

ACHILLE RATTI CLIMBING CLUB



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Introduction

THE journal is an important and valuable feature of club life. I have a copy of the second journal produced in 1949 which makes very interesting reading. We have not managed to produce the publication every year since then but the zealous efforts of the many editors to tease copy out of members over the years has managed to ensure that we have been able to produce one most years.

I have not seen the content of this year's journal but I believe that it is full of interesting articles that reflect the adventurous spirit of our members.

Our members' mountaineering interests are many and varied and include walking, fell running, rock climbing and in travelling to distant and interesting places. I was thinking of this last year whilst John Foster was speaking about a hut in Scotland, as I looked around the room I reflected on the mountain areas in many parts of the world that people in the room had ventured to in the past year.

During the past year there have been a number of club meets that have been enjoyed by a good selection of the core of active members.

The management committee has continued in their efforts to maintain and improve the club huts to ensure the provision of comfortable accommodation for present and future members.

The ARCC is a vibrant club I would like to thank on your behalf all those members who work to ensure that this is possible. At this point I would like to thank the Journal editors Dave Hugill and Brian Hodgkinson and those members that have provided copy for this journal.

David Ogden
Chairman

Bob Graham Round - 14 June 2003

by Dave Makin

THE seed was planted at the Achille Ratti Dinner Dance in 2002. Feeling good at Christmas I gave it the thumbs up (well one at least!) and from then on I knew all I had to do, other than six months of hard training, was turn up and run on the day as everything else was masterminded by Leo Pollard and Arthur Daniels. As usual they lined up the Ratti's lean mean BG machine to give me a great chance of completing a successful BG. At 42 years old I would be the same age as Bob Graham when he completed his successful attempt. 14 June was the day after he did it and we both ran under a full moon. The omens were good.

It was a relief to finally set off. I'd struggled to get some sleep but before I knew it Janet was shaking me and we were off to Keswick. It was a convivial atmosphere with lots of supporters and friends at the Moot Hall to see me off. Then I was running. At last, this was it. With Colin Jones, Bill Mitton, and Robert Green it was a steady run up and over Skiddaw and Great Calva in the dark. The overcast sky hid the full moon. I felt tired. "Don't worry, you'll wake up when the sun comes up," the team assured me. It was starting to come light as we climbed Blencathra and raced down Halls Fell Ridge. Janet and Sean were manning the mobile support van at Threlkeld. I was a few minutes down on schedule but, as promised, I was starting to feel good and was relieved to have got through the night.

The sun was on the back of our necks as I climbed Clough Head



Ready for the off!

with Micky Donnelly, and Jeff and Peter Billington. The Dodds passed easily as Jeff and Peter entertained me with an endless stream of jokes. "Less laughing, and more running," Micky scolded, "you're not supposed to enjoy it!" We powered over the rest of the leg, probably a little too quickly as we'd pulled half an hour ahead of schedule by Dunmail. Janet and Sean were there to ply me with a variety of goodies to keep up the strength.

Leg three beckoned. Alan and Brian Kenny, Steve Schofield and John Broome escorted me as we made the long pull up Steel Fell. Alan set the perfect pace and it was steady away as we hit summit after summit bang on schedule. The

number of people who came out on the hills to offer encouragement was amazing. Austin and Lucia, Martin and Nicola, John Crummett, Chris the barman from the New DG; there seemed to be hordes ascending from the valleys just to see me. It was a



Dave, Steve Schofield, Brian Kenny, John Broome and Alan Kenny on Bowfell

humbling experience. Hilary and Peter McGonagle, "We're just out for a picnic," were even wearing specially commissioned T Shirts identifying them as 'Dave Makin's BG Fell Crew 14-6-2003.' Then we met Dave 'Butty' Melling, a seventeen and a half stone prop forward I've known for twenty five years. He'd never walked up a mountain before but, there he was, stood on top of Bowfell clutching a big bunch of bananas. "You're a minute late," he growled, "where've you been?" I pointed to the backdrop of peaks that filled the skyline behind us, "Over all those mate." I don't know whether he actually believed me - or just how quickly his bananas disappeared. Just further on were Michael Pooler and Tony McHale. They'd told me the day before that they'd bring up a succulent meat and potato pie for me, "It kept me going on my BG," Michael had fondly remembered. Unfortunately by

the time I met them they'd eaten most of it themselves and I had to make do with a few crumbs. By now it was all becoming a bit of a blur. It was hot and sunny with a big blue sky but, despite the heat, I was feeling great. Jane Smith met us with her dogs and we bumped into lots more Todmorden Harriers out to wish me well. Phil Hodgson and Tony Shaw had rigged Broad Stand making it easy to romp up the cliffs and onto Scafell before Jim Smith led us off the top and into Wasdale at a cracking pace. The food and liquid provisions concocted by Janet slipped down well. I was right on schedule.

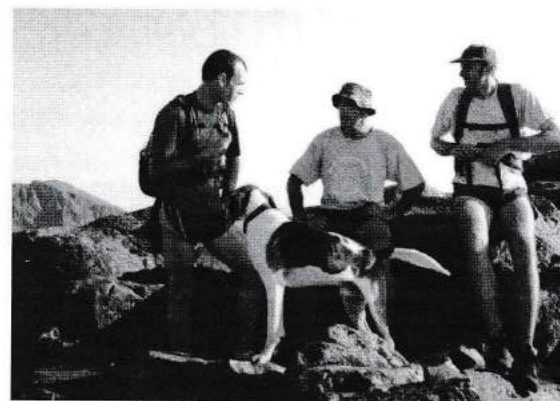
I was guided up Yewbarrow by Arthur Daniels, Mark Laithwaite, Neil Hodgkinson, Neil Sale and Colin Jones (this time with his dog). We passed Alan Brighton round the back of Yewbarrow before the endless drag up Red Pike. I ran on my own out and back to Steeple. As I returned Arthur thrust an old BG favourite, the crisp butty, into my hand. "Get this down yer neck lad," he ordered. Not one to argue with 'Top gun' I gulped it down. The soaring temperature necessitated lots of fluid and a hat that got dipped in every puddle of water we saw. I even had to have a couple of minutes sat in the shade on the gruelling pull up Great Gable. But I was still on time. The amazing support continued; I don't know how Leo and Arthur managed it but I got a flypast by the Red Arrows as we descended Green Gable. As we ran over to Brandreth Arthur dropped back with cramp. "Leave the old bugger," someone said, "he knows where he's going." He certainly

did. We were amazed to see him hurtling down to Honister in front of us as we descended off Grey Knotts. We got a great welcome at Honister. Janet and Sean of course, plus my mum and dad, and lots more Rattis and Tod Harriers.

The last leg. This is where psychological strength has to kick in. Sean, Leo, Sheila Anderton, Helen Hodgkinson, Mandy Goth, Dave Hugill, and Paul Cooney accompanied me over Dale Head and Hindscarth with Leo setting a good pace. Phil met up with us on the 42nd and final peak of Robinson. It was dusk as we made the last big descent into Newlands and more people joined us for the run in.



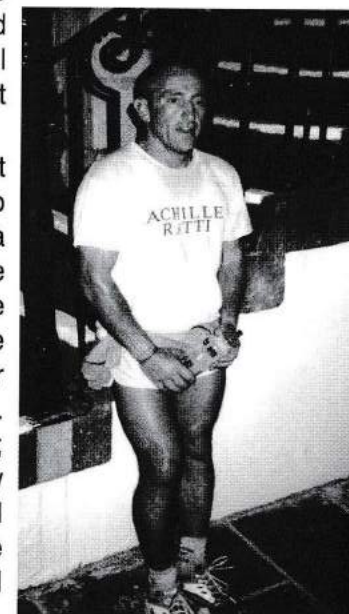
Still smiling!



Mark Laithwaite, Dave, Neil Hodgkinson and 'Macca' on Great Gable

what felt like a civic reception. It seemed like everybody was there. A clenched fist "Yes! I've done it." 22 hours 25 minutes. A marvellous feeling. It was handshakes and hugs all round before I was thrown in the back of the van and delivered to the New Dungeon Ghyll Hotel. Becky and Ian had kindly provided Janet and myself with a room. They'd even put us on the ground floor – I don't think I could have managed any stairs. But, despite the late hour, after a welcome shower, I did manage a few beers. And, somehow still awake on pure adrenalin, I was the last man standing in the bar!

I was amazed at the incredible support I got all the way round from family, club and friends. It really does make a difference to have so many people cheering you on. I'm bound to have missed a few names of those who were out there on the day but your encouragement was much appreciated. And, many thanks to the support squad; what a great team effort. Having a top crew guiding you, feeding you, and encouraging you helps takes the pressure off. As I said at the beginning I just turned up and ran. But what a run. What a day. One of the best.



Job well done!

Although the slight gradients felt like a 43rd peak we raced along the road. A breathless Mandy was heard to declare, "This is faster than my race pace!" Feeling incredibly elated I sprinted down the path into the centre of Keswick and ran down the middle of the road to the Moot Hall to

Langdale to Beckstones Meet - 12/13 June 2004

by John Braybrook

THE Langdale to Beckstones meet in June now appears to have become an established annual fixture. This popular meet has now run for three years and I have been on two of them.

You can decide on your own route over to Beckstones though Joyce Kent, the Beckstones warden, offers several suggested routes. Any luggage you have is transported over to Beckstones from Langdale. A sweeper system is in place on the roads to pick up stragglers. There is tea and cake on arrival and an evening meal is provided. On Sunday there is a pre packed lunch for the return trip.

You can be chauffeured back to Langdale on the Sunday, make your own way back or be dropped off en-route.

The route I planned this year was via. The Band, Three Tarns, down the Esk Valley to Stanley Force and up on to Birker Fell leading to Ulpha thence to Beckstones. This trip is the best part of twenty miles.

The conditions this year were ideal for walking with dry sunny weather and a cooling North Westerly breeze. I left Langdale at 7.30 am and reached Beckstones for 6 pm. I had grand views of Scafell range from Three Tarns. I stopped there for a breather and to take photographs.

At the Woolpack Inn near Boot, in Eskdale, I was tempted to have a pint. The picturesque Stanley Force leading from Eskdale on to Birker



Fell is well worth a visit and is well pathed. Birker Fell provided excellent panoramic views over the Lakeland hills and I took more photographs.

Leo Pollard, a veteran fell runner who is nearly 70 walked and jogged both ways. One way was enough for me at 60!

A most enjoyable weekend and there were 30 people at Beckstones. Many thanks to all those, especially Joyce Kent, who toiled on our behalf to make the meet run so smoothly. I was pleased to see many familiar faces.

The Dubhs, and the Don'ts

By John Foster

A DIFFICULTY most mountaineers have with the Scottish mountains is the correct pronunciation of their Gaelic names, especially on first acquaintance.

Some have been Anglicised to simplify the problem, the best example being Ben More, but inevitably, something of the correct pronunciation is lost in doing so. The original Gaelic is Beinn Mhor, in which the 'i' is pronounced and 'Mh' is as v.

The word Gaelic itself is pronounced differently on either side of the North Channel, the Irish saying 'Gaylick' and the Scots more like an abrupt 'Garlic'. The word 'dubh' means black, and the nearest pronunciation I can give is 'doo', but it is not exact.

The 'Dubhs' of the title refer to a long subsidiary ridge running east from the main Cuillin ridge at Sgurr Dubh na Da Bheinn (3,069ft) over Sgurr Dubh Mor (3,089ft) and then over Sgurr Dubh Beag (2,420ft) and down broad slabs to the western shore of Loch Coir' Uisg (26ft). The average angle of these slabs between the shore and the top of Sgurr Dubh Beag is $24^{\circ} 23'$, but as they are not uniform and are split by several narrow terraces they make an interesting scramble (being gabbro) without the need of a rope, except for a novice.

The descent from the other side (west) of Sg. Dubh Beag is quite another thing, being short and sharp. The last 50ft or so is slightly overhanging in places and is only descended unroped by fit and experienced competent climbers. For the great majority of us a rope is an essential safeguard. The rest of the ascent to the main ridge offers no problems.

In an old S.M.C. district guide to Skye, an ascent of the Dubh slabs by two earlier presidents of that club is commemorated:

'Said Maylard to Solly one day in Glen Brittle,
All serious climbing, I vote, is a bore;
But for once, I Dubh Beag, you'll agree to do little,
And as less we can't do, lets go straight to Dubh Mor.
So now when they seek but a day's relaxation,
With no thought in the world but of viewing the views,
And regarding the mountains in mute adoration,
They call it not 'climbing', but doing the Dubhs'.



The district guide describes the Dubh Slabs as "the finest approach to any mountain summit in the British Isles." The photograph shows the Slabs, but there is nothing to give any idea of scale. So I will compare it with an area with which all of our members must surely be very familiar, our own bit of Langdale.

The road in front of our chapel is at about the same height above sea level as it is in front of the New Hotel, 300ft. With Loch Coir' Uisg being at 26ft above sea level, this means that the bottom of the Dubh Slabs are at an altitude 274ft below the small car park at the junction of the old road with the present.

If we could transfer the Slabs to Langdale at that point, they would continue upwards behind the New Hotel, past Tarn Crag, above Stickle Tarn and over the summit of Pavey Ark (2288ft) to reach the top of Sgurr Dubh Beag 132 ft higher, higher even than Harrison Stickle (2403ft). Surely, the longest continuous slab on any British mountain.

The ascent of the Dubh slabs is a must for any Cuillin addict like me, but they are so difficult of access that the years were rolling by, until I realised in my mid fifties that I'd better make sure of them before I was past it. In September 1989 the Glen brittle Memorial Hut was being wardened by Faith Gardner, a club member for a couple of years. We met in the bar at Sligachan one Sunday night and I asked if she fancied the Dubh slabs. The weather had been settled fine for two days, with a good forecast for the morrow, and she readily agreed.

Full Circle by Ted Maden

FROM my bedroom window in the house in Bacup where I grew up I could look over the town centre and past factory chimneys to hills on the Pennine watershed. Behind our house upland pastures were easily reached and a panorama of the complete ring of hills surrounding Bacup and Rossendale unfolded. This was my first horizon.

When I was ten my Dad came home from the army after World War II and we started having family holidays in the mountain regions of Britain. I became an avid hill walker. The Rossendale skyline was a constant backdrop to walks from home. Almost subconsciously there formed in my mind the concept of a big circuit. But this was long before the era of long distance footpaths, and I did not put the idea to the test.

My career took me far from Rossendale, but then in the mid 1980s to Liverpool. From here Rossendale was easily accessible via the motorway system. There had been big changes: fewer factory chimneys, clean stonework, the beginnings of tourism and the opening of the Rossendale Way. I did several local fell races, and my wife Sybil and I did walks that took in parts of the Way. We considered doing the whole Way as a multi-day walk, but other holiday plans competed. Then, a couple of years ago, I learned of the Rossendale Way in a Day event.

In fact there are two events, the Rossendale Way in a Day and Half Way in a Day. They take place on the first Saturday of July and are put on by the Rossendale and Pendle Mountain Rescue Team. The starts are at different times and places. The full Way is a 45 mile round with about 6500 feet of ascent. This year (2004) I wanted to do one of the events. Early in the year I had done three Long Distance Walkers Association twenty-five milers, so I was confident I could complete the Half, but not so confident of the full Way. I phoned Andy Ellis, the organizer, for advice. He must have read my mind, for he encouraged me to enter the full Way, pointing out that the check points were kept open for long enough to allow completion at two and a half miles per hour pace.

Entering just two weeks before the event I had only one day available for reconnaissance. In addition to my previous coverage of parts of the Way I had a route description in the form of a series of leaflets

issued by the Rossendale Tourist Information Office. These had been very well written and illustrated in the 1980s but had not been revised since then. Also they described the route anticlockwise, whereas on this occasion, for the first time, the event would be in the clockwise direction. Entrants were to receive a description for the clockwise route upon registration. Meanwhile I decided to target my recce to short sections on both sides of the A671 Bacup to Rochdale Road near Healey Dell. Sybil accompanied me on a rather wet afternoon and we did much useful sorting out of the twists and turns hereabouts. Sybil also suggested locating the starting point at the Fisherman's Retreat near Shuttleworth. This proved to be good advice, as we found the venue was reached via narrow lanes that would have presented an unwelcome maze if first encountered in the early hours on the way to registration.

On the day of the event I left Liverpool at dawn and arrived at the Fisherman's Retreat in good time. A marquee extension was in use for registration. It did not occur to me at the time that this luxurious canopy might have been installed primarily for other purposes! The modest sized field of sixty-seven starters set off under a grey sky at 5.30 am. The description of the clockwise route with which we were supplied was clear and detailed, but was necessarily in somewhat small print. Thus there was a temptation to "let the anoraks ahead" do the navigation, and this caused me to make a couple of errors early on. The first of these was where the route climbs out of the Rossendale Valley at Stubbins and enters woodland. Here I kept going straight up a path instead of taking a right turn. Consequently I missed the first checkpoint, and did not realize this until some time later. My departure from the prescribed itinerary was quite small, and I hoped that if I confessed at the second checkpoint at Tor Hill I would be forgiven. Fortunately I was.

My second mistake was at the end of the moorland section before Haslingden Grane. On much of this section, where there are grand prospects past the bend of the Valley at Rawtenstall to Upper Rossendale, the path is easy to follow, and there were several walkers ahead. However, in the quarries on Musbury Heights the route becomes less obvious. A series of squalls had set in, and a heavy one chose this moment to obscure my spectacles, making reading of the route description almost impossible. I followed and caught up with two red anoraks. Their occupants were contemplating a steep

descent towards Ogden reservoir. Other walkers in the event were passing below us on a path just above the reservoir, and we realized we had gone wrong in the quarry. In fact we had followed the old route, which I had previously encountered as part of the former Musbury Heights Fell Race. The Way had been altered since then due to an access constraint, but fortunately there was no checkpoint on the changed section. We descended the open hillside as surreptitiously as was possible in red anoraks (I also being in red). In due course we reached checkpoint three at Clough Head Information Centre. We took shelter from another heavy squall and enjoyed some welcome and substantial refreshments.

I resolved not to make any more route-finding errors, and tagged onto the tail end of a group of several walkers with whom I kept in touch for a couple of miles. The weather was now improving. The next sections of the Way were new to me, although I was familiar with the general surroundings. I was intermittently on my own here and kept on course with the aid of the route description. High ground separated upland valleys with major roads out of Rossendale and checkpoints at Rising Bridge and Loveclough. A wide vista of Pendle Hill opened out from the moors near Compston's Cross. At about midday I reached checkpoint six near Water on the Waterfoot to Burnley road.

The route description at this point carried a mouth-watering sketch of great piles of sandwiches and bunches of bananas, but, alas, there had been a hitch in the provisioning, the only hitch in the event, and I had to continue with sustenance from my iron rations of Smarties and potato crisps! From here the route continues in an arc on the hills to the north and east of Bacup. It was not quite such an idyllic homecoming as I had hoped. Much of the route hereabouts is overshadowed by a profusion of electricity pylons, and some of the upland farms were in a less than immaculate state, no doubt reflecting the economic difficulties of hill farming. On this section I was overtaken by the only runner in the event, who had started later than the walkers, and I also caught up with three local entrants from Rawtenstall and walked with them for a while.

At Sharneyford, on the crest of the Bacup to Todmorden road, the character of the route changes again, and the next few miles are probably the toughest on the Way. For a couple of miles the route is mainly on the Todmorden side of the crest and traverses tussocks,

which on this occasion were waterlogged and had already taken a pounding from the Half Way entrants, who had started mid-morning from Deerplay on the Bacup to Burnley road. Then a green, but equally wet, walled path was joined overlooking Britannia. This gave access to the three hills called Hades, Middle and Brown Wardle Hills, before the route dropped down to checkpoint eight by the Whitworth golf course. I was familiar with parts of this section from having run the Hades Hill and Turnsack fell races. It was exhilarating to put it all together. A strong westerly crosswind was blowing, the sky was clearing and the sun was shining over extensive adjacent areas of the Pennines and nearby conurbations.

However, dark clouds still loomed over the Rossendale Fells. These are the big mass of moorland fells that separate the Rossendale Valley from Rochdale. They would constitute the final section of the Way. How would the evening weather be up there?

The helpers at checkpoint eight were most welcoming and plied several of us who had congregated there with food and fluid. Within minutes I was on my way again and was soon on the section that I had inspected with Sybil. It was a relief to negotiate this slightly tricky part of the route without the need to study the description. The sun was now definitely winning through. After the last houses, aptly called Houses o' th' Hill on the Rossendale Tourist Office leaflet, the Way came to a uniquely scenic section. The path goes down to a bridge across a stream that flows into Spring Mill Reservoir, and then climbs to traverse above the ravine of Fern Isle Wood. The beauty here was enhanced by the late afternoon sunlight. The path deteriorated at an old quarry, but in the clear conditions it was easy to find the way to a track that linked with the Rooley Moor Road and checkpoint nine.

A question had been puzzling me for some time. The closing time here, the penultimate checkpoint, was 19.40, whereas that at Cowpe Lowe, the final checkpoint, uphill and about three miles away, was 22.05. I had rationalized this seemingly generous time allowance as being for the benefit of any walkers who might be getting a little weary. However, this had not seemed very plausible, as Cowpe Lowe was still some miles from the finish at the Fisherman's Retreat. A less comforting possibility now occurred to me. The map depicted the Way looping around Cowpe Lowe. Could it be...? I put my question to the helpers. Yes it could! The Cowpe Lowe loop was on the route, and the checkpoint had to be visited both before and after! I ate a

banana and set off up the Rooley Moor Road.

The Rossendale Fells are only slightly higher than some other hills on the Way, but they are much more massive. The Rooley Moor Road is a substantial old hill road of gravel and setts that ascends the Fells from the Rochdale side and connects with a track through old quarries overlooking the Rossendale side. When living in Bacup I had been up on the Fells from time to time but had not troubled to locate the highest point. I now knew from reading the Tourist Office description that the actual summit is Top of Leach, which is easily accessible by making a small diversion from the high point of the Road. I duly made this diversion and gained the trig point and an indicator stone with the names of the former boroughs of Bacup, Rawtenstall, Haslingden, Ramsbottom and Whitworth that now constitute the administrative unit of Rossendale. I glanced briefly around the far-flung horizon but I did the view less than justice because I wanted to keep up my momentum. With hindsight I realize the diversion gained me a Marilyn!

The checkpoint was just before a little col that separates Cowpe Lowe from the main mass of the Fells. Substantial provisions were still available and I grabbed a couple of sandwiches. I was ahead of a small group at this stage and it befell me to start sorting out the loop, which, in contrast to the route as a whole, was being taken anticlockwise. There was a bigger initial descent than I expected, but the subsequent re-ascent was fairly gentle. It was a spectacular evening, with the low sun lighting the green foreground, and some banks of cloud on the horizon. From the far side of the loop I caught a glimpse of a distant range of hills that I could not at first place but afterwards identified as the Bowland Fells.

I was soon overtaken, but I was going comfortably. At the checkpoint again I exchanged greetings with the Rawtenstall three with whom I had walked earlier. They still had the Cowpe Lowe loop to do but they were in good time for this and to complete the course. Meanwhile I set off on the final section along past Waugh's Well and down from the Fells.

A gravel track goes down the hill to the main Rochdale to Edenfield road. The Waugh's Well fell race finishes down this track near the road. Instinctively I would have gone down to the road this time. However, the Way takes a footpath on the right some distance before the bottom. Luckily a couple of walkers were visible ahead and took the turning, prompting me to do likewise. Soon, while rounding the

lower slope of the hill, I detected sounds of distant revelry. Rhythmic music was booming in time with strobes of blue light emanating from the marquee at the Fisherman's Retreat, which was still half a mile away as the crow flies. Evidently the marquee was not for Way participants this evening!

The path drops down to the main road at a somewhat tricky blind spot, which required care. The last bit was through the village of Turn and along narrow lanes to the Fisherman's Retreat. Done it! I had come full circle on the home hills of my boyhood and youth.

I should like to thank the organizers of this excellent event and the helpers at the checkpoints. The event is non-competitive. No finishing times are given but finishers receive a certificate. I can mention here that I finished at 21.10, in a time of 15 hours and 40 minutes.



The view from the bedroom window that started it all; Bacup in the 1940s. Part of the Rossendale Way which traverses the left skyline, Sharneyford, and continues behind the hill on the right, Tooter Hill.

Welsh 3000's - Hut to Hut - 21 August 2004

by Phil Hodgson

I'D ONLY been back from our antipodean travels a few weeks when Dave Makin popped the question, "Are you up for the Welsh 3000's then?"

"Is it one of the Ratti long walks?" I asked.

"Yes, we do it every few years."

"I presume we'll be running it?"

"Of course."

I hadn't yet filled the calendar with fell races and, as I'd always wanted to tick off this epic Welsh traverse, I thought now's my chance. I seemed to remember that it was about twenty odd miles end to end. "Count me in," I said. "No problem."

I later found out that it might be. No end-to-end jaunt this time; rather a full-blooded hut-to-hut epic, traversing all the 3000'ers by a circuitous circular route. The promise of a bacon and sausage breakfast at Llyn Ogwen and brews and butties at several other checkpoints helped push the, "It's a bloody long way," worries to the back of my mind.

Such thoughts were quickly re-asserted as we dragged ourselves out of our bunks at five o' clock the following morning. Arthur had excelled as usual and we helped ourselves to a pre-breakfast breakfast, mulling over the route we'd worked out the previous evening and making a few last minute changes. Four other contenders, Michael and Andrew Pooler, Bert Heyes and Chris Farrell, had set off an hour or so ahead of us, aiming to cover the initial miles on easy tracks and paths in the dark. It was just coming light as Dave and myself ventured out of the hut and broke into a tentative jog. It wasn't long before we were stood scratching our heads. Which way is it?

"I thought you knew where you were going?" I chided.

"I did on the map...but I don't recognise this?" It didn't bode well for the forthcoming trial of navigation; we were still in Bethesda. Finally finding a likely looking track we headed up onto the moors. The surrounding hills were cloaked in mist. So much for the sunny weather forecast. And it was cold, particularly once we gained the ridge at Garnedd Uchaf. The run out and back to the summit of Foel Gras and the ensuing traverse of the Carnedds in a thick pea souper was good

KIMM practice. I hadn't realised that the paths up there are so indistinct and our map and compass were in constant use. We passed Bert and Chris on Carnedd Llewellyn. They looked a little sheepish as they recounted their own navigational nightmares. Mick and Andrew had apparently fared even worse, getting lost on the initial slopes up Garnedd Uchaf! We pushed on descending the unlikely looking route off Pen Yr Ole Wen, weaving steeply down between the crags. I was sure I could smell the bacon. At Llyn Ogwen car park Pete McHale didn't disappoint us and we tucked into a fried feast.

Despite the slight drizzle we made a full frontal assault on Tryfan worming our way up the greasy rocks to the summit. Pounded by hail as we crossed the Glyders we were looking forward to a warming cup of tea at Pen Y Pass. John McGonagle was manning the checkpoint; or so we thought. We spotted his car, boot lid open to reveal a sumptuous spread of sandwiches and cakes. But, there was no sign of John. Even worse there was even less evidence of a boiling kettle. "I could murder a brew," I moaned. As we sat stuffing sandwiches into our dry mouths John rushed over. "You're there!" he exclaimed, "I went up the road to look for you, you must have sneaked past."

"Any chance of a brew?" we asked.

"Aaahh, now that's a bit of a problem," he replied, "I seem to have forgotten the kettle."

Earlier in the day Dave had found the bowl of an old clay pipe on the lower slopes of the Carnedds. He retrieved it out of his bum bag and admired the 19th Century workmanship while we slaked our thirsts with plain water. As lower back pain was by now affecting both of us I passed the Ibuprofen to Dave and we swallowed a few more pills to ease the torture.

"Oh yes," John smirked, "What's those then? And what's that pipe for?" he smiled knowingly. "I think I'd better warn the Testing Agency to meet you at the finish, we can't be having a drugs assisted round."

We departed quickly before he found the white powder in my bum bag (this was actually Isostar carbo-load) and drew further erroneous conclusions. As we ascended Crib Goch the sun burst through the clouds. We tiptoed along the crest of the ridge taking care not to stand on the grasping fingers of the tourists edging their way along like crabs and jogged the final half kilometre up to Snowdon's summit fighting our way through the crowds. It was good to get away from them all as we plunged down a precipitous valley into the Llanberis

Pass. We were grateful to John 'No Kettle' McGonagle for another quick butty and water stop at Nant Peris before the long drag up Y Garn. The distance was starting to tell but we managed a gentle jog to the final peak of Elidir Fawr. The sun was low in the sky and we were rewarded with a glowing view of all the ridges we'd traversed since dawn. We trotted back to a warm welcome at the hut after just over thirteen hours on the run. Our chosen route was 41 miles with 16,000 feet of ascent. Quite a challenge and a great day out. Many thanks to Arthur and his support team for yet another top weekend.

The Cassin Route, Piz Badile, Bregalia by Neil Hodgkinson

I HAD dreamt of climbing a classic Alpine North face ever since I walked the Haute Route in my early twenties. The ideal opportunity arose two summers ago when I visited Bregalia with Helen and a group of friends from Todmorden Harriers.

This unspoilt region in the Eastern Alps, straddling the Italian border in the South East corner of Switzerland, is a magnet for climbers wishing to tackle its jagged granite peaks and elegant snow ridges.

We had been climbing in the area for over a week when Roger joined us, and I suggested optimistically that the Cassin route would be the perfect route on which to acclimatise.

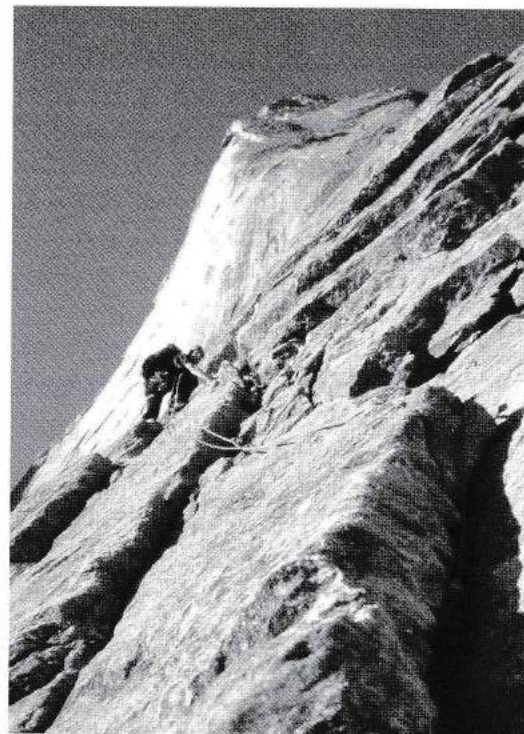
"Well I'm in!" Roger enthused.

We decided to bivvi at the foot of the North Ridge rather than stay in the nearby Sasc Fura hut, and did a recce of the approach before

nightfall, so as to avoid wasting precious time route finding in the early hours.

The Cassin route is one of the six Great North Faces in the Alps, up there amongst the Eiger, Matterhorn and Grandes Jorasses. It lies on the North East face of Piz Badile, an unbroken sweep of soaring granite, rising 800 metres above the Cengalo glacier.

First climbed by Roberto Cassin in 1937, it remains one of the most desirable rock climbs in the Alps, although it still represents a serious undertaking as the mountain is notorious for sudden storms.



Roger Haworth on Pitch 2

Alpine starts are never pleasant, but the adrenalin kicked in immediately. At first light we picked our way through the boulders at the foot of the climb and scrambled down a gully over a snowfield to reach the base of the route. Although roped together, crossing the snowfield in rock boots with no ice gear felt precarious to say the least. My feet were soon soaked and numb and the rising sun revealed a dizzying 600 metre drop below. My early morning grogginess vanished instantly – this was no place for a slip.

Crossing from the snowfield to the rock was no mean feat. The summer temperatures had melted the snow to form a gap between the top of the snowfield and the first slabs of the route. I lowered Roger into the gap and he squeezed his way along to reach some good ledges. Finally the route proper!

While gearing up, Roger observed a flattened marmot, which had obviously fallen from a great height. A cautionary reminder to place good protection, as if I needed it. I made a mental note, "Must not end up like marmot".

I led off on the first pitch and we alternated leads up the initial pleasant blocky slabs.

By the top of the third pitch, we could feel the sun on our backs and I was beginning to wish I had not packed so much gear. Other parties on the route, we later discovered, were climbing much lighter than us. My spare clothes and extra water were weighing me down as I embarked on the crux pitch – a step left by a roof and then strenuous climbing up a very steep crack.

More delicate climbing up a succession of slabs followed until we reached a small patch of snow. Fortunately this was easily avoided and my boots remained dry.

The face opened out at this point and route finding could have become problematic, had it not been for the parties of climbers ahead. We continued to the base of a large chimney where we were joined by a guide, who advised that there were two ways to climb it, either by scrabbling up the back via a wide flaring crack or by bridging boldly, three metres out. It was Roger's turn to lead, and deciding on the bridging approach, he was soon 30 metres into the pitch, with a long run out and very tired limbs. Gripped and with no option but to dig deep and carry on, Roger emerged from the chimney wobbling and exhausted.

"How was that then, Roger?"

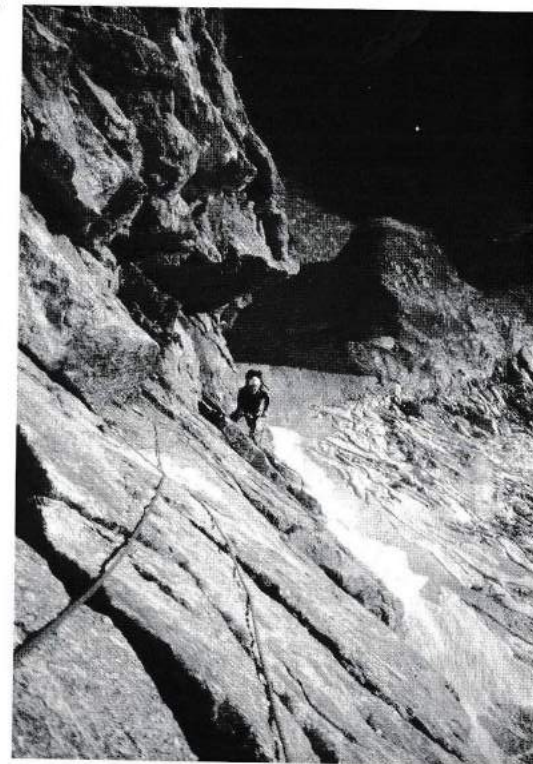
"Petrifying"

Reassured in the knowledge that the hardest climbing was now behind us, I led the final pitches as the gradient eased. By the time we reached the notch in the North Ridge which marked the top of the route, we were both extremely tired. It was 4pm and we had climbed 20 pitches in 9 hours. To climb the ridge to the 3,308 metre summit of Piz Badile would have taken a further two hours and necessitated a second bivvi on the mountain. At that moment a warm tent, food and a beer was far more appealing. Elated to have completed such a committing route, we savoured the moment and took in the views across the Bondasca valley before beginning our descent down the seemingly interminable North Ridge, accompanied by brockenspectres, our shadows cast against the surrounding clouds.

Darkness fell as we completed our 23rd and final abseil. It felt good to be finally rid of our harnesses but we then spent a frustrating hour searching for our rucksacks stashed at the bivvi site from the previous night.

Finally reunited with our bivvi gear, we hurried back to camp, saucer-eyed in the light of our headtorches, and were greeted at midnight by Helen with a well-earned beer and a plate of cold spaghetti bolognese.

The next morning, while sat round having breakfast, Roger piped up, "So which next, maybe the Dru?"



Neil on Pitch 6 above the crux pitch

A winter plan and a summer cycle

by Joanne Welding

IT was one of those winter evenings, after a meal and lots of wine, when someone suggests a plan for the distant summer and you say "Why not? Sounds great!" And so you are committed to a long distance mountain bike ride without really realising.

The trip actually took very little planning. Once the initial idea was fixed – to take a train up into the borders of Scotland and cycle back to Yorkshire – it was one evening with a few maps, me repeatedly saying "remember it's still supposed to be a holiday!" in response to the suggested crazy distances and the B & B stops were sorted. The itinerary was to stop overnight at our friends Jo and Phil's house in Bainbridge, cycle to the station at Garsdale early the next morning, catch a train to Lockerbie and then cycle back via Newcastleton, Haltwhistle and Middleton-in-Teesdale, ending up in Bainbridge again four days later. Overall we estimated it would be about 120 miles, with lots of off road.

As it happened we were blessed by the weather. When we arrived at the pub on the evening of the first day there were dire weather warnings for heavy rains and the TV news was reporting the terrible flood which had swept away Boscastle. We put our coats on twice: once for a brief shower outside Haltwhistle and to cut the wind at a very breezy Tan Hill stop. Otherwise we easily got away with our super light travel arrangements of wearing the same cycle gear every day and a different T-shirt in the evenings. A bigger problem was the way we kept running out of supplies and water while travelling through areas without shops or café stops.

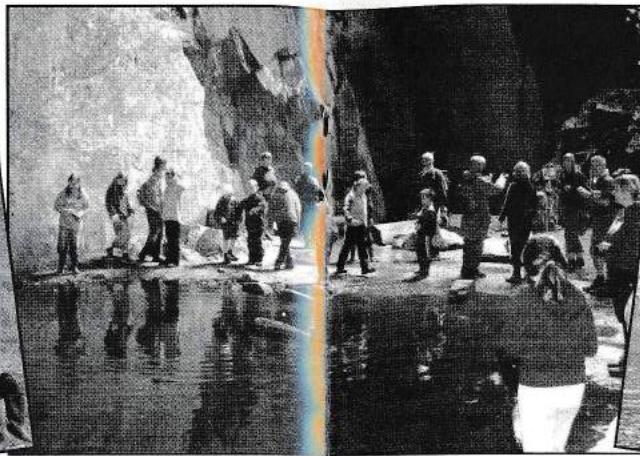
The worst was the last day. We left The Strathmore Arms outside Middleton-in-Teesdale, crossed the A66 and Bowes Moor and didn't come to a habited place until we eventually reached the Tan Hill Inn. We were reduced to breaking our remaining biscuit into bits and sharing it between four as we crossed the moor! We had also managed, in the unbelievably sunny weather, to run out of water near Hadrian's Wall. In the end Phil hopped over a garden fence and filled our bottles at a garden tap in desperation! We really appreciated the café at Birdoswald when we got there.

It was a fantastic trip overall with some great highlights. As we cycled up to the door of our first stop, The Grapes in Newcastleton, a young

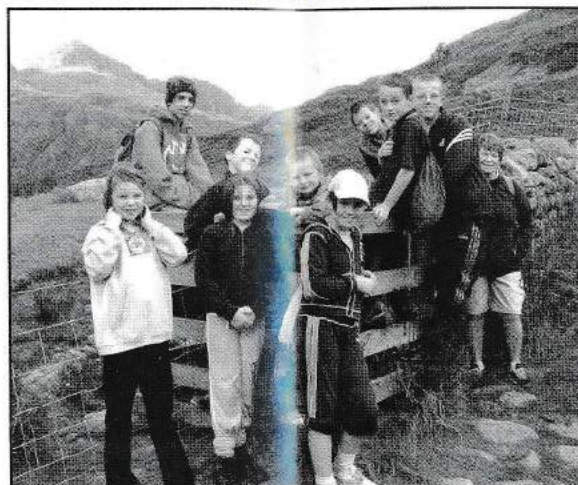
bloke was just coming out. He asked us if we liked mountain biking – actually after the ride we had just had over the hills from Langholm I wasn't too sure! He was the designer of the latest addition to the Forestry Commission's new project, the 7 Staines mountain bike trail in the Newcastleton forest. The routes weren't due to be opened until a couple of days later but he invited us to try it out the following morning. We did and it was thrilling, especially to me as a not very technical rider. Then it was off over the border to Haltwhistle. Another place to recommend is the dining room at the Centre of Britain Hotel. The food was fantastic.

The only section of the whole four days I really didn't enjoy was the ride from Alston up and over the hill to Middleton. It was 1,000 feet of climbing into a head wind and a real grind. Otherwise I thought it was a great route, even when I had to get off and push up Buttertubs to get from Swaledale back into Wensleydale.

So where is it to be next summer...?



Junior Meet



18-19 September
2004

