

ACHILLE RATTI CLIMBING CLUB

September 1968

Bulletin No.29
Side 1

Dear Member,

Well, the Long, Hot Summer that I prophesied in the last issue turned up more or less on schedule - at least, so far as we in the North were concerned.

The South of England seems to have had a dampish summer but I can't be expected to extend my aegis that far. The Lakeland situation is one of drought, with the campsite at Troutbeck threatened with closure and most of the streams or becks dried up or reduced to a trickle. In fact, the Troutbeck people called in a water-diviner from Yorkshire in an attempt to relieve the position, although if they had only known it, one of the locals claims some success in that line.

A few years ago, armed with a couple of pieces of fence wire, I tried my hand under his direction and unearthed two drains and one penny hidden under the carpet - altogether we reckoned on finding something 50% of the time even if it wasn't always what we were looking for! Our 'instructor' said we weren't tuned in properly or something, as though we were a couple of cat's-whisker sets, but I must admit it was a bit odd. Come to think of it, in times like these, a young lad could earn good money; pardon me, while I get my wire-cutters....

Just two points before I close - one, Members should sign in immediately they arrive not when they are about to depart; and two, have you paid your subs yet?

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ARRAN - EASTER 1968

This last Easter we decided to go to the Isle of Arran for a long weekend.

On Maunday Thursday afternoon we went by car via the Lake District up to Fairlie, arriving there late evening.

Good Friday morning dawned rather misty. We had a good breakfast and then boarded the ferry "Glen Sannox" for Arran - a very pleasant 1 hour sail. Our first impressions of Arran will always remain with us; the mist had cleared revealing snow capped Goat Fell against brilliant blue skies. What a beautiful sight! We landed in Brodick and went to the Kingsley Hotel where we had reserved accommodation, living in luxury for the weekend. After lunch we went to Brodick Castle which was closed, but we did a grand tour of the grounds and had a good photographing sessions, returning to the Hotel for dinner.

Saturday morning found us bog-trotting up Glen Rosa, where quite a number of campers from Glasgow were spending the weekend; and started to climb the S.E. spur of BEIN A'CHLIABAIN 2141 ft., quite a pleasant scramble.

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When we reached the summit, we ate our packed lunches and continued on our way, traversing the ridge and then dropping down the shoulder, round Bein Tarsuinn to the beginning of the A'CHIRRIDGE. It is graded moderate to difficult in the climbing guide therefore no route for the faint of heart. We decided to split up into two groups. Which meant only three of us went along the summit ridge. It was a wise decision as the walk involved some quite serious climbing - taking the full party across would have taken far too long. One particular section, which is known as the Vaulting Horse, can cause a few painful moments if not tackled the right way. We met the rest of the party at the end of the ridge and dropped down to the saddle between A'CHIR and CIR MHOR which is a very interesting mountain, like a small MATTERHORN! From any angle, the ascent is a hard climb. We came down into Glen Rosa again doing a five mile bog-trot once more, but we arrived back at the Hotel with comparatively dry feet as the weather was in our favour - dry and sunny.

The following day, Easter Sunday, our party decided to take things easy - bicycle rides round the Island! Janet and I, not wanting to waste such a sunny day, donned our climbing gear again and with the highest point of the Island in mind, "Goat Fell" 2866 ft., we set forth. We traversed the golf course easy; then we went through a Rhododendron wood - harder but very pleasant as the bushes were beginning to bloom. We came out onto a well trodden path, upwards following a dry stream bed until the path deteriorated to practically nothing and then the climb started, up the south ridge. It was a very hard rocky steep climb to the summit, where we refreshed ourselves with vittles and admired the marvellous panoramic view. We set our course northwards along STACACH - which is the ridge to North Goat Fell; a very adventurous route, with three gritstone pinnacles that caused us one or two anxious moments. In a N.E. direction, we dropped down into the valley and so to the village of Corrie where we discovered to our delight they sold afternoon teas at the Post Office - most welcome! We thumbed a lift back into Brodick, whereupon back at the Hotel we listened to tales of the hair raising adventures of the cycling party.

Monday morning, everybody was ready for the mountains again. We boarded a mini-bus that took us along the coast to North Glen Sannox, where the driver dropped us at the bridge that crosses Glen Sannox burn. Here we had a slight shower, that left low lying cloud, but as we made our way through rough heather and marsh to the foot of CREAG DHUBH, the cloud lifted and we were rewarded with a lovely clear view of CAISTEAL ABHAIL (The Castles) 2817 ft., our goal. We toiled up CREAG DHUBH to the summit. This peak is at the end of the ridge that leads to the Castles - which as the name implies looks like a fortification with a very worthwhile scramble along the ridge. The summit of the Castles was covered with snow that was whipped into our faces by a bitterly cold wind and we had to keep moving to keep warm on the tops this particular day. We didn't linger over lunch. The rock formations on the mountains are very round and weirdly shaped, especially those on the Castles. One of our party remarked that they looked like Henry Moore creations.

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After a very short rest we dropped down to the saddle between CIR MHOR and CASTLES. We would like to have done CIR MHOR as we were so near the summit again but time was against us. Still it is an excuse to revisit the Island. A steep track lead us into Glen Sannox, another long glen but very picturesque - crystal clear burns falling over long flat slabs of rock and foaming miniature waterfalls where the slabs ended. Such slabs form the North face of CIR MHOR and could provide very interesting climbing routes for rock enthusiasts. When we reached the end of the glen we found a very convenient tea room where we quenched our thirsts till the bus driver came to deliver us back to Brodick. Glen Sannox is splendid for camping, we were left with this thought on the last very enjoyable day on Arran. Tuesday took us back home to Blackburn.

A beautiful Island, warmed by the Gulf Stream resulting in a mild climate where Palm trees grow in abundance. A splendid weekend!

Matt and Janet Bennett.

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From Basle came the following epic with a request for a suitable title as the authors had been unable to agree between "Ramblings from a storm-bound tent" or "The Saga of Rod and Fred". Accordingly I present:-

"The Rambling Saga of Rod and Fred from
a storm-bound Tent!"

In June to Chamonix they came, to climb Mont Blanc and make their Name.
To introduce our heroes two, as Rod and Fred they're known to you.

They started in true British Style, sweating and cursing (with language vile).

As on the paths they spent their days, not for them the telepherique ways.

After climbing the 'M', and Charmoz (Petit) they set their sight on the club elite.

The route they chose to state their case, Grepon, by the Mer de Glace face.

Three's a crowd, or so they say, but with Aussie John they made their way.

As far as Montenvers by railway train, though all around it looked like rain.

On the Mer de Glace they made good time, and Omens were good for their intended climb.

But Tour Rouge hut was guarded well - Glaciers, Bergschrands - a Snowy Hell!

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They rose at two, and by candlelight ate, not realising
what would be their fate.
But then at three the day dawned clear, and dehydration
became their fear.

Though the Sun grew hot they climbed apace, Eleven hours
they were on that face.
Layback, bridging, towering wall, The Knubel crack -
they conquered all.

Descent should be a simple thing, but the climb, they
found, reserved its sting.
Every watery abseil stuck, Our heroes were quite out of
luck.

In darkness snowy slopes were reached, But icy walls
could not be breached.
A rocky ledge became their quest, On Snow, a bivouac's
no jest.

The night was cold, they shivered and froze, But when
dawn came they stretched and rose.
And down to Chamonix made their way, To eat and sleep
through the heat of the day.

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And so the Good and Lordly Rod, Unto the Noble Fred
did say,
"Now, shall we climb the Matterhorn?" (and) so they
did - the very next day!

They climbed the Cervin at great speed, Two fit
Englishmen and an unfit Swede,
They stayed at Hornli at great expense, (But better
by far than carrying tents).

Up past Solvay they climbed in haste, Not even stopping
at that place.
Until by axe and fixed rope, They reached the final
summit slope.

The view from the top "C'est Magnifique, Now let's get
off the b..... peak."

Descent was harder, took more time, More difficult now
to find the line.
Back to Zermatt to Chips and Steak, Hoping tomorrow
the weather would break. Writ by Rod Witham & Ian(Fred) Dewhurst

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P.S. Sorry for all the fingerprints etc., but we
had some fun with the van.

News from TYN TWR - in the absence of John Foster (On Skye) I'd like to mention that the last hurdle has finally been cleared and all that remains is the issuing of the specification for the conversion. We're now able to ask for tenders for the work to be done and after that, no doubt, John will give the word to all those who have volunteered to lend a hand.

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CHRIS. MITCHELL

I am sorry to have to tell you of the death of another of our Members recently - on the 16th July last, Chris Mitchell was struck by a falling rock and killed instantly whilst taking part in a geological expedition in the Arctic regions of Norway. The funeral took place at Roundhay, Leeds when about 20 Members were able to be present.

A Memorial Service was held on the 3rd August on the fellside behind the Langdale Hut at which Bishop Pearson and The Rev.B. Rawlings of the Congregational Church, Windermere led the prayers and was attended by Mr. and Mrs. Mitchell and family and a large number of Members and friends.

Chris. was a very safe and skilful climber and his death is a great loss to his family and to us. He was aged 20 years.

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DAVE MARTIN.

On Saturday 17th August, a Memorial Service was held in the chapel at Bishop's Scale for David M. Martin of Walton-le-Dale, who was killed in a motor-cycle accident near Stanstead Airport where he was a Met.Officer. He was a keen walker and lost no opportunity of getting up to Buckbarrow and onto the fells, usually with his close friend Paul Charnock. The Service was given by our Founder-President, The Rt.Rev.Bishop Pearson, Bishop of Sinda, at which members of the family and Club were present. Later, the ashes were taken to Buckbarrow where they were to be buried or scattered in some suitable place on the fells. He was aged 24.

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ASCENT OF MOUNT KENYA.

The sun rises in Kenya just before 7 a.m. and we were away soon after with a hundred miles to drive from Nairobi. At that early hour Mount Kenya looked no more than twenty miles distant with its twin peaks pointing out of the shadowy massif like fingers. John was as keen to climb it as I was, especially since an earlier attempt had been foiled by the last rainy season. It would be his first big peak, though he had plenty of snow and ice experience gained in Antartica.

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A party of two on Mount Kenya is fairly unusual; more common are organised safaris for wealthy tourists with many native guides and porters in attendance. The guide-book explains quite clearly where the bivvy shelters for servants are! We tackled the mountain in the usual way, carrying duvets, camping gaz and food for four days. Two of our friends left Nairobi at the same time; their mission was to establish a scientific base camp 300 miles 'up country' in the Rift Valley, to be used later in the year.

The old Land Rover rattled along the good road which leaves Nairobi to the north, passing through fertile red farmland where coffee, maize and bananas are grown. At Naro Moru, ten miles south of the equator, we turned off the tarmac onto a murrum road, with the mountain still in full view, though it usually hides in cloud later in the day. As usual we gave lifts to Kikuyu women farmworkers, who invariably had about a hundredweight of vegetables on their backs and infants in their arms. We traversed the open country of the 'shambas' and entered the forest on a steepening track. Soon we reached the gate of the Mount Kenya National Park (surprise, surprise, no charge to enter) where a helpful young African signed us in, informed us there was no-one on the mountain, and closed the gate behind us. This was the moment when we began to feel intrepid.

Now the road was a wide switchback among tall Mexican cypress trees and impenetrable undergrowth. From the map we knew that it took a ridge between two river valleys, though we could see nothing of these. Eventually we reached the limit for ordinary cars and pressed on in 4-wheel drive, gaining height rapidly round hairpin bends. Forceful driving techniques were needed to charge the bad sections of road hard enough to get past. Luckily the surface was fairly dry and we were only bogged down once before we reached the clearing at 10,000'. We 'parked' the vehicle here, among giant bamboo, heather as tall as man, and elephants' footprints, and started walking.

Almost at once the forest grew thinner until after an hour in single file we emerged onto a steep, marshy section, 'the Vertical Bog'. It was heavy going in spite of the dry weather, though trampled grass marked well the passage of many feet. The peaks seemed much nearer now, which was encouraging, and looking back we could see the Aberdare peaks rising from a great plain. Late in the afternoon we gained a ridge overlooking the Teleki valley where our objective should be. It was quite a relief to drop down for a while to the stream, then the going was gentle, and we reached the hut as darkness fell at 7 p.m. The Teleki hut was a bare aluminium shelter and we had it to ourselves except for a big cheeky mouse. There was nothing to do but prepare a meal and make ourselves as comfortable as possible for the night.

In the morning we were away by eight and came after a mile to Klarwill's hut, which we had expected to be derelict but found in a good state of repair, probably thanks to the Mountain Club of Kenya.

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It was built of wood, so might have been warmer to sleep in than the Teleki. As we enjoyed a drink of icy water we noticed on the rocks nearby a number of little furry animals watching us. They were rock-hyraxes, sharp of tooth and shrill of voice; John approached them close enough for photographs without frightening them away. We continued up the valley with the peaks becoming bigger and more dominant and the vegetation sparser until only giant groundsel remained. The sun was hot and we still wore shorts at over 14,000', but the valley behind us was swirling with cloud and we realised that no-one except us could see the mountain. Our route took the moraine above the Lewis glacier; it was like all moraines, steep and loose, and our packs felt very heavy. Apart from weariness on this section we were unaffected by altitude, possibly because Nairobi itself is at 6,000' and we had been several times to 11,000' in the Aberdares.

Just before cloud enveloped us we caught a glimpse of a mast where Top Hut should be. Suddenly it became very cold and we changed from shorts to 'longs' duvets and all. The snow was deep and fairly soft, so we concocted stop-tous from poly-bags and took out our improvised ice-axe, which consisted of an aluminium tube with a chisel end. Top Hut was at 15,700', as high as Mont Blanc, cunningly situated in a sheltered place behind a rock ridge. We entered and began at once to make it habitable. There were bunks, mattresses (though, alas, no blankets), candles, a few tools, and a radio powered by a solar cell, for emergency use only.

The clouds cleared briefly before nightfall so we scrambled up the rocks to see the main peaks. A wooden cross commemorated an unfortunate German climber. The twin peaks of the volcanic plug looked to be made of superb rock - easy to see why the natives thought they were gods. Crossing the Lewis glacier to reach the peaks appeared straightforward, then the ordinary route could be reached by scrambling up some acree. It took a chimney leading to a series of gullies which in turn gave onto ribs, with exposed but easy climbing to the summit of Nelion. Batian (17,000') is the higher peak and it is climbed by descending first into the gap between it and Nelion. Apparently it is advisable to leave a fixed rope for returning across the gap. From our position the route was easy to see and I felt impatient to get onto rock. John was less abandoned, remembering perhaps that we had only 100' of rope, which might make descent (or retreat) complicated. We also had a good view of the lower peaks, notably Point John, which looked desperate but in fact starts at Grade III; and the rugged ridge of Sendeyo, a separate volcanic relic, behind us. There would be any amount of climbing if the weather were only favourable.

Twelve hours of darkness is a long time. That is the main drawback with mountaineering on the equator, especially when there's absolutely nothing to do, and it's bitterly cold. At last light began to filter through and we discovered we were nearly snowed up. We couldn't see the nearby rocks, never mind the main peaks, and it was still snowing. To my dismay and possibly John's relief there would be no rock climbing.

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Like many before us we had to be content with Point Lenana, the highest snow peak. This was at our side of the glacier and meant simply striking a snow ridge and following it to the top. The snow was good for kicking steps and within an hour we reached the summit, where flags of many nationalities hung stiffly from a big metal cross with the inscription CHRISTUS REGNAT. We improvised one with a mud-coloured hanky. For a moment the main peaks appeared, like white, folded curtains. The feeling of complete isolation from other people was overwhelming in a way I have never experienced in the Alps. There was also a sense of advancement, because Point Lenana, at 16,300', was higher than we had ever climbed before.

Back at the hut we discussed what to do. If the weather improved we would have liked to walk round the peak area to a hut on the other side. But we knew that in the middle of March the rainy season was imminent and that bad weather on the mountain usually comes to stay, and neither of us fancied another long night up there, so we decided to go down and catch up with some work. It was a disagreeable descent, hot and very wet, with melting snow right down to Teleki hut. The 'Vertical Bog' was so gruesome that we should probably never have persevered going upwards. Going down was bad enough. Inspecting an outcrop we lost the track and found ourselves wandering through a maze of giant plants and elephant debris with the horrible prospect of being caught out in the dark, and actually we were within 200 yards of the track! The only other incident was being confronted by a buffalo in the forest, but it was a young one and ran off without harming us.

We were right about the rainy season starting; it poured all the way back to Nairobi and there were widespread power failures. All the limelight had been stolen by our friends, who had completed their mission 'up country', but at a price. They had been shot by warlike tribesmen and would be having a long rest in hospital.

Angela Faller.

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THE FELL RACE

The 2nd Annual Fell Race which was cancelled recently, will be run on Saturday, 21st September '68 at 6.30p.m. The course will be as last year, starting from the New D.G. up to Stickle Tarn and then back to the Hut. The more entries we get for this short run then the better the race it will be. The runners, too, deserve your support, so come on up and help to make it a good week-end all round.

Last years race was a great success and we're hoping that it will be every bit as good this year, so do make an effort and come along and help make the Fell Race into a great annual event.

SATURDAY, 21st SEPTEMBER '68

6.30PM

ALL WELCOME!

ANNUAL DINNER

As the Chairman remarked at the A.G.M. now is the time that we usually bring up the question of the Annual Dinner - unfortunately, due to the steady expansion of the tourist season, the Red Lion is not able to give us a firm date for the closing of the Hotel and so we cannot yet fix the date of the Dinner, but the proprietors assure us that the last Saturday of the season is reserved for us. This means that it could be any one of four dates - the 9th, 16th, 23rd, and 30th November - nor do I yet know the menu or price, but we have never had a bad meal at the Red Lion and the price has always been in the region of 21/0d - maybe a little more this year, I don't know. The only certain things are that there will be a Dinner in November at the Red Lion and what is even more certain is that there will be the usual shortage of tickets - and I'm getting my application in NOW!

Stop Press: Date is 23rd Nov. tickets available from Barry after 20th Sept.,
Cash with order. - - -

Round and About

Back from the Peruvian Missions for a brief visit, was Fr. Brian Passman whose parish is in the slums of Lima. Oddly enough, the neighbouring priest is also a Member of the A.R.C.C. - Fr. Gerry Hanlon.... Little news from Antarctica as the ice hasn't broken yet but Harry Wiggans radio's that he's delivered 7 husky puppies during the winter - pups and midwife reported well... Correction, now 19 pups....

In the recent 20 mile Sponsored Walk, John Bulman came third in about 2½ hours...in the same event, Barry Ayre and Adrian Crook were also well up, and Terry Hickey and Frank Whittle were seen lifting a car out of a ditch...Angela Faller is at 'Gildersleets', Giggleswick, Nr. Settle which is a Nature Study Centre, anyone passing by is welcome to call for a cup of tea...recent engagements include that of Dave Emmerson to an unknown admirer - a Glasgow lass, I believe...Marriages this year include Marjorie Crook in Welsh Wales, Paddy Sumner to Paddy Killiner, Phil. Calvert, Paddy O'hagan to Elizabeth Ashton.... births are to Tom and Zita Walmesley, a daughter and to Jack and Val. Case, a second daughter...all of which information has reached me fourth and fifth hand, so if I'm wrong please don't shoot the Editor, I'm the only one I've got!

Conclusion

There's little further to mention at the moment...we shall be starting work on the hogg-house soon, volunteers ready, please. We shall need electricians, plumbers, plasterers and all the muscle-power we can get.

Anyhow, that's about it for this issue,

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Cheers
Broddy

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