - 10 miles**

We left the Lion Inn at 10.30. This should have been an easy walk but Dave was now in considerable pain with his foot, his blisters had now turned septic, and the pills he obtained from the doctor in Ambleside did not seem to be working.

The weather was beautiful, in stark contrast to the day before but it did not help Dave, who was now walking quite slowly. We passed through White Cross at 11.10, this walk, in good weather, could easily have been added onto the previous day's walk, but for Dave, yesterday was miles too long, and today, was enough. We arrived at Glaisdale at 14.00, and found the Arncliffe Arms, which to our horror was one of them 'Fun Pubs', will say no more!

Dave went to bed and I spent the afternoon strolling round the village, and phoning the wives to inform them we had lost a day due to 'adverse weather conditions'. In the evening when Dave got up for something to eat, the landlady on looking at his leg took him to the local hospital. There he saw a Doctor who told him, no 'walking and drinking', when told that he was walking the 'coast to coast' then said no drinking! Thankfully he was a walker himself! Dave returned more cheerful and armed with some new super strength pills.

#### **Day 11 Glaisdale to Robin Hood's Bay - 19 miles**

We left the Arncliffe Arms at 08.15, without so much as a cup of tea, the landlord and his wife still in bed after a late night's drinking session, not with us!

Dave was now in a lot of pain, his right leg was badly swollen. We stayed on the road, and found the shortest route to Robin Hood's Bay. (We only the strip map with us, showing the footpath).

We arrived at Robin Hood's Bay at 14.00 in glorious sunshine just as we had started, all those days before in St.Bee's. The wives, who, after spending a day and night, in their words, in 'smelly Whitby' on their own, without male company, met us with stony silence, and, on seeing the 'pitiful state' of Dave, (his wife's words) 'set about us' as only concerned wives can do.

In Scarborough, the following day, after a good rest, Dave's health, was much improved, the pills having begun to take effect, all was forgiven.

*On his return, once the infection had cleared up, due to abscesses, Dave had to have three of his toenails removed. He was off work for several weeks.*

*Next time, and there will be a next time, we will walk it, in reverse direction, but we will wait awhile before telling our wives our plans.*

*The following year, we walked the 'West Highland Way', but I'll save the story for another day.*

## THE LONG WALK - 6<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2000 - LANGDALE

Pat Haley.

Route:

**Blisco, Three Shire Stone, Wet Side Edge, Swirl How, Dow Crag, Grey Friars, Cockley Beck, Scafell Pike, Esk Pike, Bowfell and Crinkles.**

On arrival on Friday night we were greeted by the view of a beautiful sunset and the Bishop's Scale car park filling up and a host of old and new faces looking forward to the following day. The kitchen was a hive of activity getting food ready for the following day's stops. Arthur seemed to have bought up a supermarket with the stocks of essentials to keep the parties on the hill going for the weekend. I had arrived intending to help but Arthur indicated that enough help was available for the day so encouraged me to walk.

Saturday dawned bright and clear.

By the time most of the walkers had breakfasted the advance party of Derek Price and Mick Pooler were away. Strolling down Langdale valley at 6am, we were greeted by a beautiful morning. The ascent of Pike O'Blisco was easy at the start but lack of fitness began to show. However, meeting Leo Pollard at the top enable a more irregular descent route to be followed and some time to be regained. The Three Shires was a breakfast stop delight bacon butties and tea was in hand before stopping. It was good to see George Partridge again. Having recovered it was up Wet Side Edge with Mike and Dave. Dave contoured off as he was recovering from the Three Peaks the weekend before. Mike and I wended our way over Swirl How, Dow Crag, Grey Friars to extensive views and the cheery greetings of the runners. We arrived at the reservoir at 12.30 looking for Pete. We took a break and just as we were ready to go, Pete arrived complete with mountain bike, epic tale of the difficulty of route finding and a massive sack of water. Water was gratefully received. The slow plod up Grey Friars began and we got to Cockley Beck and the lunch stop about 2.30. I was really feeling the lack of fitness and said that I would cut across to Three Tarns and down Langdale so as to continue to enjoy the beautiful day.

Mike seemed to think this was an option he would join in and I was grateful for his company and conversation as I seemed to get slower and slower and the Three Tarns seemed to take an age to arrive. However all good things come to an end and the pint of shandy at the New Dungeon Ghyll went down without touching the throat. On return to the Hut it was a treat to enjoy the new shower facilities, then enjoy the three course meal and congratulate those who completed the route.

Thanks to Arthur and the team for hut catering and the road support team of Jean, Austin, John and George who kept us going on the way round. We were blessed with a day to see the Lakes at their best and good conversation with members old and new. A great weekend and a fitting Millennium celebration complete with Mass on Sunday morning and Blue Peter hat making competition.

## "PILGRIMAGE TO HELVELLYN"

500 people attend Mass on Summit.

*This was a Club event in a Holy year and it is fitting that it should be in the Journal for the present Holy Year. I am grateful to the Editor of 'The Westmorland Gazette' for kindly giving permission to allow me to produce the following.*

### Tom Brodrick.

A memorable event took place in Lakeland early on Monday morning, when Mass was celebrated on the summit of Helvellyn, by 500 Roman Catholics from many parts of the country. The pilgrimage was organised by the Achille Ratti Climbing Club to commemorate the Holy Year, which is proclaimed every 50 years in the Catholic Church.

The club's largest and most luxurious hut, situated on Dunmail Raise, was the venue for the main body of pilgrims. There, during Sunday afternoon and evening, they began to assemble, coming by bus, car, motor cycles, cycles and on foot. All available space was soon occupied, and tents were pitched on the slopes of Raise. Some people slept in the open. Four priests and 100 pilgrims broke their journey at Ambleside to say mass in the Church of Mater Amabilis. By early morning, some 300 people at Dunmail Raise were preparing for the ascent. At 4.a.m, the large party set off on the mile walk to Wythburn from whence the ascent to the top of Helvellyn began.

Led by members of the club, the procession carrying the furnishings and vestments for the Mass, wound its way up to the mountain top and the summit was reached at 7.am. An Altar of rock was erected and decorated with flowers, and in prayerful silence, Father Buxton, secretary of the Club, put on the sacerdotal vestments and began the celebration of Holy Mass. During Mass, 200 people went to Holy Communion, and when the Sacrifice was finished, the whole congregation sang the traditional hymn, 'Faith of Our Fathers'.

Many of the 500 returned to the climbing hut to enjoy sandwiches and a cup of tea and others stayed to admire more the beauty of the mountains and the sky.

This is the third time that Mass has been celebrated on a mountain top in Lakeland, similar services have been held on the summit of Scafell.

*Reprinted from 'The Westmorland Gazette' August 12<sup>th</sup>, 1950*

This was long before my time in the Club, I have never heard of any reference to it from any of the more long serving Members. And Dunmail our most luxurious Hut? Was than before or after the cow climbed upstairs to the dorm?

Fr. Wilf Buxton is still around, but now Monsignor Canon Buxton, at Our Lady of the Wayside, Grasmere, after many years service at Keswick.

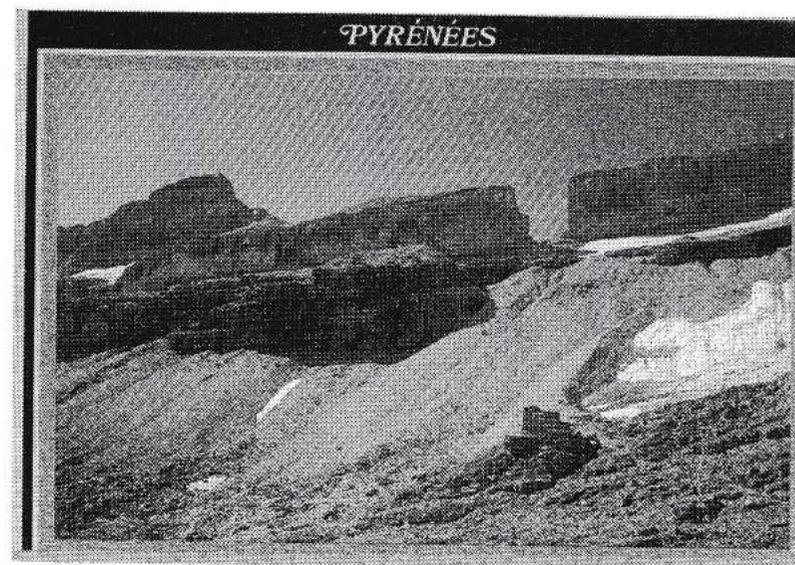
## THE BRECHE de ROLAND

### Keith Cooper

Cath and I along with friends Marion and David have spent nearly every summer holiday for the past ten years camping our way around Europe. We have had a great time except when Marion broke her leg on the Puy de Saney in the Massif Central near Clermont Ferrand, but that is another story. Our trips are a mixture of all the things that people do on holiday - sightseeing, wine tasting, reading, canoeing, sleeping and walking.

Thinking back all the walking we have done in the Alps, Pyrennes and Dolomites, none of it could be called epic mountaineering. Where a car or a lift could be used to gain altitude- it was. Beautiful scenery and sunshine were essential. Anything involving ropes, helmets, crampons or too much toil was out. It could be called 'Exciting Walking for Softies' or 'Non-Epic Walking for Wimps'.

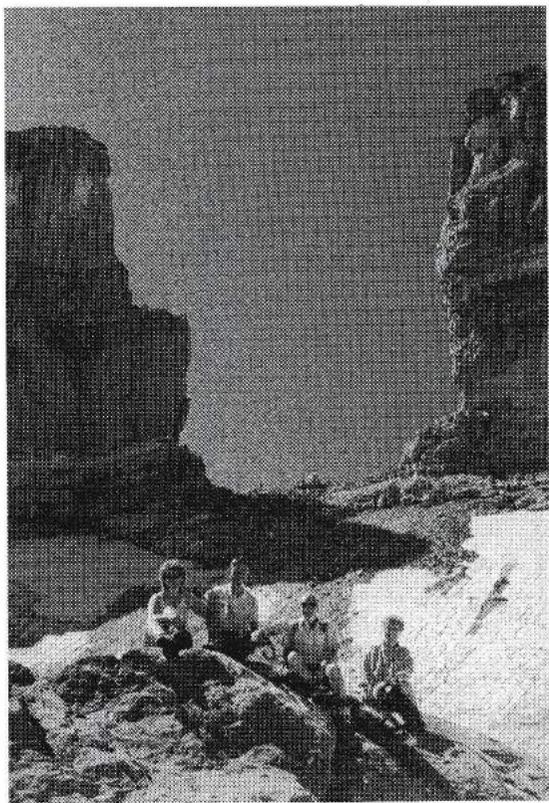
One of our first and perhaps exciting walks was in the French Pyrennes up to the Breche de Roland near Gavarnie. Gavarnie with its world famous cirque is very popular in high season. The wall of glacier-scoured rock rises more than 1300m from the valley floor and is nearly 4 km in circumference. The 3000m summits are covered in snow all year round and are spectacular. As you drive into the village from Lourdes watch out for the Breche de Roland, which is a gap like a missing tooth in the rock wall. Legend has it that the breche or gap was smashed out of the rock by the sword of Roland who was commander of Charlemagne's rearguard.



Breche de Roland

We started this walk of about 8 km. And 500m of ascent by driving up from Gavarnie to the Port de Boucharo thus saving about 900m of sweat and toil. Despite our fairly early start the car park was full and so we parked apprehensively on the road at the foot of a rock strewn slope. Dressed in shorts and polo shirts and carrying drinks but no food because I thought we could buy some at the refuge, we set off eastwards. As we climbed we passed under the north face of Taillon and amongst the boulders below we saw our first marmots. They were shy, furry little creatures and looked like a cross between a rabbit and a teddy bear. (No wonder Marmite is so expensive when you think where it comes from).

After about an hour or so the clear path turned to the right and began to climb steeply. Signs pointed the way upwards to the refuge and the breche but were superfluous as the route was obvious up the wide gully. Soon strangely striated cliffs came into view as well as the refuge and our first close-up view of the breche. More strange cliffs, huge scree, old patches of snow and an old glacier lay between us and this strange gap in the rock wall which separates France from Spain. We headed up to the refuge to get an early lunch only to find that they were not doing food at that time as they were making the beds and cleaning. I was not the flavour of the month!



Close-up of the Breche

We had a drink and then headed off towards the breche. First we crossed an easy snow slope and then followed the path up a long scree slope to a line of cliffs. From there the path was less obvious as it crossed an old glacier covered almost completely with rocks and boulders right up to the breche. It was very steep and unstable and quite slippery if you came across a bare patch of snow or ice. A couple of gallant Frenchmen gave Cath and Marion a helping hand on the more difficult parts of the route (funny how keen Frenchmen are to help women). Soon all four of us were standing on the Breche de Roland itself, one foot in France and the other in Spain. There was no wind, the sun was shining from a cloudless sky and we were still only wearing shorts and a polo at 2807m. Looking back towards France it was much greener than the view into the Ordessa and Spain where it looked dry and arid. The views all around were fantastic with wall after wall of mountains and different coloured rock walls. It had taken us about 3½ hours of steady walking.

After a drink we headed down towards the refuge below us. We were carrying two walking ice-axes between the four of us, so on the way down we deliberately picked out the snow slopes so that we could have some fun sliding down using ice-axes to steer ourselves. It was great fun. However, because the snow was old it was very crystalline and abrasive. Great care was needed to avoid leaving parts of your upper leg and buttock behind on the slope as one Frenchman in a skimpy pair of running shorts found out to his cost.

Arriving at the refuge with food looming large in our minds we found it completely over-run with hordes of people and little chance of getting served quickly, so we finished the last of our drinks and headed back to the car. Luckily it was undamaged and we were soon back in Gavarnie.

Never did four people enjoy pizza and beer more than we did that day. We had had a great day out in a very exciting place. Call us softies if you like but we don't care.

## THE BISHOP'S WALK - 2000

Alexandra O'Sullivan - aged 10.

I woke up at 6.00am and rushed about till 6.40. We left the house at 6.45 and were at the school car park early. Mrs Kirkman, Mrs.Sweeney and Mrs Home were waiting for us. Mrs Home was a little bit late. Soon we were on our way to the Lake District to do a sponsored walk. It was a long journey, but it was worth it. As we approached the gate of the car park, we saw Mr. Kirkman with his school children.

We parked the mini bus and we got out to sort out lunch for later. The scenery was lovely. After a while we started walking. Soon we had our first break. A lady gave us all a large refreshing drink of cold squash and we had a snack to give us energy to carry on with our walk in the hills. The route ahead was looking steep. Later I hurt my foot and toes and had to have Mrs.Home's stick for a long time. then our big moment came, we reached the lake called Grisedale Tarn. It felt fantastic to be so high up in the mountains with all the fresh air and wonderful views. We got really close to sheep too, they were really inquisitive. We took photographs and skimmed stones on the still lake. Other people were there too, enjoying the mountain air. We gave ourselves three cheers for doing so well and reaching our destination together. We had reached our summit.

Our challenge had come to an end and we had to head back to the mini bus. We walked back a different way and called in at the village hall. Everyone clapped when we arrived. We were given certificates, hot soup and cold drinks. It was a great welcome and we felt pleased to have finished our long walk. On the way, we stopped for an ice cream and we bought things. In the mini bus the girls got changed and the boys got changed outside.

The sun going home was red and orange. It was a lovely end to a great day out. We arrived at the school car park at 7.30pm. Our mums could tell we were tired, but we'd had a lovely time. This was the first time I had been to the Lake District for a walk. None of my friends had been before. We all feel pleased that we had managed to do something so enjoyable but also helpful. Our group raised over one hundred pounds for people less fortunate than ourselves and we had great fun doing it.

We'd like to say a big thank you to the teachers who took us and the helpers who organised the walk and kept us safe in the mountains.

I walked with James Roddy, Michael Armstead, Niall McDowell, Lyndsey Waft and Natalie Rowland. All from St.Theresa's Catholic School, Blacon, Chester.

## GRUBGOTT, CIA OR BUN DE? A WEEK IN THE LADIN DOLOMITES

Dominic Sinnett.

It is the 2665m peak of Sassongher which catches the eye during the long climb to the 1875m Paso di Campolongo. It seems to rise vertically above the head of the pass as height is gained, with its parallel-sided buttresses towering above a curtain of scree, until, on reaching the summit of the pass, the valley of Alta Badia is revealed far below. Approaching the south the pass also marks the border of the autonomous Italian region of Alto Adige. I was prepared for the bilingual signs pointing to Brunico/Bruneck and Bressanone/ Brixen, the area having belonged to Austria prior to 1920, but was confused when we entered a town whose sign read Lalia/Stern/La Vila. Why three names? When we arrived at our destination, marked on the map Pedraces/Pedratches, the sign proclaimed Badia Abtei. The answer to this conundrum lay in the Ladin language spoken by the locals, a language related to the Rhaeto-Romanic spoken around Chur in Switzerland. As a languages teacher myself I was rather ashamed that I'd never heard of this language, which has survived in a few remote valleys in the northern Dolomites.

Joanne, Jo, Phil and I had arrived earlier that day in 36 degree heat in Venice, attracted to the region by the prospect of climbing some of the famous *vie ferrate*. As we drove up through Beiluno the temperature dropped dramatically (and not just because we'd worked out the air-conditioning in our hire car) until, by the time we reached Campolongo, the rain was dancing off the road to the accompaniment of drumrolls of thunder echoing between the limestone peaks. It was to be the only serious rain we would encounter all week. A few years before, the four of us had spent six nights doing a high-level traverse of the Stubia Alps in the Austrian Tyrol. This time we fancied a little more luxury and had booked, through Collett's Mountain Holidays, three nights in a small hotel in Pedraces, and a further three in the luxurious Sporthotel in Arabba, ten miles to the south. We were to spend just one night in between at a high-level *rifugio* on the Sella *massif*. This allowed us to combine exciting climbing with excellent food, service and a high degree of comfort.

We were grateful too for the network of cable cars and chairlifts which took some of the legwork out of getting up onto the plateaux, not to mention getting back down again. From Pedraces a chairlift takes you to just below the treeline at the foot of the Fanes *massif*. From the church of Santa Croce (or San Crusc in Ladin) a path, totally unsuspected from below, leads diagonally up and across the cliff face, with the occasional fixed rope for security, to a 2612m col. It is the sort of place where you feel a sense of vertigo looking up, with 400m cliffs appearing to bulge out above, with steep scree leading down to the trees 300m below. It reminded me of pictures you see of big-wall climbing in places like Yosemite. Later, after lunch, we walked back along the edge of the plateau. On one side stretched barren karst from which the ice seemed to have only just retreated; on the other, as you approached with care on hands and knees, a peep over the edge revealed the church once more, a thousand metres down.

The sign outside La Vila reflected a local pattern; all the trilingual signs had Ladin first, followed by German and then Italian. The family at Haus Valentin in Pedraces, who spoke Ladin amongst themselves, were more than happy to speak to me in

German. The locals were all quick to point out that they were Sudtiroler (not Italian), that Mussolini had embarked on a programme of Italianization between the wars (without success) and that 80 years (since the collapse of Austria-Hungary and the secession of its territory in Trentino and South Tyrol to Italy) is only a short time in people's memories. When Phil and I reached the top station of the Santa Croce chairlift just seconds after the last chair (after 8 hours walking), we were resigned to a further hour's knee-crunching descent. Instead, one of the operators offered us a lift down in his 4x4. After an awkward conversation in my halting Italian he discovered I could speak German and we chattered happily. We stopped to pick up an old lady who had been haymaking on her nephew's farm, and as we drove past the house where she'd been born over seventy years before, the conversation switched to Ladin. The valley, Alta Badia, had been completely isolated until the Austrians built a road in 1892: this isolation explains the survival of the Ladin language and culture while more accessible areas were colonised by Italian and German speakers during the Middle Ages. The traditional settlements can still be seen, with their characteristic mushroom-shaped houses. These have masonry-built lower walls with the projecting upper storey constructed in timber, and a shingle roof. More modern buildings are pure Tyrolean: you could imagine yourself in Austria. The illusion was enhanced by the Tyrolean costumes worn by the locals on the Tuesday we were there, the Feast of the Assumption.

Not surprisingly the cuisine reflected the border country character of the area too. It was amazing, but not at all unwelcome, after three tough hours on the *via ferrata* to reach the Pisciadu *rifugio* at 2587m. In the midst of a bare, scree-filling corrie, surrounded by gaunt fangs of rock, we could hear the sound of jollity and the clinking of beer-glasses; within minutes of our arrival we were being served fried polenta, bratwurst and wild mushrooms, accompanied by half litres of draught beer. It was amongst the best food we had all week, or perhaps we just felt we'd earned it. And the view the next morning from our bedroom window, straight down the valley, backed by the peaks which we had climbed earlier in the week, and which were just poking out of the mist: all this was unforgettable.

On several of the summits we were surrounded by choughs, of the yellow-beaked alpine variety, who seemed to be drawn as much to the discarded sandwiches and apple cores as to the magic of the mountain tops. Not everything was entirely unfamiliar, though. On the descent from Sassongher we traversed around the side of a deep corrie at the foot of the cliffs, outpaced by three chamonix just ahead of us, and suddenly emerged into what for all the world might have been Malham Cove. Apart from the flora, that is. Two years ago we spent the week fruitlessly searching the glacial wastes of the Stubia for edelweiss, stella alpina. Here, all of a sudden, in perfect Yorkshire limestone country, we found it in relative abundance amongst the harebells, orchids and gentians.

What about the *via ferrata*? At first we were a little bemused: maps frequently showed a *via ferrata* where, on the ground, there was nothing more than a fixed rope and little exposure. Then again, while climbing the 3026m Sas dales Diess on the first day, Phil and I found ourselves on the top of a metre-wide wall above a 50m drop on one side and a 500m drop on the other. It was marked on the map as a path. The scrambling was only moderately difficult, but the wire provided a welcome sense of

security. When a few days later we decided to climb the Brigata Tridentina *via ferrata*, we underestimated the length, verticality and exposure of the route. It climbs in three stages, from a high pass, up the initial escarpment to the scree curtain which surrounds the whole of the Sella massif. Then it climbs steeply up the back of a narrow cove alongside a waterfall, before spanning a 150m deep gully on a wire bridge on the final approach to the Piscadu hut. The route included stemples (rungs driven into the rock) and a ladder which hung halfway up a sheer rock-face above the waterfall.

The grade F *via ferrata* delle Trincee, above Arabba, was a different proposition. When, on May 23<sup>rd</sup> 1915, Italy declared war on its former ally, Austria-Hungary, the Austrians retreated into the mountains to take up a better defensive position. The *via ferrata* was put in to facilitate troop and equipment movements over difficult terrain. The gun emplacements, artillery positions and field kitchens looking south towards the Marmolada glacier can still be seen. So unassailable were each side's positions that the front line scarcely shifted; as on the western front, both sides resorted to mining. At nearby Piccolo Laguzuoi five mines were detonated as each side tried, in vain, to undermine the other's positions: the face of the mountain was blown away. The delle Trincee has a tough start which entails pulling on the wire and walking up a vertical wall for some 60 feet or so. Standing on the bolts provides welcome respite for your arms, particularly when stuck in a queue! You end up on a knife-edge ridge which takes you over wire bridges, past artillery emplacements and even through tunnels, with sensational exposure on either hand. The volcanic rock, unusual for the Dolomites, rough, dark and the consistency of cake-mixture, is reminiscent of Skye. Except you can't imagine anyone dragging a field gun along the ridge of Sgurr a Greadhaidh.

A week is not long enough in such a fascinating environment. *Massifs* such as Civetta, Tofane or the Tre Cime di Lavaredo still beckon. And the jacuzzi in the Sporthotel would, I'm sure, be just as relaxing after a day on the piste as after a day on the Trincee. But I'll have to learn some Ladin before I go back.

## BECKSTONES APRIL FOOL WORKING WEEKEND - 2000

### Joyce Kent, Hut Warden.

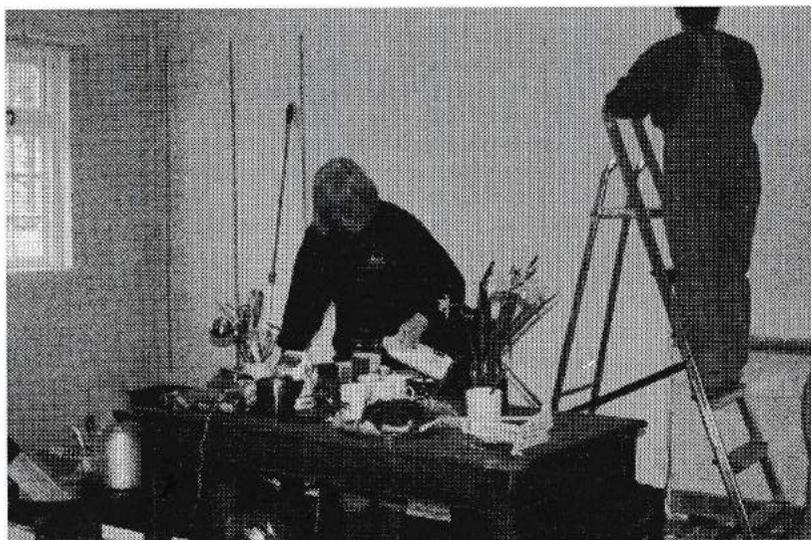
We had an excellent turn-out, thirteen members and one guest and we only have beds for twenty people.

The weather wasn't good enough to put all the furniture outside in the garden this year, but we all worked hard on the day. We built a room-divider and an extra bunk; a new ceiling in the big bedroom and a small bedroom (there are no spiders crawling out of the gaps now); we painted the lounge, the kitchen and a bedroom; scrubbed the tables, cleaned the windows and did general spring cleaning and made last years chopped down trees into kindling.

We dined at 7pm on Lentil Soup; Roast Pork with Crackling and sage stuffing and apple sauce, Roast and Boiled Potatoes, Buttered Carrots, Sprouts and Roast Parsnips with Vegetarian Gravy; Proper Old-fashioned Sherry Trifle; Red or White Sicilian Wine and Coffee. After dinner we were treated to a slide show of Terry, Dave and Dot's recent trip to Patagonia, South America, and after that most people fell into bed exhausted.

Sunday dawned cooler and slightly damp, as did the enthusiasm for yet more work. However, after a slow start, more work was done and some members resolved to come back the following weekend to finish off.

Many, many thanks to everyone that helped, it was a very convivial and pleasant weekend.



Dorothy Buffey making the brew - Sharon Gaitskell painting the wall

## BECKSTONES B-B-Q - 1<sup>st</sup> July 2000

### Roy Buffey.

Saturday: Mostly sunny and calm - rain held off.

Daytime Activities - Climbing on Wallowbarrow Crag.

Logan Stone Route	Dot Wood & Barbara Charlton
Leaf. V Diff	Terry Kitchen and Ray Baptist
Thomas. Severe	DW & BC, TK & RB
The Plumb. VS 4c	TK & RB

Biking - Eskdalle, Ulpha Jim Heyes, pedalling well with a new knee.

Walking - everyone else - various routes.

Nocturnal Activities - B-B-Q presided over by Frank Lord with the occasion being graced by the presence of the Hut Warden on her return from a Management Committee Meeting at Bishopscote.

Sunday: Wet, warm and midgy.

Early morning drive to village, stagger in general direction of bottle bank, returning laden with Sunday papers.

Thereafter, reading papers, attempting crosswords and starting jigsaws and later on a circular walk around the river and Frith Castle.

## GOLDEN DAY ON GOLDEN SLIPPER

**Bryony White.**

It was August. Summer was suddenly showing signs of fading and as ever, Faz and I were showing signs of not having done enough climbing. Weather, work and life in general had once again got in the way of more important things. So we decided nothing would deter us from a weekend at Langdale, and set off on Thursday evening with climbing gear vying for space with food in the back of the car, and climbing in mind. We arrived early on a warm summer evening and sat outside with tea and possibly one of the most wonderful views in the Lake District to gaze upon and discussed the possibilities for the next day.

Faz. Of course, had lots of ideas about where we should go and what we could do when we got there. But I sensed a hot day to come and therefore wanted to include a swim somewhere in the itinerary. It suddenly occurred to me that I had never managed to climb a classic in the area, one spoken of with reverential tones by someone whose opinion I always listen to (yes I do, Ray), as possibly being even more wonderful than the truly delightful "One step in the clouds". And I'm sure you would have guessed from that description, had not the title of this piece rather given the game away; that I am talking of Austen's route on Pavey Arc, "Golden Slipper".

I could tell Faz was a bit taken with the idea - he had an idea we could lead up to that particular route with one he wanted to revisit - "Arcturus". So a compromise was reached. I did not mention the swim but included a tea towel in my rucksack; for two wet people, the drying off of....

Next day dawned fairer than anyone could reasonably expect and I realised it was actually going to be hot. We took a lift with Dot and the kids in the back of the car, to the New D.G. and set off en masse (more or less) up the path to Stickle Tarn. This was a much hotter and sweatier experience than I had bargained for. I have a feeling that the problem with basting oneself with factor fifteen before setting out on such a day is that it acts as an insulating layer and eventually slides off on the resulting waves of perspiration rendering it pretty much a waste of time having put it on in the first place. However, I mopped my brow and plodded up on the seemingly indefatigable heels of Faz and eventually was grateful to reach the heady heights of Stickle Tarn reflecting the handsome edifice of Pavey Arc.

We headed Left around the tarn to reach the bottom of Jack's Rake, and found it far easier and far quicker than heading Right, which for some reason is the direction I have always headed hitherto.

We did stop at the bottom of "Arctucus" but unfortunately (for Faz anyway) it was already being climbed, and we had to make do with eating a ham roll instead!

Jack's Rake always proves enormous entertainment value in that while it is perfectly safe, it offers some of the manifestly uninitiated their first taste of scrambling. If you are lucky when climbing the Rake, you will pass at least one group in which one member is having a not-altogether-enjoyable-epic (dare I say generally a female parent)

who is being coaxed or harried along by a more experienced spouse. Best of all there is often one or two small or not so small children accompanying who are gambolling up with arms crossed in contempt of their elders, any danger, and the wonderful view spreading before them, in equal proportions.

I don't know why I enjoy this, but I do.

We reached the bottom of Golden Slipper. Disappointingly all sight of the second pitch slab is obscured by the first pitch, which looks fairly unremarkable. We sorted the ropes out, anchored me, and Faz set off up the slanting gangway with that casualness that comes of having soloed the route on a number of occasions in the past. I followed a little bit later, up the gangway to the right, finding it a rather awkward step up right onto a ledge. After that it was more or less straight up to another ledge at the bottom of the most amazing 80 foot slab.

This is the part that can be seen from a long way off, looking like a sheer blank wall. I suppose in terms of placing protection it still looks like this from close up, but fortunately for me Faz was leading. He made his way effortlessly upwards barely pausing on the way to put in gear at apparently mathematically regular intervals. This is one of his particular gifts which never seems to amaze me as a second.

I stood in the sun, drinking in the lovely smell of warm rock, and the shimmering vista over Langdale, thinking this was as good a place as any to feel happy.

Climbing the second pitch myself I found it to be encrusted with little nuggety holds. It was a lovely realisation that there was not a set series of moves, but that it was possible to wander upwards at will almost, balancing on tiny things any one of which would have been useless on its' own. The friendly angle and sun on my back lulled me into such a state of dreaminess that I managed to miss the loop in my harness with the gear from the anchor and let it slide tantalisingly away from me and over the edge below. That woke me up, but if it hadn't the gradual change of angle "from slab to wall" as it is described in the guidebook, forced me to concentrate. The last moves up the rib on the right were a little anxiety provoking, but manageable. And the whole pitch completely delightful.

Faz forgave me for so casually throwing some rather nice gear away. In fact he was remarkably philosophical about it. And sitting at the top of that particular route I would say that it was worth it too.

By the time we got down the sun had hidden itself, so we didn't stay for a swim after all, but scrambled back to the "New" to celebrate in the time honoured way, a really Golden Lake District day.