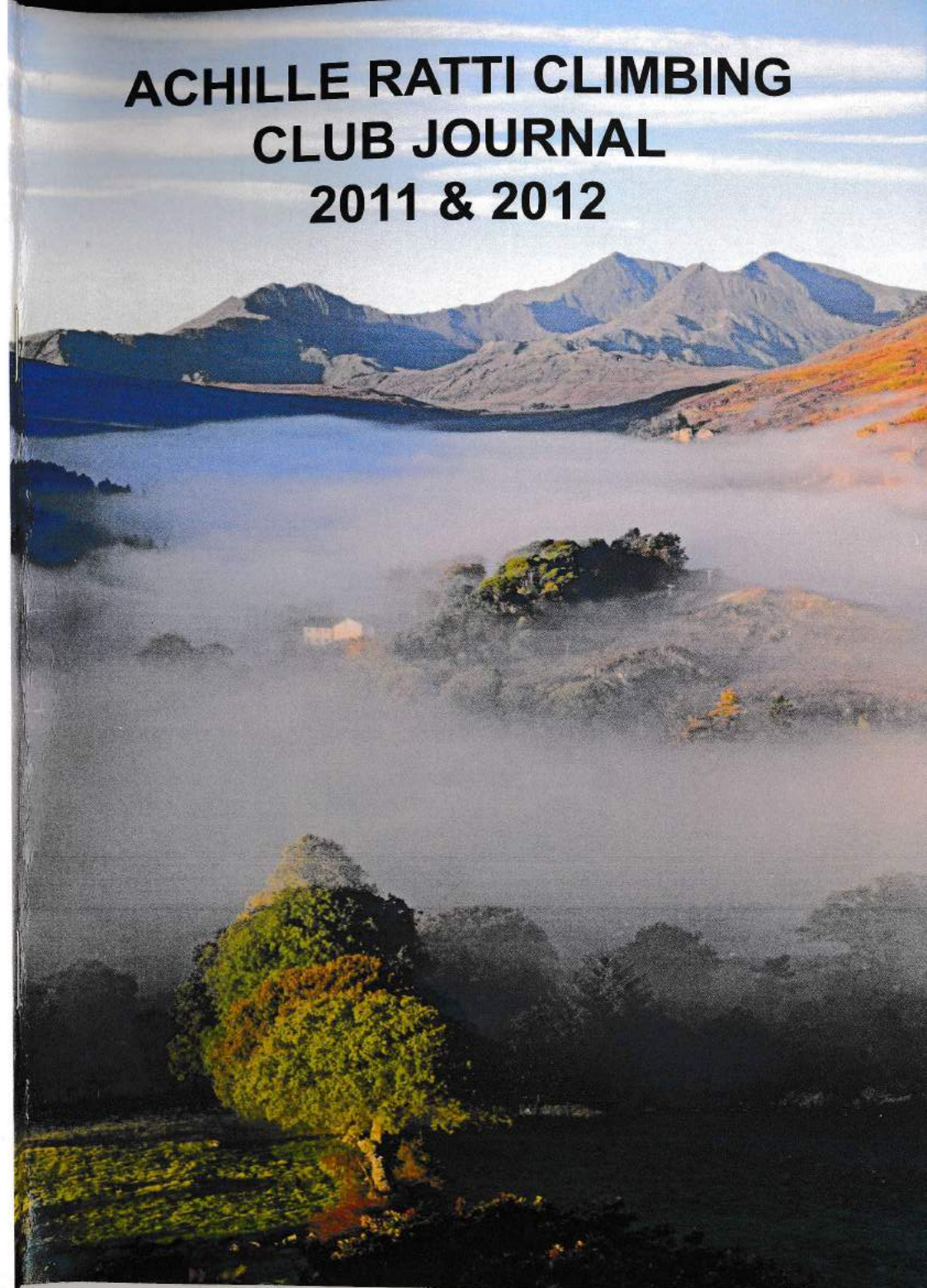


**ACHILLE RATTI CLIMBING
CLUB JOURNAL
2011 & 2012**



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FRONT COVER:

The front cover photograph of Snowdon from Capel Curig with Plas y Brenin in mist has been kindly donated by BRIAN HODGSON.

ACHILLE RATTI CLIMBING CLUB

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INTRODUCTION

2012 has been a memorable year and one for celebration both in the country and for members of Achille Ratti. The Queen's Jubilee and the London Olympics took over the summer months I hope we were all inspired.

The club celebrated with numerous events and our members were active in many spheres – Leo Pollard was made an Honorary member of the Club, a successful Lakes Meres and Waters relay enjoyed by many members, a gold medal for our Treasurer for Orienteering in Germany and personal achievements for the walkers and runners of the club.

The journal is an extremely good read and makes me feel proud to be a member. It is pleasing that articles have been written by the old and the young of the club (and the in-betweens) on various trips, expeditions, historical facts, excellent photographs and poetry what a diverse membership we have. Our thanks to Mick McGovern for the collation of the information and producing the Journal and to you all for your contributions – please keep them coming.

Finally as we approach Christmas I hope the photo within 'Super Nova spits and giggles' doesn't disappoint Ruby Makin, the junior contributor to the journal – don't worry the shorts will be replaced with the red hooded cloak! Ho Ho Ho.

Long may the membership continue to enjoy the out-of-doors. My term of office has come to an end and I hope you will join with me in welcoming Chris Farrell as your new Chairman.
John McGonagle

Editor

Thank you to all who have contributed to this edition, particularly Ruby, Tom and Kieran.

Phil Hodgson will be producing the future club journals so keep your articles coming for the 2013 Club Journal.

ACE VEN-JURA

Kieran Welding.

Junior Member aged 15.



On holiday with my dad, auntie and uncle.

The mesmerising sun hovered over the Isle of Jura. We walked along the lonely path, wondering how long it would take us to arrive at the first of the three giants. As soon as I started to ascend the mountain I realised how sheer and treacherous the face of it was; the rocky terrain we had to struggle up; how worn out I would be once I had climbed up it. However, it was a beautiful day to climb. Everyone enjoyed themselves by simply being social, and having a good chat, which took my mind off my wobbly legs. In the end we did make it up the Pap. I could sum up how I felt in one word. Relieved. I could now look over the entire island and truly be proud of my achievement.

Talking of achievements, here is another one. The gruelling cycle to Barn Hill, the temporary home of George Orwell, most famously known for writing "1984" and "Animal Farm". As I rode I encountered a series of problems. Firstly, the bumps in the track. This caused me to have a

personal injury... Secondly, the sheer length of the journey. Finally, there was the feeling of loneliness despite my companions. The thought of there not being anyone but us for miles around. Yet I did make it back in one piece.

The whole of my holiday was not action packed. I took the time to do a spot of fishing, with the help of the locals' suggestion about bait, but I caught nothing! Don't think using a spinner works either. However, I did get to see some local wildlife in the form of sea otters and pheasants.



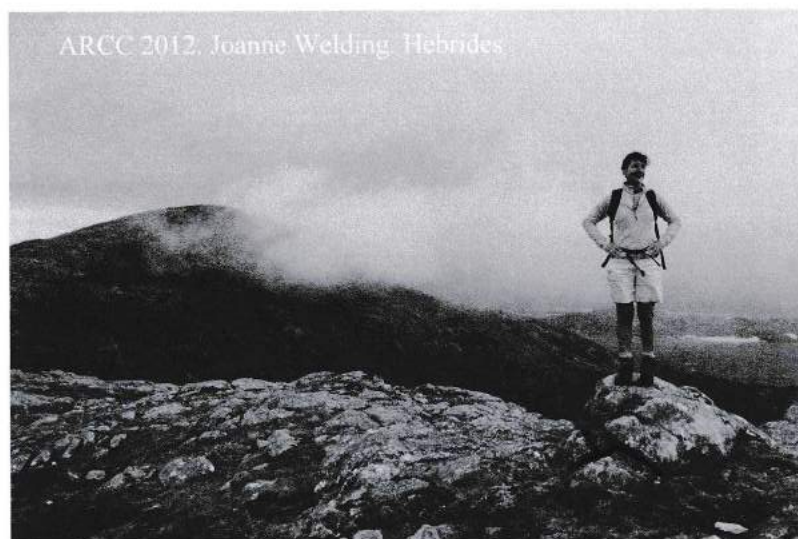
SOME SMALL HILLS

August 2011

Joanne Welding

I have decided to write about going up some small hills, but in fantastic locations and with great views, so travel with me to the Outer Hebrides.

This summer we decided to hire a converted panel van and go to the Outer Hebrides for our summer holidays – a brave move I think considering our knowledge of midges and rain in the Scottish summer. However swayed by the thought of luxury camping, we hired our van from the small company who do van conversions, Wildax in Halifax* and set off. *look for all my recommendations at the end!



Joanne on Griomabhal, Lewis

First stop Oban and the ferry to Barra. We had been in touch with a crofter there, Angus Morrison, who is setting up a small campsite on his croft at the north end of the island, up beyond the airport. Wild camping, especially in camper vans, is no longer allowed on Barra but crofters can have up to

three campers on their crofts if they wish. Not having been to Barra before Angus instructed us to head for the airport and he'd meet us there in his blue van. I did wonder if we'd identify him but of course – and if you've been to the OHs you'll be there before me – his was the only vehicle there. Traigh Mhor airfield is like no other airport I've ever been to, beautiful, empty and peaceful.

I have to prefigure all I say here too by the note that the weather was fantastic for virtually the whole of our trip so I have a VERY positive view of these islands.

Small hill 1

Beinn Sgurabhal

Above the croft is Beinn Sgurabhal (79m). The views were sensational, especially in the late evening sun over Rum and Skye. Walking up from the white sand beach, through meadows packed with clover and wild flowers onto the breezy top was lovely. The sea all around was a gorgeous aquamarine, the result of crystal clear water over white sand in the sunshine. A perfect walk for after a barbeque. Barra was laid out clearly below us and the island of Fuday, with its lovely beach, just off shore. It was the first of many of the small islands I decided to buy when the lottery comes up.

Small hill 2

Beinn Sciathan (185m) Eriskay

On the ferry from Barra we met another camper-vaner who recommended a stop on Eriskay. He said a lot of people just drive on through to South Uist, so we took his advice. It was a lovely island with the Politician pub in a suburban style bungalow (named for the ship that went down in the novel "Whisky Galore"), and a great community shop. The beaches and coves were deserted and beautiful, and we could still look across and see the light on in the hallway of the croft on Barra!

Up on Beinn Sciathan practically the whole island was visible with the causeway snaking across to the Uists. The village – Bala – was scattered below us like a toy town, red rooves and meadows between the houses,

dominated by the Catholic church on its own little hill. On the slope down to the village was a perfectly kept shrine to Our Lady, a white picket fence surrounding benches and a statue. (Camper van note – not only public toilets, fresh water and toilet disposal but a shower too on the jetty).

Small hill 3

Hecla (606m) S Uist

South Uist was the biggest surprise for me. I had expected a flat and dreary island. It turned out to be everything you want on a Scottish island – empty, wild and with a beauty quite of its own. It reminded me of pictures I have seen of Scandinavia with scattered houses and fertile flat lands.

A recommendation is the café and visitors' centre on the main road at Kildonan selling local crafts. Need hand knitted gloves? They have them!

Hecla proved to be a bigger day than I had expected, given the height and proximity as the crow flies to the road – four km. The path from the road end begins deceptively clearly and is well maintained at first but soon peters out into bracken and heather lumps and bumps and headlands before you reach the ridge of the mountain proper. Once on the ridge the going is clear again rewarded by great views of Ben Mhor (620m) close at hand with the dramatic corrie of Glen Uisinis below. As we came down Dominic spotted a vehicle track curving away across the moor, back in the direction of the road end. It made much easier going and brought us back to the original well made path. (Top tip – when starting the walk, after the second wooden bridge ignore the well made path curving up in front of the ruined cottage. Take the less clear track up behind the cottage and it leads right to base of the mountain.)

Small hill 4

Griomabhal (497m)

Skipping over Benbecula, N Uist, Berneray, (we loved Berneray. Lots of seals and the ferry crossing to Leverburgh must be one of the most entertaining Calmac routes, weaving between skerries and sand banks) to Lewis. By this time we needed to fill up with LPG – the only outlet on the islands being in Stornoway we headed straight there. A trip to the Co-op

and the launderette later and we were off, past Uig, to the end of the road at Mealasta this must be one of the most amazing spots anywhere – crashing rollers onto more white sands, a view of St Kilda and the history of the RAF base that was once here. It is also rumoured to be the real destination of the Lewis chess men. A resident of Uig (who told us he went to Uig school in the 1930s) pointed out to us that we were camped on the guard house that had been demolished in 1947. We wondered if the RAF men had felt lonely there. He said he thought it had been better than being bombed in London... there were hundreds of men based there in WWII with a cinema and regular dances. A must for the local lasses I would have thought.

So to the hills. From the end of the tarmac road and jetty it was an excellent rough cross country walk, passing a thin horse tail waterfall, up to the bare rock of Griomabhal (497m). Once on the summit the views down to Harris were really clear and looking across to An Cliseam, the sharp peaks looked like something out of The Hobbit. An easy walk ensued along the ridges, coming across eerily silent rock strewn lichens and sudden cliffs.

Even smaller hill 5

Sutor Point

So back to the mainland, wondering why we had only hired the van for two weeks... we decided to break the journey home with a stop at Cromarty, only known to us from the shipping forecast. It is a lovely preserved 1700s village with lots of camping space on the shore, very strange with huge luxury liners passing by just off shore on to Invergordon. We saw a pod of dolphins playing in the wake of the little ferry across to Nigg (can that really be the name of a place?). We made another great find, advertised as the only wood fired pizza oven in the Highlands. It was in my top three best ever pizza experiences and made the return to the mainland slightly more tolerable.

The small hill is Sutor point. The gun emplacements and defences there were OK'ed after a visit by Winston Churchill, who could see the need to defend the small opening into the safe waters of Cromarty Firth. Looking

over the oil platforms being build or dismantled, we could see the bold outlines of Ben Wyvis and Kilbreck and towards Fort George on the other side of the Moray Firth

And so, back south

Recommendations

Wildax Vans, Halifax.	Angus Morrison's croft, Barra.
The community shop, Eriskay.	Visitors' centre, South Uist.
Bridge Street launderette, Stornoway.	Mealasta, Lewis.
Sutor Creek pizza restaurant, Cromarty.	
The whole of the Outer Hebrides.	



Kieran's family- a river crossing.

ACHILLE RATTI – A SUITABLE FIGUREHEAD

Bill Mitton

Bishop T B Pearson founded the 'Catholic Boys Association Climbing Club' in 1940. In his article for the Achille Ratti Climbing Club Journal No.1 in 1946 (Reprinted in the 1988 Journal issued as a tribute to Bishop Pearson), he says that the name was changed to 'The Achille Ratti Climbing Club' at the suggestion of Mr Arnold Lunn, 'for the obvious connection with the late Pope, who was a skilled and keen climber'. 'The Late Pope' he was referring to was Pope Pius XI, or Monsignor Achille Ratti, Pope from 1922 to 1939. So Achille Ratti was to say the least, a person of some importance and influence at that time, particularly to a Roman Catholic Bishop, and indeed, to any member of the Roman Catholic Church, in the period between the two great wars. It is recorded that he 'has been more than once in England' and visited Manchester in 1900, so it is possible that Bishop Pearson was aware of this, and may have known people who met the Pope. We in the Club are obviously interested in his mountaineering activities, but what do we know about



the man himself? What about his time as Pope? I hope to throw some light on those questions in this article

Early Life: Achille Ratti was born on 31st May 1857, in Desio, between Milan and Como, in full view of Monte Rosa. He was one of a family of seven, with five brothers and a sister. His family was relatively prosperous, his father being the manager of a local silk factory. His character and ability brought him to the notice of the Archbishop of Milan at a young age, and he was sent to the Theological Seminary there, after which he obtained a triple Doctorate in Philosophy, Theology and Canon Law at the Lombard College of Rome. He was ordained as a Priest at the age of 22, and returned to Milan as

Professor in the Theological Seminary in 1882, aged 25. Between then and 1910 he was Sub-director and then Director of the great Ambrosian Library, producing many significant writings in the fields of history, literature, and alpine climbing. He also worked as a priest in the community, assisting the nuns in social and charity work, teaching the local poor children, and becoming known for his courtesy and welcoming manner. In 1910 he was called to work in the Vatican Library, and in February 1922 he was elected Pope Pius XI.

Climbs on Alpine Peaks

In the mid 19th century the Alps became recognised – in one writer's phrase – as 'a playground' while some spoke of 'the deep and, as it were, religious silence of the highest crests'. Each nation in Western Europe, Italy being one of the first, founded its own climbing fraternity. Achille Ratti, being a proud and patriotic Italian, embraced the new sport, and set out to further his country's status. Achille Ratti climbed the Grand Paradis in his younger days, and had shown 'presence of mind, skill and strength' in saving one of his guides.

In 1889, aged 32, he traversed the Monte Rosa from east to west from Macugnaga, descending via the Grenz Glacier, and a week later climbed



the Matterhorn. In 1990 he completed the ascent of Mont Blanc. This was in the days before lightweight thermal clothing, Gore-Tex, crampons, lightweight ice axes, gear and ropes, rescue helicopters, and GPS navigation.

Alpenstocks, studded boots, tweed, wool, hemp ropes and waxed cotton were the basic climbing equipment of the day. Routes were not as well known or marked as today. They really were climbing into the unknown. His climbs were recorded in the journals of the Italian Alpine Club, and were published in book form in English in 1923 as 'Climbs on Alpine Peaks'. A copy is held in the Club library. The ascent of the Dufour Peak of the **Monte Rosa** (4638m) from Macugnaga was the first by Italian climbers. The few who had climbed

the mountain told of the risk of avalanches and falling stones. Achille Ratti studied the mountain and found that there were brief periods when the risk was at its lowest, and that at those times the climb could be attempted with a reduced risk. His party consisted of a colleague, Professor Grassley, and the two Courmayeur guides, Giuseppe Gain and Alsip Proment. On 29th July 1889, they climbed from Macugnaga up to the Marinelli hut at 10500 feet by 7pm. It was full of snow, and had to be dug out. By 11pm they slept, to 1am on the 30th, at which time they set off to cross the Marinelli couloir, after 'comforting the inner man with Leiberg broth and hot wine'. Without crampons, it was necessary to cut steps in the 'excessively hard' snow. At 1pm, 12 hours after leaving the hut, they stopped and took rest, 'gazing at the beauty of Nature and restoring our strength with Suchard chocolate. Despite Professor Grasselli dropping his ice axe, and having to continue using his hands, causing the disintegration of his gloves, leading to severe frostbite, the party reached the Ostpitzze on the evening of the 30th July. The wind was now insufferable, forcing them to descend 30m to a rocky ledge by 8.30 pm. There they spent the night. Far from feeling dejected, it is worth reading Achille Ratti's own account of the night to see something of his character:

'The cold was intense; without being able to reckon the exact degree, I may mention that our coffee was frozen hard, and our wine and our eggs resembled it, in that they were neither respectively drinkable or eatable. We again had recourse to our chocolate, and to a generous quantity of excellent kirsch, which we still had with us. In such a place and such a temperature, it would have been the height of imprudence to allow sleep to overcome us. But who would have slept in that pure air, which pierced our marrow, and in face of such a scene as we had before us? At that height....in the centre of all the grand Alpine theatres.....in that pure transparent atmosphere, under that sky of deepest blue, lit by a crescent moon and sparkling with stars as far as the eye could reach.....in that silence.....Enough! I will not try to describe the indescribable. Both Professor Grasselli and I are firmly convinced that Nature is very

unlikely ever to vouchsafe us a grander, a more magnificent spectacle. We felt ourselves to be in the presence of a novel and most imposing revelation of the omnipotence and majesty of God..... How could we even think of the fatigue we had endured, much less complain of it? On the second day they left their perch at 5.00am, and had climbed the Dufour Spitze by 08.20 am. They then completed the first passage of the Zumsteinjoch, the second highest pass in the Alps, to descend via the Grenz Glacier and spend a second night on the mountain under the rocks of the Gornergrat, before then descending to Zermatt.

A week later Achille Rattii set off with three guides to climb **The Matterhorn** in one day from Zermatt. Again he was forced to spend a night on the mountain due to poor weather before completing the climb.



The following year, 1890, he climbed **Mont Blanc** by the Courmayeur route, descending by the western section of the Glacier du Dome. In 1990, 100 years and 23 days after Achille Ratti's ascent, a party from The Achille Ratti Climbing Club climbed Mont Blanc. The climb is recorded in The ARCC Journal of 1990. The members of the party were: Derek Price, Paul Cooney, Dot Wood, Jean Lohead, Barry

Rogers, Mike Lomas and Peter Durkin.

Actions as Pope Pius XI

Achille Ratti was Pope in a period of political turmoil, between the first and second world wars. In a time, initially, of appeasement, he stood obstinately against communism and national socialism, including Mussolini's government in Italy. The speeches he made, and encyclicals he issued, show him to be a brave and outspoken opponent of racism, and of both Nazi and Soviet ideologies. He believed in a Christian approach to economic and political life, and that Christianity should inform both spiritual and secular life.

Pius XI's first encyclical as Pope was directly related to his aim of **Christianising all aspects of increasingly secular societies**. '*Ubi arcano*', promulgated in December 1922, inaugurated the "Catholic Action" movement. His encyclical '*Quadragesimo Anno*', issued in 1931, argued for a **reconstruction of economic and political life on the basis of religious values**. He set out his distaste for both socialism and unrestrained capitalism. He envisioned a truly Christian economy based on co-operation and charity. These two documents have tremendous relevance today, when Banking has completely lost its moral compass, and people around the world in the 'Unite Movement' have demonstrated against the lack of ethics in modern business practice.

He emphasised the spread of Catholicism in **Africa and Asia**, ordering every religious order to devote some of its personnel and resources to missionary work. He was against **modernism** in the Catholic Church. However, his opposition to modernist theology was by no means a rejection of new scholarship within the Church, as long as it was developed within the framework of orthodoxy and compatible with the Church's teachings. Pius XI was interested in supporting serious scientific study within the Church, establishing the Pontifical Academy for the Sciences in 1936.

His encyclical '*Mit brennender Sorge*' (1937) was written in German, and condemned the **Nazi Ideology of racism and totalitarianism**. Copies had to be smuggled into Germany so they could be read from the pulpit. This encyclical condemned particularly the paganism of National Socialist ideology, the myth of race and blood, and fallacies in the Nazi conception of God.

'Whoever exalts race, or the people, or the State, or a particular form of State, or the depositories of power, or any other fundamental value of the human community – however necessary and honourable be their function in worldly things – whoever raises these notions above their standard value and divinizes them to an idolatrous level, distorts and perverts an

THE CHAPEL OF OUR LADY OF THE SNOWS, BISHOP'S SCALE, LANGDALE.

Barry Ayre

Where does the club name Achille Ratti come from?

Monsignor Achille Ratti was a parish priest in the small village of Badalucco in Northern Italy where on one of the peaks of the mountains that dominate the village, is a lovely little church, a shrine that carries the name '*Our Lady of the Snows*'. Hence the name of the chapel at Bishop's Scale.

Achille Ratti was an accomplished climber and has an alpine peak named after him. He also made the first ascent of the Monte Rosa by a previously unclimbed route. Later he became Pope Pius XI during Mussolini's time. The late Bishop Pearson, the club's founder president, was an accomplished climber too and spent some years in Rome during Achille Ratti's time.

During the early 1940's when Bishop Pearson was a Parish priest in Blackpool, he would bring members of the Catholic Boys Association up to Langdale to climb and walk the fells. During England's darkest hour, on the 16th. July 1940 the Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, he brought 40 boys and young men from Blackpool by coach, with hooded lights, through barrier after barrier, challenged repeatedly by the armed Home Guard, to Dungeon Ghyll in Langdale.

At four in the morning they stumbled in the dark to the top of Scafell, having carried a table and everything for Holy Mass and offered the first Mass ever on the highest peak in England and to pray for peace. Forty

years later, a similar Mass was held on the summit of Scafell which Monsignor Slattery, our current president, celebrated with many members of ARCC including myself. By chance I took a photograph after the mass which included one of Monica's father, some seven years before I had even met Monica. (Barry's wife. Ed.)

I first joined the club in 1961, having been a keen fell walker since I was 16. After National Service from 1956 to 1958, I bought a car and together with friends camped in Langdale or Little Langdale in order to get on the fells. My best pal, Pete Durkin, was a catholic, and would ask me to get him to mass on Sunday morning in Ambleside, and it was here that he first became aware that mass was held each Sunday morning at Bishop's Scale, near the head of the Langdale valley. It certainly enabled us to get a fuller day on the fells, and within weeks he was invited to join the club. At first he declined, but on being pressed as to why, he said it would be unfair for him to be able to use the facilities and for me, his friend and chauffeur, not to be able to.

The non-catholic membership at the time was only for wives or husbands of members. For some reason I was invited to apply for membership and was accepted. To repay the kindness shown to me, I decided to play a full and enthusiastic role in the club.

Under Bishop Pearson's dynamic guidance, the club prospered and attracted more members. Originally they came from the Blackpool and Preston areas, but now members come from all parts of the country and some live abroad.

The first club hut was situated behind the New Dungeon Ghyll Hotel. It's the prominent white cottage behind Stickle Barn. This was thanks to the kindness of Cyril Bulman the then proprietor of the New Dungeon Ghyll Hotel. The huts in Wasdale and on Dunmail Raise followed. In 1957 Bishop Pearson launched a national campaign to raise money to buy Bishop's Scale then known as Raw Head barn. Newspapers throughout the

land carried the headlines '*Bishop buys a Mountain*' and little by little the money came in. So the Raw Head barn was bought from Mr. Bulman. The club also borrowed several thousand pounds from the diocese too, this enabled the incorporation of a small chapel not much larger than a family lounge and providing separate accommodation for visiting priests was provided in the adjacent room now known as the family dorm. The priests came mainly from Underly Hall at Kirkby Lonsdale to take mass.

The club membership was growing rapidly and naturally some married members wanted to bring their children along. But where would they sleep? The men's dormitory could sleep about 30 and the ladies about 25. Bishop Pearson, had a vision to convert the adjoining barn known as the Hogg House which the club owned, along with a considerable amount of fellside behind the hut, into a chapel. The existing chapel within the hut could then be converted to family accommodation. But how would this be financed and justified when the club was already in debt? Shortly after joining, I became Hut Warden at Bishop's Scale, and got to know Bishop Pearson extremely well. We worked together as a team and I started and organised the sponsored walks which became known as 'The Bishop's Walk'. Each year we made several thousand pounds to finance catholic projects in Lakeland, including the little chapel in Glenridding and the church in Grasmere. I suggested to the Bishop that the wish to convert the barn to a chapel should not just be a pipe dream but could be achieved. He allowed me to get the project underway, and I contacted local building contractors that I knew in the Langdale area to get started. Albert Bowness from Little Langdale was the main structural contractor, and he would not quote a price for the conversion, preferring to work on trust. How would my committee agree to this? They left it to me and the work was done for £1500.

The joinery, with the solid oak door and window frames, was completed by Peter Stott of Ambleside for £500.

The stained glass window incorporating the club motto '*Ad Altiora*' 'To

Higher Things' was designed at no charge by Mr. Walmsley, an expert in the field, who had a small showroom in Chapel Stile.

The window was made by Abbots of Lancaster, whose son worked for me in Morecambe. The cost was just £25.

Delmar Banner, of Little Langdale, a sculptress of the highest order in the land, (who died recently at the age of 100) carved in oak, a cross with the figure of the Risen Christ.

Whilst hitch-hiking back from a walking holiday in the Austrian Alps I heard on the grapevine that the Anglican church in Windermere were disposing of some pitch pine pews, and was able to get these gifted to the club. Of course they were not the right length, but Peter Stott came to the rescue and skilfully reduced them to fit. Club members scrubbed them and renovated them to their original glory. Later, after the chapel was opened, I managed to acquire Italian marble tiles for the floor from a Mr. Quilligotte from Manchester, again at no cost.

The chapel was opened by Bishop Pearson on 18th July 1970 and the parish priest from Badalucco, Don Caprile made the journey to represent the the villagers a thousand miles away in Italy. I have copies of the speeches made at the opening mass.

In the early years, mass was held on Sunday morning and priests came mainly from Underly Hall at KirkbyLonsdale, but Bishop Pearson thought that Saturday evening would be a better time and this was introduced, probably before it became the norm elsewhere.

Monsignor Kershaw came over from the new church in Grasmere for several years to take mass. Later on Father Hughes drove from Glenridding in all weathers over Kirkstone. This enabled members to have a full day on the fells on Sunday.

On June 10th 1989 the first marriage took place at the chapel, and guess who's it was? Yes, it was mine to Monica.

It took months and months to get it licence, but I was very determined and succeeded after filling in countless forms and contacting the appropriate authorities.

The chapel was packed with guests from both families and since then, numerous other couples have tied the knot there.

AN AFTERNOON IN GOSLAR

Jean Lochhead

Jean Lochhead (Treasurer) who has been practicing Orienteering for many, many years, finally managed to get it all right at the World Masters Orienteering Championships in Germany.

Goslar is a medieval village near to the old East German border in the Harz Mountains. It has lots of ginnels, alleys, dead ends, squares and a myriad of confusing cobbled streets.



Photograph by Professional Photographer Nick Barrage

I pack up to go to Sprint Final and for some reason put Welsh Flag in bottom of rucksack! Drive to Goslar, it's raining and the car park is 2 miles from the venue at the Barbarossa Palace near the centre of Goslar, a beautiful backdrop behind a sea of colourful Orienteers.

My final was near the end of the afternoon and after spending 3 hours hiding in the Welsh tent (shelter), which was the size of a dog kennel but

very welcome, any trace of nerves that I may have had had long gone. Make way to start calling at Porto Loos on the way. (They were worth an article on their own, a step back in time).

Run down 400 metres to start assembly and look for special number W65-7 hung up on strings. The best 10 qualifiers got special numbers so that their progress or lack of it could be monitored.

Names not on numbers, check on start list counting backwards – don't want to confuse the announcer. Point out to Hilary with no.1 that she is a marked woman. She is not amused. My legs feel remarkably good!

(How I qualified for the top 10 is a mystery. Leaving a control in the park area during the qualifying heats I had run towards what I thought was the next control, a kite on another tree, wrong number, inspect next tree, wrong number the next tree, every damn tree had control on it. Got it sorted eventually).

AND then it stopped raining: For a change I **quickly** find the start triangle, things are looking good.

Wander off to first control, it must have been a wander, I was only 18th fastest. (What Jean doesn't say here is that this race had over 400 competitors in it)

1st one down, and then the next, and I know that I am running fast and for a change somewhat in the right direction. (But did I have to look at a metal box when I knew that my control was the end of the hedge).

Next run up steps, see control run toward it, even though I know it's not mine – spin turn and see the correct one. Controls are all over the place.

5, 6, 7, 8, 9 why does this seem so easy, when does the big mistake come, this is definitely not normal.

Turn corner to number 10 there is doubt, where is the start of the zigzags, I slow down and try to work out how far to go, on a bit further and relief, I spot the start of zigzags. Turn on warp speed and pass loads of people going up the hill, pop out at back of a large building, it's the Palace!! Run down hill spotting next to last control on way down.

Why am I back so early? For the first time ever I know I have not missed a control. Dib and sprint to the last control, a tree in the finish area. The Orienteer in front chooses the first trestle; I use her as a brake. Then she's off and I am trying to keep up to gain more time.

Punch the finish – Good run, I may make the top 10!

Lean on barrier to recover. The PA guy says "at zee pre warning Hilary Palmer is 30 seconds down".

I don't know where zee pre warning is – it could be half way round the course - it turns out to be the 3rd control from the end, just where I hesitated when looking for the zigzags.

Hilary comes into the finish – "anz now we have zee winner in W65 J....." Cue to leap up in air and grab everyone in sight. Won by 25secs, a massive amount in Orienteering terms.

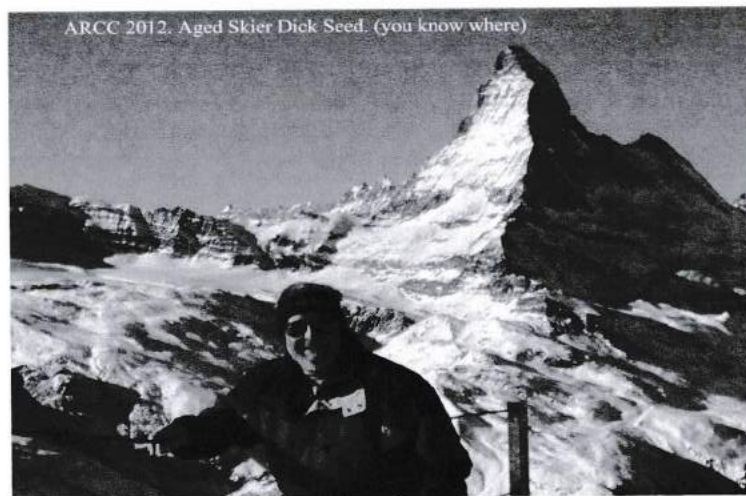
I hadn't made the usual big every event mistake, and it was a case of being in the right place at the right time where my main competitors were not as quick on some legs! as they should have been.. I was really looking forward to the long distance cross country event, as I had loads of confidence and thought I could make the top 10.

Unfortunately after making the A Final in the long event I was pole axed by a cold – Looking forward to next year in Italy!!

AGED SKIER

Dick Seed

The plaintive subtitle to Mick Pooler's "Introduction" to the last Journal tugged a chord. I, too, "used to climb a bit." Warming up on Scout Crag, dangling precariously on White Ghyll or trudging up I too used to fancy myself as a bit of a "hard man" before lycra and chalk and all those fancy dot-com climbing aids. We drilled the threads out of our own nuts and threaded them with whatever we could nick – nylon cord (pre harnesses), braided wire, old parachute tape if you knew someone who worked at BAe... all great fun and you didn't have to be a mathematician to work out if a route was hard – the grading *told* you so!



Bowfell. Carefree days of youth on Gimmer or in the dripping gullies of Pavay Arc in the rain. We must have been daft! We probably were; I recall moonlight expeditions to Scout after walking back from the "New" (when it was a pub) – and even one never-to-be-forgotten night when we set off up the Pikes in the moonlight, just Black Jack Thornton and me, on a night when the fells were cloaked in snow and we cut steps up a gully to emerge on top of Harrison Stickle at one in the morning with no other signs of human life but the slow blink of the lighthouses round the coast, and the sky a great mass of stars.

Great days

Came gliding, when a climbing mate got posted to the Sudan (no, not the prissy hang-variety – proper aeroplanes) came family ... came skiing. Now when I were a lad ... skiers were overdressed pooftas who couldn't walk uphill – but perceptions change with the advancing years and Lena's persuasive holiday wishes lead to a week in Scotland with another family, with the kids in the kindie or on a sledge. Leather boots and wire bindings, how's that for primitive?

OK so far. Several years later we took the kids to Austria. My twelve year old daughter fell in love with the ski instructor. (She's never been quite the same.) My wife tore her cruciate ligament. (She's never been quite the same either.) And I felt for the first time that exciting tingle of feedback through the skis that evokes the feel of a sailing boat's rudder or the controls of an aircraft, that strange almost-alive symbiosis that melds a man and an inanimate machine into something more, a mysterious "us" that can swoop over a wave, carve a tingling turn in spraying powder, or tilt the world on the soft pressure of your fingertips and turn it at your will.

Pure magic.

Our summer holidays became cheap camping trips to Wales or Scotland or taking the glider to other airfields as I joined a syndicate to own a share in my own machine, staying in farmhouse B and B's by the airfield. *Real* holidays took place in winter, in Scotland at first - all we could afford with a family in school and college (They got budget ski trips with the school that way!) then Spain and the Pyrenees, ribbons of snow between bare mountain slopes, softening by lunchtime into sloppy porridge, but a great instructor who used it to hone our skills.

Came Italy. The vast southern bowl of Cervinia behind the Matterhorn, unbelievably long easy rolling pistes, doing more miles in a morning than we had skied in a week in Spain.

Traversing around the Matterhorn by way of Col Rosa or the Theodule Pass and the descent to Furri. Skiing all the way back down in the fading light from Kleine Matterhorn to Cervinia in an endless series of linked routes Fabulous.

We were hooked.

There followed years of snow filled weeks in the Alps, in Canada, in California (and Nevada – just!) and still the odd day in Scotland while our son lived in Edinburgh, but always we returned to the Alps, to magnificent mountains rendered even more lovely by a coating of snow. Snow that smoothed the rugged shapes of rock and heather, snow that glistened in the sun, transformed the very air into a magical glitter-dust that veiled but could not hide the long, long views of blue-white peaks and misted valleys, of cloud decks far below...

Air like icy new wine, tingling in a morning, encouraging that first run, bracing the system, defying age and making you ever young. We learned to ski late, in our forties, but as skill grew the action got easier, denying advancing age. That is one of the true joys of skiing, the effort, once you have some skill, is far below the reward – as long as you stay off the black chutes and moguls of course!

With age came returns to familiar, less challenging resorts, comfort skiing in Wengen, Westendorf, or Morzine, and a couple of times in March we even bit the bullet and took the motor home to Bourge St. Maurice in France to ski Les Arcs, surprisingly comfortable after some second stage winterisation of the van. Probably no cheaper than a package deal for a weeks skiing but we spent another week and a half travelling back up France and filled the back up with wine on the journey! Great fun and we shall do it again, maybe not in January, a hotel with central heating is still a draw, but come March and somewhat warmer weather...This retirement business is great!

But still, when I were a lad

EASTER EIGG-STRAVAGANZA 2012

Phil Hodgson

Mandy Goth



The Sgurr of Eigg, a 390 m high prow of volcanic pitchstone, dominates the western side of the Isle of Eigg, towering above the small harbour at Glamisdale. We'd looked across the Sound of Eigg from the Ardnamurchan Peninsula at this geological marvel but today, as we powered across the sea in the "Sea.fari" fast catamaran, it was obscured by clag and drizzle. Together with nearly 50 other runners we were sailing from Mallaig to Eigg to take part in the Easter Eigg Races, a one off adventure devised by Lawrie Anderson of Lomond Hillrunners. Today's 9km race would take us from the harbour, across the bogs and moor under the eastern precipices of the Sgurr, before scrambling steeply up and running the rocky ridge to the trig point. Then a headlong dash back down the way we'd come. That was the plan anyway.

"I've put a few flags out", explained Lawrie, "the route's obvious; just follow the red dots along the main tourist path". However, the main tourist path was supplemented by numerous other trods and more than one runner took wayward routes in the thick mist. Even Lawrie himself, flying down the moors towards the

last mile on the track, found himself off route. Despite the navigational incidents the race route was a big hit with the runners. A race with everything but a view... track, moor, bog, rock and beer. The cafe at the harbour serves butties, cakes, teas and coffees...and Guinness. Marvellous.

Mandy and myself, and another running couple, were picked up by Stuart "Scruff" Miller in his old land rover and taken the four miles across the island on the single track road (the only road on the island) to his croft and newly opened B&B. Howlin Croft House sits in a stunning spot under the Quirang like cliffs of Beinn Bhuidhe and overlooks the pristine white beaches of Laig Bay and Camas Sgiotaig - the Singing Sands. The stunning backdrop is the Cuillin Hills of the Isle of Rum. Probably one of the best views in Scotland, but today it was invisible. Scruff, raconteur extraordinaire, regaled us with tales of the island. As a farmer, builder, coastguard and ex lobster fisherman he seems to have his fingers in many pies on the island. Those fingers he has left that is. In his most gruesome tale he explained how he got three of his fingers trapped in the creel winch on his boat and had to cut them off with his bait knife to get free!

If you want to stay somewhere unique, friendly and informal you must visit Howlin Croft House. <http://www.spanglefish.com/howlinhouse/> Before we'd even sat down a large dram was thrust in our hands. We were given a guided tour of the chickens, ducks, goats, pig and polytunnel. Scruff's wife Kathleen cooked up a wonderful home-made and locally sourced meal and we were entertained by endless stories. The Easter Ceilidh was to be held in the community centre near the harbour. Scruff volunteered to give us a lift. He was soon cursing when we were held up by the local bus, an old white minibus, crawling along at 10mph. "The bloody driver's always pissed" Scruff explained, "but nay bother, I know a short cut". He steered the land rover off the road and accelerated across a bumpy field before cutting back onto the road in front of the van. "Did you like that?" he asked. Before we had time to reply, "I know an even better one". We plunged over an edge and plummeted down a steep grassy bank cutting out a hairpin on the road. "My brother's still got a neck brace from last time I did that" he shouted gleefully. Nerves were calmed by one or three guinnesses at the ceilidh. Scruff had promised to pick us up at 1am warning us not to walk home as the road was full of drunken drivers. We wondered whether we'd be better taking our chances with the drunks!

The Ceilidh apparently starts at 9pm, and finishes at 9am! One obvious reason for this was that each dance seems to last forever due to the large number of dancers - all having to execute the particular highlight of the dance at least once. We started stripping the willow just after midnight...by quarter past one we'd stripped it three times and the band was still going strong. We retired, dripping with sweat. I'm sure it was the dancing that caused my calf strain rather than the fell running.

Sunday saw us lined up on Laig Beach ready for Race 2. Lawrie, having lost one young lady in yesterday's race (she was eventually found wandering the misty moors in tears several hours after everyone else had finished), had revised today's route as he didn't want to lose anyone over the precipitous drops of the Beinn Bhuidhe ridge in today's thick clag. Along the beach, along a track, up an outrageously steep climb to Beinn Bhuidhe trig, back down vertical heather before flying down a wonderful grassy ridge to finish on the Singing Sands. Another top 8km route. No prizes for our racing prowess but we did win a spot prize each. As we were strolling back towards Glamisdale in the rain a rusty old pick-up with no rear lights and the widows held in place with gaffa tape pulled up. Scruff leaned out, "You wanna lift?" We nodded. "You'll have to jump on the back then". We perched on a pallet as the pick-up negotiated the narrow winding road waving at the other runners as we passed them. An Isle of Eigg white knuckle ride. "Great pick-up this" Scruff told us, "I once had 18 passengers on the way back from a ceilidh, four of 'em were on the bonnet!"

So, if its ever on again (Lawrie's still deciding whether to repeat it), put the Easter Eigg races in your diary. Or, just visit the island anyway. It's a magical, friendly and wild island with great walks and runs, fascinating geology and archaeology, and extraordinary Scottish island hospitality. We're already looking forward to going back.

Slainte

Mandy & Phil