

ACHILLE RAFFI CLIMBING CLUB

Bulletin 36

MARCH 1970

Side 1

Dear Member,

This will be a momentous year in the Club's history, with the Welsh Hut having been officially opened on the 14th of this month and the Hogg house extension to Bishop's Scale due to be finished early in the summer. Just as important, however, is the continuing 'health' of the club's membership figures and the increasing use that is being made of the existing facilities. If any further pointers are required, you need only note the 'foreign' content of this edition of the Newsletter.

.....  
A HARD DAY'S NIGHT

"A splendid training climb ..... almost always in perfect condition ..... advisable when the high mountains are snowed up" (Monte Bianco Vol. 1. p.342). With increasing interest we read this description of a route on the south face of Mt. Rouge de Peuterey, a neglected peak on the south side of Mt. Blanc. We were demoralized by fresh snow falls in September and this was like balm to the soul. From the camping site in the Val Veni above Courmayeur, the south face looks impressive, sweeping up from the woods, to merge with the giant S. ridge of the Aiguille Noire above. The face is divided by a spur, with two enormous tiers of overhangs on either side. The Grivel-Ottoz route, first climbed in 1931, went up the front of this spur, avoiding the overhangs, to where it petered out short of the summit. We guessed that it must be all of 2000 ft. 'Guessed' is the right word because the only definite information in the half-page description was that it took 5-6hrs., had a pitch of IV and started at a big cave, 'usually reserved for sheep'. We were surprised that such an attractive line didn't even get a mention in the English 'Selected Climbs', let alone a fuller description.

Deciding that it was worth a try, Brian, Neil and myself set out about 8a.m. to look for the cave. After wasting two precious hours on slabs and gullies, without finding a cave or sheep, we thought of calling it a day. Curiosity led us up a line of grooves splitting easy-angled slabs. "Perhaps it's up there", we thought. We were certainly on the spur, but our inability to find the start kept a nagging doubt in our minds about the proper line. The slab section was about 500 ft. long, followed by a 40ft. pitch of loose rock piled up like broken crockery. If someone had been there before, it must have been long ago because the stuff came away in handfuls. More easier pitches followed, with full run-outs, leading to a steep corner. We bridged up this and traversed out

to the right about 20ft., coming to a grassy platform with a tree on it. This pitch felt like mild V.S.; at last we were coming to grips with things. With the sun shining in a cloudless sky, we were now determined not to waste a perfect day.

Four more pitches followed, up steeper rock, with more interesting climbing mostly in good jamming cracks. We must have been about 300 ft. above the grassy ledge when we were again reminded of the doubtful character of the rock. A block the size of a small table, came bouncing down from nowhere, missing Brian and me, making a direct aim for Neil below us. We were on the same stance and shouted to him. After what seemed a long time, he came into sight, unhurt but shaken, having lost the straps of his sack which had been torn off. After he had replaced these with slings, we carried on much more subdued, trying not to notice that the weather too was taking a turn for the worse. Our only consolation was the fact that about 1000 ft. lay below us, and we were heading for a saddle between the lower set of overhangs. This was so narrow that we would find the correct line passing over it, however off-line we were at the moment.

We decided to quicken things up and move together whenever possible. It was well past mid-day, the sun had disappeared in mist, and a gentle drizzle had started. Above the saddle, a 250ft. rib of IV led to another big ledge. This was so loose and messy that it took a long time. The ledge held all three of us and was topped by an overhang with a crack down its left-hand side. It looked hard, and water was streaming off it. After what must have been an hour of waiting for the downpour to finish we set off, up the crack. In it was a rusty peg, a twisted piece of metal which gave us a tremendous uplift, just when a bivouac for the night now seemed probable. At least we were on the right route. But we had been deceived by the length, were soaked to the skin, and the light was fading. After several more long pitches of III, miserable and slightly gripped, we were forced to quit.

We banged in some pegs into the bed of a shallow gully, and waited in a half-sitting, half-standing position, watching the last rays of light disappear in the west. Beyond the twinkling lights of Courmayeur to the south, lightning was breaking out over the Gran Paradiso. Far below us the headlights of a car flashed occasionally on the bends of the valley road. With no bivvy gear we put on all our overcloths, and spent the rest of the night shivering, sleeping and eating at regular intervals. At least there was no wind and now only the odd shower. We watched the storm over the Gran Paradiso come no nearer, wondering how far it was to the top, and suddenly, after an eternity of waiting, the dawn appeared. It was exactly 6 a.m. After swallowing some fruit and biscuits we started to move, determined to get off this great pile of rubble as quickly as possible. Three more pitches finally took us to the top of the spur, into a complex system of gullies and small



ridges. Thankful that there was no mist, we moved across, coming to a shoulder overlooking the "Fauteuil Des Allemands", where the Noire Hut was beingre-constructed. After more route-finding problems down gullies which ended in space, we stamoped on two abseil pegs, and went off these to a final chimney which brought us down to the screes.

It was here that we met the proverbial 'last straw'. To rebuild thehut, workmen had blasted a big hole in the rock. They were sending down a constant bombardment of stones, as they winched up huge wooden beams from a helicopter-pad. As we approached, there was much gesticulating and shouting of warnings. After a lively and prolonged discussion with the foreman, we were allowed to run past the line of fire at his signal, to the fixed ropes leadingdown to thevalley. Perhaps after all, there were more dangerous places than the s. face of the Monte Rouge, but you still won't catch any of us going there again.

P. Sidoli, B. Monk, N. McCawley.  
(7-8 Sept., 1969)

.....

#### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The A.G.M. will be held on Saturday, 9th May 1969 at St. Ignatius' Hall, Preston, at 2.30p.m. and all members are asked to attend. Club officials retiringthis year are:

Tom Brodrick - Secretary  
John Gilmour - Main Committee

TomBrodrick is standingdown, but John Gilmour is willing to allow his name to go forward for re-election. The last bulletin mentioned the importance ofthe Secretary's position in the club, but it cannot be emphasised too much that any post on the Management Committee involves a great deal ofwork for the club.

Nominationsfor the above two positions should be in the hands of the Secretary; Tom Brodrick, 22 Fairfield St., Accrington. Not less than 14 days before the date of the meeting. Meetings of the Management Committee are held in Garstang eachmonth, and it would help if nominees lived within reasonable driving distance of this.

.....

#### MOROCCO BOUND

(or an account of the A.R.C.C. Moroccan Expedition - Part II)

The last bulletin left our two heroes at Imitil - 10 miles from Toubkal's summit - so as the plot thickens, read on .....

At the timeof our arrival at Asui, a religious festival was taking place at a village further up the valley Around (funnily enough Wilf, it was just 'around' the corner) and so the first three miles were spent 'bonjour-ing' the local people. Soon,

however, we were beyond the populated areas of the valley and heading into darkest Atlas. With the large packs and the heat of the day it took us until just before night fall to reach the Nelter hut, which is incidentally, nowhere near where the map says it is! It is, however, another fine stone building complete with dung (and brushwood!!) and another real toilet. We waited for two days to become acclimatised and set off to climb Toubkal at first light on the third. The ascent commences immediately outside the hut with a scramble up a gigantic scree slope to the mouth of a col. All the time whilst climbing could be heard the crash of falling rocks - the decay in this area is quite fantastic, due of course to the extremes of temperature. Once in the col, a sometime steep and boulder strewn ascent is made in the direction of Toubkal's summit which could now be clearly seen, until a path forks right to a higher col at the entrance to an amphitheatre. This path is followed upwards until a col is reached, and once the ridge is rounded, a magnificent view is revealed. Directly in front lies a 3000 ft. gorge between you and the south east ridge of Toubkal, which if it were not in such an advanced state of decay would provide some excellent rock routes. To the left high above stands the trig point of Toubkal's summit, with just a narrow precipitous rock ridge to be conquered before the summit can be reached. Once over this final obstacle, 200 ft. of scree covered slope brought us to the top. The view from the summit was remarkable, with a blanket of cloud to the North, far below us, and stretching as far as the eye could see; whilst to the south lay the Sahara Desert shimmering in the heat of the day. As it says on those famous packets "We sat at the top and looked at the country far below us..... we nibbled Kendal Mint Cake". The bottle of rum was also ceremoniously broken open, and immediately consumed by members of the party.

It was now getting quite late, so we re-packed our equipment and began the long descent to the hut and the curry meal we were eagerly looking forward to, dung and brushwood permitting. (Actually it was the same curry meal that we had every day for tea, for 12 ruddy days!) The descent is quite jogging as the area is very loose and there is a continual movement wherever you put your feet, but with a little time and patience we arrived back at the abode intact, and cooked a well deserved meal.

After another day of festering we decided to climb the main col at the head of the valley (12,000 Ft.) as this is the only point from which the Lac du Ifni, the only lake in the Atlas Mountains, can be seen. A rough path is followed south of the hut, meanders for about three miles to the foot of the col, and then a steeper path for about one mile brought us to the top. Here we stood in the snow and looked across to the desert before climbing left to photograph the Lac du Ifni and South East face of Toubkal. The Lac du Ifni was 5000 ft. below us when we first caught sight of it, and with the sun being at its zenith, we decided it could stay there. Toubkal is sheer on its south east side and the only possible access from the south appeared to be up the main south ridge, but this would require an extra day in order to set up a camp at the base of this ridge. We returned to the hut and



The usual curry, and left for Imitil the next day, stopping the night at the French hut there. From Imitil we went, via the 'taxi' to Asui, and there found ourselves at the youth hostel. Now the I.Y.H.A. gives the Asui youth hostel quite a good "write up", but read on .....

There were forty beds with eight mattresses between them, but 6 of these disappeared as the evening fell. (There is quite good trade in overnight mattress hire). The handbook also said it had cooking facilities, and these consisted of a metal grill placed over a stack of bricks. ("Please bring your own firewood") The table was a door on trestles and the toilets were across a paddy field; well, it was either that or a river finding a new course.

The night went very quickly, and so would a certain cock if we had got our hands on it. Nevertheless, we were at the bus stop bright and early for the local bus to Marakesch, and we were still at the bus stop bright and late. Then a friendly Arab explained that although the bus came to Asui "it not go back". This had us rather puzzled until we found that the bus route described a circle and rejoined the road about one and a quarter miles further down. One and a quarter miles later we met a group of some thirty or more Arabs squatting by the roadside, and about twenty or more running down the road chasing a bus which had refused to stop. As they disappeared around a corner, still waving their arms, and now about half a mile away, we thumbed a passing car, more a gesture than anything, and to our amazement, it stopped. In we clambered and were soon on our way to Marakesch, passing en route a number of Arabs who seemed rather fatigued.

The return trip to Tangiers was as uneventful as travel in Morocco could be, and we arrived at 5.0 a.m. on a cold Tuesday morning. By 6.0 a.m. we had been approached by over a dozen people selling anything from cream cakes to boat tickets, so decided to walk round to the wharf and await the departure of the boat to Gibraltar. (Well, I mean, we are British after all.) How pleasant to stand on an English rolling deck and watch Tangiers fade into the background a sight marred only by the fact that we had to return next day to catch the ferry back to Spain.

Gibraltar was an oasis; with genuine British 'bobbies' who couldn't be helpful enough; streets with English names and English ale and fish and chips. After a delicious pint of Red Barrel and a bag of fish and chips we set off to climb to the top of the rock. It is impossible to reach the very top as this houses all sorts of cunning mechanical devices placed there by the army and navy. However, we climbed as high as we were allowed, and from there could see Spain, Africa and Gibraltar town, bursting with a strange amount of traffic considering entry into Spain is prohibited.

The night was spent accepting the hospitality of a Gibraltar park and all too soon the next day we were making our way back to the harbour for the boat to Tangiers and then to Spain. The

usual trouble ensued in Tangiers and whilst it is illegal to import or export Dirhams, nobody will change them into Spanish currency, or indeed any other currency. Even the Spanish ferry boats will not accept them, which makes one wonder about the stability of Morocco! Once back in Spain, it was only a matter of an hour before we were again re-united with the "command module" and began our drive, as the sun set, to the mountains of eastern Europe.

F.M. HOPLEY, P.T. CHARNOCK

The following is an edited version of the letter received from Peter O'Neil.

For the few people in the club who once knew me, I disappeared to Paris for six months last year. I spent a superb week in Grenoble below the site of the Winter Olympics - this was in July and the heat and flies were unavoidable, though I escaped once when I popped over to Italy for lunch. I swam in a semi-dirty lake with half the population of Turin round its shores in their woolen singlets and knee-length socks, and then made my way back via Mt. Cenis.

Well, I left the sun of France at the beginning of July, and after muckin' about in Liverpool, set off to the Lakes. The weather dogged our tracks everywhere we went, but from Buckbarrow we managed a few walks and had a magnificent tea at the farmhouse at the head of Mitredale - I thought lakeland teas only existed in books nowadays!

From the Lakes to Scotland - and rain, so back to Liverpool, then on to London and the Tilbury Docks to set off for the University of Moscow.

Of course, I have all my gear - but Moscow area is pretty flat and you have to plan a climbing expedition well in advance. Money is no problem because transport by road, air and train is incredibly cheap. The climbing club here has some Mountain Camps in the Caucasus, where you get back into trim, do some training with instructors and then get going.

We are all looking forward to the possibility of non-stop skiing and skating during the four months of winter. You can spend a pleasant morning skiing around the University in a number of "Semi Parks". The football pitches are flooded over for ice-skating and so is the Lenin Football Stadium: Ten Kilometres of frozen alleyways around the Terraces!!

Anyway, the opportunities are there, but I shall have to see about doing my work too. If anyone fancies dropping a line, it will be more than welcome and they will, I assure them, get a reply!

All the best,

Pete O'Neill.

Subs are due on 1st April this year (just like last year) and should be paid to the 'Subscriptions Secretary',  
Nev Haigh, at,  
752 Devonshire Road,  
BLACKPOOL, Lancs.

The amount, of course, is 30/-, and cheques and Postal Orders should be made payable to Achille Ratti Climbing Club Main A/C. To ease the book-keeping burden, it would help if subscriptions were paid at the A.G.M., but for those who must write ..... please include an S.A.E. with your letter!

It is perhaps worth repeating at this stage that Neville deals only with membership renewals, and that Graduate Members applying for full membership and anyone requiring application forms for membership, should write to the Club Secretary, Tom Brodrick in the usual way,

### WALES

Approximately 40 club members discovered that the sun does shine in Wales (occasionally) when they attended the official opening of Tyn Twr, on the 14th of this month. It was, in fact, a perfect day for the ceremony, with clear blue skies, and hot sun - and the snow-covered Carneddls in the background.

It was not a long ceremony, and Bill Carter in opening the proceedings, commented on the work that had gone into the hut, and its marvellous position - close to the hills and the sea

Bishop Petit blessed the Hut and then Bishop Pearson officially opened the hut by unclipping the ceremonial karabiner from the loop of Perlon that was across the door. Bishop Pearson told us that we were doubly fortunate in having Bishop Petit present, as he was an official patron of the Club. Bishop Petit, in his last words, remarked on this, saying that he could remember recommending the purchase of property in Wales - in preference to the Lake District - when the Blackpool Catholic Boys Association was changing to the A.R.C.C. However, he had one important message to put across - "Have the greatest respect for Snowdon". The local hospital contained a number of people who had been injured whilst using the tourist paths.

The official party was shown round the hut by John Foster, and then tea and biscuits were served to all present.

As final comment (my privilege as Editor) I can only echo Bill Carter in hoping that the hut will be well used by members and become a real asset to us.



The following was sent complete with its own introduction.....  
so after apologising once again to Fred (in writing this time!) for  
scratching his beautiful new shiny crash helmet;

Flipping through an old climbing magazine the other day, I  
came across an article by an old club member, one Dicky Seed (ex-  
climber). Inspired by his narrative and lyrical efforts, I decided  
to record my first impressions . . . of continental  
climbing (also, as it happens, in the Sellaioch). Hence the following:-

DAWDLES DELLE DOLOMITI  
or  
CLIMBING ON SPAGHETTI

June 1966, after 3½ day's hard travelling, Rod and I at last  
started to pitch camp beneath awe inspiring white Dolomite spires,  
rising thousands of vertical feet from green Alpine slopes. More  
prosaically, we were about 40 yds. from the only bar for several miles  
(sorry, kilometres). No sooner had we got ourselves sorted out than  
Mick and Paddy rolled up in the mini-van, so we set off to  
celebrate with a "quarto-litre di vino rosso" apiece, and to discuss  
forthcoming epics. Mick had already been here once (with the afore-  
mentioned D.W.S.), so we pored over the guide book, gleaning information  
on the various routes therein. Having sorted out the easy from the  
hard, the good from the bad and the firm from the loose, we arranged  
our plans for the next couple of days. Next morning at about  
9 o'clock (no 3 o'clock Alpine starts here folks), Mick led us off on  
a gentle 20 minute stroll to the Sella Towers. Here, someone thrust  
a brand new rope into my hands which in my bemused state I automatically  
tied to my waist at the same time clamping a brand new (but much  
scarred by falling peg-hammers) helmet onto my head. I was then  
pointed at the nearest Dolomite and told "Go". I went.

But it was beautiful - good sharp holds, good clean jams (none  
of your flesh tearing gritstone) good firm rock, good peg belays,  
and a lovely dry sunny day. The only worrying thing was the rapid  
approach of a dark looking, overhanging cleft, about 30 ft. high.  
Once ensconced underneath this thing, I was even more worried, until  
to my amazement, two Frenchies came down (yes, down) this thing, en  
route for the bar (alcoholics, these Fogs). Seeing that they  
clipped into three hither to concealed pegs, all was revealed. This  
in fact, was to set a pattern for the rest of the holiday - I just  
couldn't see those white Cassin pitons even should they be right  
under my nose.

So the holiday progressed, good climbing and good weather; a  
brief trip to the Vajolet Towers, where it was very cold, so we  
returned to Sella; the odd excursion to civilisation to do some  
shopping; spaghetti and vino each night in the bar. Finally,  
towards the end of three weeks, Rod and I decided to attempt the face  
route on the third Sella Tower - "3000ft., grade V, the hardest thing  
on the towers," - thus Pete Crew in the English Guide. At first  
it was easy. Straight up to a big black band of overhangs which were  
turned by a surprisingly easy slab (IV, sup?) on the right. Then  
on to one of the crux pitches - a long, delicate slab completely  
unprotected, getting progressively harder and more delicate the



further you got - a great pitch, the best we did. On again to the big broad ledge that divides the face (and provides an escape route if necessary). After casting about this ledge for some time, we eventually found the weakness in the bulging wall above, vertical to over-hanging crack, with two pegs in it high up and a three foot roof a little higher. My mind raced back to the mixed English-German-Italian conversation in the bar the previous evening, which had elicited the fact that the second crux pitch had three pitons, two below and one above the "strapiombo" (so that's what he meant). Off we went again. Protection conscious as ever, I clipped into all three pegs - by which time I couldn't move. So I unclipped from two and started to pull on the third. This still didn't seem to help, so I let go the pegs and started to climb the rock (after all, that's what we came for), after which it was reasonably straightforward - apart from continuous head-banging against the roof (it always seemed a fine point as to whether helmets are life-savers or just a damned nuisance). The rest of it was easy, just a few hundred feet of scree covered summit. However, just to add a little bit of spice, the mid-afternoon thunderstorm that Mick had been forecasting for the last three weeks decided to put in a belated and unwelcome appearance and we got sodden. Thirty minutes later, a strong sun started to dry us out and another thirty minutes saw us relaxing outside the bar, conducting a post mortem on a thoroughly enjoyable route.

For pure rock climbing, I can recommend the Dolomites and for an introduction you won't beat the area round the Sella pass. Personal experience says the best time to go is June-July. There may be a little late snow on the ground but at least the weather will be good. One word of warning, check up on the route descriptions in the English guide, one or two aren't so hot. But if you can read German you're laughing.

Ian (Fred) Dewhurst.

As a last word, please note that I have moved to another address - all your articles on your Easter activities should be sent to this new address:

Secretary,  
Mr. T. Brodrick,  
22 Fairfield St.,  
ACCRINGTON, Lancs.

EDITOR,  
Mr. R. Witham,  
10 Cavendish Rd.,  
St. Annes on Sea,  
Lancs.

Sincerely, Rod.

P.T.O.

Post Script

The Summer Season is rapidly approaching, and the following addresses should be useful:-

Mr. J. Bulman, New Hotel, Dungeon Ghyll, Langdale,  
Westmorland.

Mrs. Gass, The Ghyll, Nether Wasdale, Cumberland.

Mr. Sherlock, 3 Tyn Twr, Bethesda, Caernarvonshire.

These are, of course, the key holders for Bishop's Cleeve, Buckbarrow and Tyn Twr, respectively. The usual arrangements for weekends cover anyone arriving late on Friday night, but those who are fortunate enough to be able to visit the huts mid-week and expecting to arrive later than about 8 p.m. are asked to write to the key holder so that the key can be left available with a minimum of inconvenience.

STOP PRESS

Harry Wiggans is back from the Antarctic .....looking disgustingly fit and sunburnt.

Vinny Wells has just announced his engagement to Miss Barbara Fox.

The work on the Hogg House is going at a fair pace, and a few more wet weeks should see the structural work completed.

Rod.