

November 1969

ACHILLE RATTN DINNER CLUB

Bulletin 24

Dear Member,

Over the weekend 8/9 November, Tyn Twr was informally opened for the club. As this is the news everyone has waited so long to hear.....

TYN TWR

by John Foster

At long last all the major jobs have been completed, and your new hut has now been opened for general use. Inside there remain only 1001 minor jobs to be done, which are not terribly urgent, & can be left for wet weekends. One major job, however, requires special mention -- the woodworm which I had thought long dead. While rewiring in the loft last June, it was apparent that some of the blighters were still active, so I called in a preservation firm for a free estimate. The price was close on £200, and at a subsequent committee meeting it was decided that we could save the greater part of this by doing the job ourselves. This needs to be done early in the new year, before they start flighting and laying their eggs. I am hoping for some volunteers to do this, especially someone with any experience of this work, and that it will not be left to the extremely small band who have borne the brunt uptill now.

Accommodation, The maximum capacity of Tyn Twr at present is 24; A large room with four triple bunks, and two small rooms with two triple bunks; but a comfortable complement would be about half this number. There is only one toilet, no bath or showers, but with only half our property available to us, bed space is of prime importance. When eventually we have the whole house, there will be separate toilets and showers. There are wash basins in two of the bedrooms, and two sinks and drainers downstairs.

A coke boiler provides hot water and waste food disposal. There is an electricity supply (which has considerably lightened the work load, my drill won't work on calor gas), for cooking and lighting, and an immersion heater to be used only if the boiler has gone out.

Location For skilled navigators, the map reference is 625660 O.S. sheet 107. By the other well known reference system, approaching Bethesda from Bangor, the first hostelry is the "King's Arms." Pass this by along with the "Victoria," the "Globe," and some others and the last Pub "The Douglas Arms". From here the A5 is dead straight for 4/10 of a mile, when there is a crossroads. Turn right (west) down the B4366 for 200 yards crossing the Afon Ogwen, and 2 Tyn Twr is the second house on the left. The key is kept by our tenants the Sherlock family, next door at No. 3.

Approach For a few of our members the roads into N. Wales are as familiar as those into the Lake District; But I've heard it said that some of the primitive tribes North of the Ribble (especially on the Moss) have only a vague idea in which direction the ancient principality lies. "Somewhere west of Birmingham" is a common notion.

Liverpool should not be considered unless you will be passing through the tunnel at other than peak times, and in summer weekend traffic can be quite heavy especially Northbound on a summer evening. Probably the best route from the North is down the M6, leaving it either at Vinnick, and going through Warrington to Queensferry, or at the Northwich turnoff and through Chester. A by-pass (M56) of Frodsham and Helsby

Will be open by the end of next year, which will eventually link with the M6 near Lymm. Both routes converge at Ewloe, where the coast and inland routes diverge. The former (A55) is a much better road, but passes through several holiday towns, so that from May to September the inland route is faster. From Ewloe head through Mold, and thence either through Ruthin or Denbeigh to join the A5 at Cerryg--Druidion or Pontrefoelas, this road then being followed to Bethesda. My favorite approach on summer evenings is over Denbigh Moors, with the sun setting behind the Glyders, Tryfan, and the Carneddys, but this road is one of the first to be blocked if there is any snow about.

There is much more I could write about N. Wales, and from time to time I will make suggestions in the bulletin; But the walkers best friend is the Snowdon O.S. map. For climbers new to the area, I have placed some old guide books in the cupboard, donated by Pete Grounds and Bernard Potter. Please replace them after use, and treat them with the respect that their age and fragile state requires. If anyone has any old N. Wales guide books, made redundant by age or retirement, I would be pleased to add them to the library. (This could equally apply to Lakes guides for Bishop's Scale or Buckbarrow).

Many members have asked me "What is it like? Is it like Bishop's Scale or is it like Buckbarrow?" The answer of course is that it isn't like either! It has its own character and appearance, its walls being of local Blue slate, alternate blocks having sawn and riven faces, giving a chequered effect. I expect that some members won't like it (initially), I remember that my first impressions of Buckbarrow were that it was a dark and miserable hole. Yet, I wouldn't swap it for Muncaster Castle now.

But a hut is only a means to an end and I hope you will come to love the Welsh mountains as I do. In fair weather or foul, I think you'll agree that they do not lack character.

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With the opening of a new hut, and with new things to talk about, perhaps the following will stir up some (healthy!) discussion;

The Achille Ratti Climbing (?) Club

It was the day of the Fell Race. I mention this so you'll know what the weather was like. As Mick Pooler was pounding down the road off Pike How with all the fit young men of the AROC sweating behind him, one member was having his own private battle high up in the central mass of Dove Crag. Perhaps he should have been in the race, but having waited two years for the right combination of form and weather to do this route, he wasn't going to waste the opportunity.

I remember coming back to Bishop's Scale in the evening and people asking me where I'd been. "Oh, I've done Extol today" I answered quite proudly. Blank stares and the odd "what's that - couldn't it have waited?" only confirmed what I'd suspected. It didn't matter to me what people thought, my satisfaction was gained and Extol was finally out of my system, but it all went to show. It all went to show that generally speaking the vast majority of AROC members, excluding a very small group, don't really have much idea of the state of modern rock-climbing in the lake district. In the last bulletin Paul Charnock mentioned that it was a rare occurrence for any member of the club to put up a new route. It's not really surprising when one considers that like any other human being trying to do something original, a climber needs all the encouragement he can get and having done it someone (who better than his own club members?) to appreciate it.

Since I'm purposely trying to be controversial I may as well go the whole hog. It was recently suggested by someone (Don't worry mate - you'll remain anonymous!) that a smaller climbing section should be formed within the club as a whole. Can you imagine

the farcical situation - "Oh, I'm a member of the climbing section of a climbing club."

I've just been reading Joe Browns autobiography - I hope we all know of his contribution to climbing. All his early experience was with the Rock and Ice Club - a club that promoted climbing in a most fanatical way and also encouraged a certain amount of healthy competition, in which, no matter what anyone says, lies an essential part of climbing, and is quite inseparable from it. Not for one minute am I suggesting that we should imitate the Rock and Ice (the club later achieved some notoriety) or that we have any Joe Browns in our midst, but if we had, the club doesn't provide the right atmosphere to nurture such a phenomena. What we do have is a small group of young, very competent climbers who, because they are young, have great potential for the future. Such a young lad can see no heritage of exploration and expertise within the club, gets very little encouragement and seems to live in a little dream world of his own.

Take Sherpa, it doesn't matter why he left the club, and that he upset certain members before he did, whilst he was a member he became one of the better climbers in the Lakes and took part in a good number of first ascents, some of considerable difficulty. All the time he was having to climb more and more with people outside the club. The routes he climbed were recorded in the Journals and Bulletins of other clubs, although some of the original descriptions were to be found in the Bishop's Scale log book.

This all leads to my main suggestion. Let's have some sort of climbing and fell-walking report in the bulletins - perhaps a yearly report or even as frequently as the bulletins come out. Let's say that 'X' walked the Scafell, Skiddaw, Hellvelyn circuit in such and such a time. Let's say that 'Y' led his first 'excess', 'Z' made the second ascent of such a route etc.. Let's say it, congratulate them and await future developments with interest. If we have a first ascent to record, let it be published in the bulletin and eventually we may reach the stage of having to publish our own climbing supplements.

The Fell and Rock are self appointed Lords of the guide books - it's not a divine right, but are we equal to the task? Above all, let's become an important influence on Lakeland climbing (we're a big enough club) instead of being regarded as some sort of curiosity. I'm aware that I've been distorting some facts and saying some things I don't really believe but it's all in the good cause of making more graphic the identity I'm trying to promote.

If the club didn't change at all, I'd never leave it, I've got too many friends (at least I had) and what it lacks in some spheres it makes up for in others. It would be difficult to find a more friendly club and the atmosphere of corporate responsibility is something unique.

by C. Mitchell.

The article is two years old, and the next bulletin will show why I was unable to follow up the suggestions in an earlier edition - ed.

WANTED preferably before Christmass, 2 Ice - axes, any age or condition, at a reasonable price. If you have treated yourself to a McInnes, and your old Alpenstock is cluttering the back room, I'll take it off your hands.

Offers etc. to J. T. Foster, 29 Braeside Crescent, Billinge, Nr. Wigan.

Arran for Easter 1970 — or Bust.

By John Foster.

I am hoping that some members will join us this coming Easter. Last year Geof. and Maureen Pitchford had booked their passage, and eventually came to Galloway with us. (See later article "Did you think about Arran for Easter?") Early in October, however, they were blessed with a son, so may be unable to accompany us next year. We will be camping, but I believe that bed and breakfast is available. More details next bulletin.

Anatomy of a Gritstone Problem

I. Dewhurst.

"There are one, two, and three point problems, and this," he said, reaching towards a huge roof affair, "is a three point problem. In other words, it's not quite straightforward and requires a certain amount of fingerstrength. The idea is to layback up this crack with the left hand 'till it peters out, then reach over the.....(uh)..... overhang with the rightfor.....the small pocket. Now make a l - o - n - g reachfor.....this.....(phew) quartzitecrystal. A couple of.....delicate.....toe-...holds.....and ...youcan...justreach.....the.....final.....aah!" (-Thud)

— And he's an expert.....I think I'll stick to the "straightforward" X.S.

The following article was received from Skye, in the middle of August;

Did You Think About Arran for Easter?

by J. Foster.

I did, and more. I borrowed the O.S. maps and guide books from Matt and Jan Bennett and wrote to book our passage over to Brodick. We were all set (we thought) for a few wonderfull days on that wonderfull island; but we hadn't reckoned with the shop stewards of the Clyde branches of the T & GWU. Joyce spotted a small paragraph in Maunday Thursday's paper with the dire news that the crews of the Clyde ferries were going on strike over Easter. A quick 'phone call confirmed this, and that was that.

After the antioipation of a new island and new hills, both the Lakes and Wales seemed too tame, as we can get to them any ordinary weekend. Then I remembered calling, a few years ago, on a past member who at that time was working for the Forestry Commission just North of Newton Stewart. There are some lovely hills there, so to Galloway we decided to go.

There is a fine campsite run by the commission on the South bank of Loch Trool, not just a field with serried ranks of canvas palaces, but a series of clearings in the forest. It is quite a civilised place, the toilet blocks having hot water and coin operated showers, though this is reflected in the price 8/6 per tent. You need half-a-dozen kids and a marquee to get your money's worth! The nearest church is at Newton Stewart, nearly 15 miles to the south, so on Sunday we did a circular tour, contiuing through Stranraer and up the coast to Ballantrae, before returning to Glen Trool. Saturday and Monday were spent traversing Lamachan to the South, and The Merriock to the North of Loch Trool. On the descent from Lamachan we came across an Arctic Hare, which was a strange sight, being between shedding its white winter coat and growing its brown summer one.

The Merrick is 2700 ft. - the highest in Galloway - and we took the "best" approach, a fairly gentle ascent from Loch Trool, by Culsharg and over Benyellery - grass all the way. We then descended the East face, which was much steeper, by a series of rocky ledges and outcrops interspersed with grassy slopes, to Loch Enoch, continuing over the ridge, and down by Lochs "eldrickon and Valley to Loch Trool. This horse-shoe is not as rugged.....

(This has been interrupted by a callout to two Army bods who had collapsed coming round from Coruisk. But after flogging round to Coir' a Ghrunda with the stretchers we found them revived and coming down under their own steam.....but then they lost one of their officers on the way down.....)

...as more renowned scrambles such as the Snowdon Horse-shoe or the round of Coire Lagan, but it is quite interesting and is well worth doing.

One other incident in this glorious long weekend is worthy of note. On the wednesday that we were due home, we were wakened at 7 o'clock by a series of rapid knocking noises, reminiscent of an A.R.P. Wardens gas rattle. In my muddled state it took me ages to realise what it was, but not so Joyce. She was up, dressed, and out of the tent in time to see a green woodpecker on the tree above us - a fantastic din from such a small bird. (The only green wood-peckers I see, are by Bulmers!)

So there it is - or was - Easter '69. I am determined to get North of the border every Easter from now on, and even more determined that next year (God and the T & G.W.U. willing) we will be over the sea to Arran.

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Since coming back from Chamonix, I have often been asked about what routes were done. My rather apologetic "Well..... none really", scarcely sufficed to wipe the laughter from various faces. The following article should help to put the record straight

To The Last Slice.

By D.Grace.

As some of you may have noted from previous bulletins there was to be a club get in Chamonix. Well there was, of sorts. Do you know that French bread is better than your actual Wonderloaf - this is just a crumb from the mound of useless information we acquired in the land of the Big Hill.

It all began (I think!) on the last day of August. On the aforementioned day we set off on a round of the Motorway Cafes to pick up nail biting coffee drinking members of the team. We all arrived at our point of departure without further ado. The boy racer and the chuck wagon sailed for the border on what they thought was a French tug boat whilst the cowhands were to fly in a modern, time saving, giant vacuum cleaner. The next scene is the Hoverport at Calais where the boys with the chuck wagon are on their tenth brew and eating corned dog hash. Boy racer finds a beach ball, Yipee, footy. Gust of wind blows ball away. Back to the brew.

The official excuse for our wait was bad weather mid-channel, but we new better and a word with a porter confirmed our suspicions. Yes the vacuum cleaners were broken, one on either side of the channel. Hmmm.

The cowhands finally arrived at around five on Saturday and we all arrived in Cham. mid-afternoon Sunday, to find the instigator of the whole thing - Le Maitre- had already arrived.

We found the free campsite closed and it was thought that we would have to camp in an official capacity and rise early. There were of course, cries of "to the hills", but those of "I could do with a jar" were a little louder, so we camped and supped, and whilst taking refreshment it was learned that "The British" were camping on the local football pitch - free of course - so at last we found our base camp.

Monday dawned in glorious sunshine 'neath clear blue skies, so the tents were moved to the football pitch and base camp was established for 1969. Over lunch it was decided that we would attempt the Charmoz-Grepon traverse, so we set off mid-afternoon towards Montenvers and the Chalet Austria where we sorted out gear for the climb. The plan was to continue until dark and bivouac near the top of the Rognon on the Nantillons Glacier, but when dark fell we had only just reached the glacier so a bivvi for six was set up under a large boulder on the moraine. Hours were spent melting snow for Creamola Foam. Around midnight all was quiet, in fact some were sleeping, when there we heard a crashing and rumbling. The glacier shook. It couldn't be a storm as the sky was clear and after ten seconds rumbling there was thirty seconds of rustling (of Polythene bivvi bags) after which Geoff said "It was only a falling serac" --Look out for the last slice folks.

After a terrifying night under our now creaking boulder we set off up the glacier towards the col. About 1/3 the way up it was realised that the fresh snow (which even then, at 6a.m., was of a consistency similar to sloppy porridge) would be in no condition for descent after a days "softening" in the sun. The decision was made; return to Chalet Austria and sort out something else to climb.

At the Chalet Austria plans were set down for a six hour walk which was the Midi-Plan traverse. We would Bivvi in the Telepherique station under the Midi, and catch the first Telepherique to the top of the Midi the next morning. This we did, and set off on the traverse in swirling mist and lots of snow. After his first five minutes on crampons the boy racer tripped and fell head first down the top 75 ft. of the Frendo Spur - what a start! After a few hours and one or two minor epics we arrived at the Rognon du Plan, and over a bite to eat it was decided that conditions were so bad that we wouldn't have time to make the summit of the Plan and get down again to the Requin hut. We cut our losses and descended in atrocious snow conditions to the Envers Glacier and on to the Glacier du Geant. The conditions on the steep snow slopes were frightening to most of us and the relief was quite fantastic when we reached the easy angled glacier. All we now had to do was zig-zag down through the crevasses of the Geant Ice-fall and walk to the Requin hut which was by this time in sight. Eight hours had passed to this point and what should have been an easy twenty minutes walk became a four hour epic on what was jokingly called "The Last Slice."

All was going well, crevass jumping was fun - part of the game - until we reached the last teetering serac. As I said we were quite enjoying jumping over these crevasses, but when the lip on the other side was around seventy feet lower, well it just isn't funny - until some guy at the back of the line says it's like standing on the last slice of your wonderloaf. The next two hours saw the hardest ice climbing any of us had ever seen in our lives, followed by more crevass jumping etc. until we were about two hundred yards from the hut. Here hard ice climbing (about 2 hours worth) took us down into a large ice filled crevass which was overhung by another teetering and creaking serac. A bit of scrambling and we were out on the moraine and down to the hut for a welcome brew from Mick and George.

I've gone right off sliced bread.

P.S. Further tales will be related around firesides in the huts and local houses.

Well that was Derek's view of the first week of the so called holiday. After this week in fact, the team practically broke up, with one splinter group going off on a tour of Switzerland and getting as far as the Costa Brava (I know that it's in Spain, but they said that they had the map upside down), the main body of the party going South to Radio Monte Carlo Land (and the stragglers slinking off home).

In fact some climbing was done, the following being completed;

J. Tasker & G. Cross Arete des Papillons T.D. inf.
(W. Ridge of Pte. 3009 on the Aiguille du Peigne.)

M. Day & R. Witham Voie en Z 111 sup.
Traverse of the Cougourde P.D.

Both routes on the Cougourde (obviously!) - Maritime Alps.

TYN TWR (yes again!)

There will be two official working weekends, the 15/16 November and the 29/30 November. The observant may notice that these are on either side of the club's annual dinner, but it is also worth noting that the main task at these two weekends will be the preparation of a car park.

Even if you don't fancy your chances with a wheelbarrow full of soil, don't forget what John said about the 1001 jobs that need doing inside, so don't be afraid to put in an appearance.

Reports from the other Huts.

As this has been a "rush" edition, coming out approximately one month before the date everyone expected, there was not time to collect the Hut Wardens usual cheerfull greeting. This omission should be rectified in the next bulletin.

THE BISHOP'S WALK.

7 th. December.

Last year this went under the guise of a "sponsored" walk, with the specific aim of financing a new kitchen for the Windermere school. This was such a tremendous success, that it was decided to have another walk this year - with the money being split between several worthy causes. One of these (if you haven't guessed by now) is our own chapel in Langdale. In other words the club stands to gain a considerable amount of money by staging this event. We will be responsible for all the organisation and effort at the Lake District end of the walk. This varies from providing Marshals and a marked route, to refreshments and "documentation" at the hut.

Volunteers to carry out the various jobs are required, and anyone willing to help is asked to get in touch with Barry Ayre at;
51, Lythe Fell Ave., Halton-on-Lune, Nr. Lancaster.

Final Words; Competitors and entrants are not required from amongst club members (entrants are being organised by the Bishop); and please bear in mind that a successfull money raising venture of this kind could lead to a considerable cutting down in the number of visiting clubs at Langdale.

We have had a letter from a member in London asking if we could put him in touch with other members living in the area who might be interested in a few meetings or get together. If anyone is interested in this idea they could get in touch with the secretary Tom Brodrick, who can pass the addresses around.

It should be noted for future reference that the management committee have instructed the secretary to charge 10/- renewal fee on all subscriptions that have been unpaid by the 1st. of July.

The next bulletin should appear (touch plastic) in January, and the contents are as yet unknown - as no-one has sent any material for it. However, I'm hoping that it will contain reports on the Orienteering Race, Annual Dinner, and the various Management Committee meetings held recently;

Club Secretary;
Mr. T. P. Brodrick,
22, Fairfield Street,
Accrington.

Sincerely;

Rod.

Editor

Mr. R. Witham,
37, Canada Drive
Rawdon,
Nr. Leeds.

P.S. It is hoped that the official opening of Wales will take place next year. In the meantime, it is hoped that as many members as possible will take advantage of the facilities provided.

P.P.S. A Merry Christmass to all our readers.