

ACHILLE RATTI CLIMBING CLUB

Monday 18th. November 1963

Bulletin 10/1963

Dear Member,

Since the last Bulletin appeared, the Club's coming of age has been celebrated by members at a commemorative mass and also at a dinner & dance.

On Sept. 1st., an Open Air Commemorative Mass was offered by His Lordship Bishop T. B. Pearson on the fellside adjacent to the Langdale Hut. Over 100 members and friends attended, and the occasion was marked by the unveiling of a memorial cairn and plaque erected on the site.

The Anniversary Dinner & Dance at the Skelwith Bridge Hotel on Sat. Nov. 9th. was a huge success, and over 70 members attended. Guest speaker for the evening was Dr. T. H. Somervell, whose amusing speech included references to his experiences in the Alps. Dancing followed and continued until the early hours. A ready made excuse was available for those who had 'twisted the night away' and didn't feel up to a strenuous day out on the fells on the Sunday, when the weather turned out pretty miserable!

Jack Case & Valerie Flynn who were responsible for the arrangements must be congratulated on the success of the evening. Thanks also to John Gilmour, who was Toast Master and M.C. for the evening and everyone else who assisted.

In a past issue, reference was made to commemorating the 21st. with some notable feat on the fells.

During the Summer, several attempts have been made on the 'Three Peaks' and the several variations.

Eddie Kelly writes :- On the 31st. Aug., Les Seed, Wilf Charnley, Frank Rogerson & Eddie Kelly walked from Dunmail Raise to Wasdale, and en route climbed the highest mountain in each of the 3 Lake District Counties. For those not Geographically minded, these are Helvellyn (Westmorland), Conistone Old Man (Lancashire) and Scafell Pike (Cumberland). If you ask why they did it, so did they as they struggled up Cam Spout towards the end of the walk, but before setting out, it seemed an appropriate thing to do in the Club's 21st. year.

Two similar attempts I heard of were wisely abandoned due to adverse weather conditions when on the third and final mountain.

Harry Wiggins however did complete the Scafell, Skiddaw, Helvellyn route overnight on his own. He writes:-

It was raining as I set off along Mickledon at 4-15p.m. on the 6th. July, but the weather cleared as I started up Rossett Gill. It was the usual hard slog up the Gill, but I managed to reach the top without stopping. I arrived on the top of Scafell Pike at 6-30p.m., and by this time the sky was clear and the view excellent. A young chap was on the top, whom I chatted too. He with five friends were camping on the summit for the night, the five friends had gone down to Wasdale Head for the evening leaving him in charge of their gear. Leaving him, I set out for the Borrowdale valley. On arrival there, I had a refresher at the Scafell Hotel, then proceeded on my way to Keswick and Skiddaw.

I never thought I would reach Keswick, but eventually I did, around 11-30p.m. Walking along the road which takes one round the railway station, and then taking the second turning right off it, I slogged along the path around Latrigg which brings you to the foot of the Skiddaw path. What a slog!

I finally arrived on the summit of Skiddaw where I was almost frightened out of my wits by a sheep which jumped up from behind a pile of rocks. I rested, ate some sandwiches, chocolate biscuits and an orange, then smoked a cigarette. There was a full moon which was very bright, and I could see the outlines of the fells around in the clear night. It was only then that I realized what perfect conditions I had had up to this point. I left the summit around 2-30a.m. and ran most of the way down. It was at this point my feet started to blister.

By the time St. John's Vale was reached, by way of the railway track my feet were very sore. As I walked along the Vale, I realized daylight had arrived without my even noticing it. Walking past Castle Rock, I glanced up at the place on this overhanging crag where I had fallen off last September whilst climbing in the rain. It still looked a long way up, and down!

I left Thirlspot at 6a.m. for the top of Helvellyn, and it was 8a.m. when I stood on the summit. By this time, my feet were troubling me a lot. I collapsed in a heap, and observed the view - thick mist all around. I ate the last of my sandwiches with the help of some very cheeky sheep.

Leaving Helvellyn, I walked towards Dunmail Beck, and arrived at the bottom of it at 8-55a.m.. By this time I was feeling very tired, but rather pleased with myself. I was back at the Langdale Hut by 9-45a.m. having hitched a lift over from Dunmail Raise.

T.H. WIGGANS

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In response to my pleas for contributions on holidays etc., the following have been received.

A.R.C.C. IN NORWAY

In the Summer of 1962, unconfirmed rumours reached Bill Carter's ears that Norway was well worth a visit, i.e., that there were interesting, climbable mountains within its borders. These rumours were soon confirmed when he and Joyce saw some of the slides of Harry Robinson's holiday there, and the decision to go in 1963 was the inevitable result. The question of the composition of the rest of the party had then to be decided. Whilst it was known that a comprehensive knowledge of Norwegian was not necessary, a smattering would be useful. Marie Bailey, having been there before, was therefore enrolled as interpreter. The fourth member of the party was to be treasurer, and therefore had to be a careful, serious-minded person, not given to profligacy, and able to withstand the pleas of the ladies for expenditure on non essentials. Eddie Kelly filled the bill admirably.

Throughout the next few months preparations went ahead for the trip. It was decided that the first visit should be in the nature of a reconnaissance, with stops being made at a number of points, rather than at one centre throughout. The ladies too were very busy, and as the months went by, so the length of their luggage lists grew. Eventually on 13th. July 1963, our party sailed from Newcastle, and 19 hours later landed in Bergen.

We first pulled our boots on at the tiny village of Aamot on the edge of the Jostedal glacier. Unfortunately time and weather only allowed us to do the approach walk to the snout of the glacier and gaze in awe at it.

At this point the glacier did not simply die away, but terminated suddenly and dramatically, towering over our heads and slashed with the inevitable fearsome crevasses.

The following xx day we moved on and put up at Juvasshytta, a mountain hut high up on the slopes of Galdpiggen, Norway's highest mountain. The next morning we set out to visit the 8100 ft. summit of the mountain, having declined the services of the guide, but found ourselves walking in the footsteps of 30 more prudent souls in his charge. We were surprised to see him rope up his party for the crossing of a harmless looking snowfield, but were even more surprised when he unroped them and left them to get up the final rocky ridge as best they could, even though the snow covered side slopes fell steeply away. The view from the top was very similar to that seen on many occasions from the top of Scafell Pike - nothing but cloud! An identical view was obtained the following day as well, this time from the top of Glittertind. The cloud was even denser this time, and the party was almost reduced to half strength when the first two on top almost walked straight over the summit ridge snow cornice. This was the day that we learned that whilst the elevated position of our hut might on occasions be an advantage, it most definitely was not at the end of a 12 hour day which ended with a 3,000 ft. climb back up to the hut.

Our next stop was an unscheduled one, being the result of a chance encounter with two Norwegian walkers near the village of Fortun. They recommended to us the Nordstodalsseter hut of the D.N.T., and it proved to be good advice. The road up the narrow Fortundalen ravine to the hut was a pure delight, seeming to defy us to predict where (or if) it would go next along the very steep walls. We could well understand the reason, when we were told that the weather only permitted the hut to be open for two months in the year. From the hut the following morning, we went up on to the Liabreen glacier. Our route took us over a pleasant combination of ice scrubbed rock and snow covered ice, and past two delightful tarns, the waters of one being a fascinating colour of jade green. As our approach was from the north west, the view of the Jotunheimen mountains spread out to the south east came as a breath-taking surprise, when the 5,800ft. top of the glacier was reached. Of the countless peaks which were visible, possibly the most eye catching were the sharply pointed tops of the Hurrungane & Smorstabbtind groups rising up above the surrounding glaciers.

Two days later we were trudging over one of those glaciers under a hot sun in a blue sky with the twin pointed tops of Saksa firmly in our sights, impatient to reach the base rocks. As we had no useful Guide book to assist us, we had to find our own route up the south face, which 'went' without any difficulty. The choice of a snow filled gully for the way off proved a good one, because it led directly to a snow bridge over the bergschrund at the edge of the glacier. Three of us managed the crossing with varying degrees of apprehension, leaving Bill (who was by far the heaviest) to come over last. Perhaps this was not wise, but it guaranteed Bill an audience, who watched his every step with a fascination he is unlikely to get over again.

This climb proved to be our last due to the weather changing for the worse, but it provided a suitable high note on which to end a very enjoyable holiday in new and very different mountain country.

B. J. E. M.

John Britt has sent me the following article on a holiday spent in the Alps with Harry Wiggans. I'm publishing it word for word in it's abbreviated style.

CHAMONIX-MONT BLANC 3rd. August - 18th August 1963

Monday. Chamonix. Plan de l'Aiguille via Blatiere path and across to Aiguille de l'In (difficile). Route plastered with climbers. Did several variations in order to overtake and finish route in reasonable time. Descent via the Col de Bouche, and back to Chamonix.

Tuesday. Off to Montenvers with food for several days. Wednesday crossed Mer de Glace and up Moraine to Petit Dru Glacier to reconnoitre area and find caves for bivouac. Cloud and rain closed in, and after finding caves (which consisted of large boulders propped over depressions) returned to Montenvers hut. Next three days, rain, snow and low cloud. Back to Chamonix for supplies on Friday.

Saturday. Up to Montenvers with supplies for several days. Attempt at North Face Petit Dru not feasible. Whole of face plastered with fresh snow.

Sunday. Attempt on N.W. ridge of Aiguille de Blatiere (D). Route finding difficult, and finished up on west face Blatiere. Reversed several cracks which on ascent were found to peter out. Time short, so a quick descent down the Spencer Couloir - 51 degrees ice and snow slope. Snow in soft condition, but no avalanche resulted. After reversing the Rognon and leaving the Nantillons Glacier, a furious storm began. Arrived Back at Montenvers Hut after 17 hours on the route, wet, cold and famished. Harry produced a 'tres bon repas' out of thin air, and then collapsed in sleeping bag after serving J. Britt supper in bed!

Monday-Tuesday. Weather terrible. Rain, sleet, low cloud. Struck up profitable friendship with two Austrian climbers which resulted in a pair of twelve point crampons for H. Wiggans (26/-) and a North Wall hammer for J. Britt (30/4). Both British and Austrians very happy with sale.

Wednesday. Rose at 2a.m. Torrential rain. Rose at 4a.m. Showers. Set off eventually at 8a.m. in reasonable weather. Up to Nantillons Glacier via the Rognon (2 hours) and continued up glacier. Fresh snow made negotiation of crevasses difficult, one breaking away quite close to our stance. Continued to top of Nantillons and found huge cornices on South side, and large Bergschrund blocking way to the Rocher de la Corde. Realised that due to late start and time required to cross Bergschrund, the obvious line to Blatiere summit was out. Climbed Nantillons Point (about same altitude as Rocher de la Corde) in crampons, due to large amount of snow on face, and were rewarded with a magnificent view of Glacier Goant and the Grand Jorasso. The whole north face of Grand Jorasso plastered with fresh snow. Clouds started to close in, so rapid descent of rock made, and careful descent of Nantillons Glacier. Rain started, and although snow conditions resulted in small avalanches, managed to descend with no mishaps. Descended the Rognon in torrential rain. Dried out at Montenvers, packed, returned via Chamonix, Paris, London, Preston.

Bad weather, but nevertheless a tremendous fortnight.

My apologies to Catherine Hickey for the delay in publishing her account of a month spent at 'The Outward Bound Course For Girls' in 1962. She writes:-

Although it was the beginning of Winter, the weather for the greater part of the course was more like Spring.

It began on November 19th, 1962, and lasted for 28 days. Travelling down to Devon took up the whole of the first day.

It was explained to us at the beginning, that our aim throughout was to earn the right to wear the O.B. badge. The course consisted of two expeditions consisting of caving, rock-climbing, canoeing, fell-walking, first aid, map and compass work. The evenings were taken up by bringing Log Books up to date, lectures and debates.

The first expedition was purely fell-walking on Dartmoor. We stayed the nights at a Youth Hostel. On the first day of the expedition, we arrived at the hostel about lunch time and spent the afternoon helping the Forestry Commission. The next day we walked over five or six Tors, and on the third day we were left to plan and find our own route back to the school.

During the second expedition, we canoed nine miles down the river, walked over to the coast guard station at Berry Head, stood watch with the coast guards, and then spent the rest of the night trying to swing into hammocks!

In between these expeditions, we spent single days caving and rock climbing. All the time, we generally learnt to take care of ourselves when we were out without our instructors.

During the last week, the weather deteriorated rapidly, bringing snow blizzards whilst we were camping within sight of Dartmoor Prison. In those two final days of camping, we had a short refresher on all the aspects we had covered during the course, before returning home

News from the Huts

Buckbarrow Members wishing to attend the 'Organised Meet' on the 30th. Nov - 1st. Dec who haven't yet booked, should notify Eddie Kelly, 5, Scotforth Road, Preston, enclosing a booking fee of 5/-. The total cost is 21/- which includes all meals from Friday night to Sunday, and also hut fees.

Dunmaul Although it was intended to keep the hut open for members throughout the winter, it has been decided to close it for the next few months except for the parties already booked there. This has been done to avoid damage by frost due to members not draining the system

Langdale The hut has been very well used (in the numerical sense) during recent months. With so many people staying there, the hardy annual of unwashed pots is bound to arise from time to time. Members are asked to keep the hut as clean and tidy as possible at all times. A new fireplace has been built in the Lounge, and it is hoped that more use will be made of it when members have finished their meals in the kitchen. Due to the new fireplace, the fuel bills have gone up, and wet weekends can be well filled by chopping wood to save £ s d.

Frank Davies at the Climbing Shop in Ambleside, tells me he is prepared to offer members of the A.R.C.C. 5% discount on all purchases on production of an up-to-date membership card

No gossip to report this time. Have there been no Hatches, Matches or Dispatches in recent months? Please send anything of interest for use in future Bulletins.

Yours Sincerely

Barry Ayre

17, Scafell Avenue,

Morecambe,

Lancs.