

ACHILLE RATTI CLIMBING CLUB

PRESIDENT.....RT.REV.FRANCIS SLATTERY. V.G.,M.A.  
CLUB CHAPLAIN.....REV.FR.FRANCIS HUGHES S.D.B., L.R.A.M.

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GEORGE PARTIDGE  
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VICE CHAIRMAN.....MICHAEL POOLER  
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TREASURER.....MICHAEL LOMAS  
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HUT WARDENS

BECKSTONES.....JOYCE KENT, 4 GODWIN AVENUE, MARTON, BLACKPOOL  
FY8 9LG. 01253 697948  
BISHOP'S SCALE.....ALAN KENNY, 81 STANHOPE AVENUE, TORRISHOLME,  
MORECAMBE. LA3 3AL 01524 414615  
DUNMAIL.....DOT WOOD, 5 MILL ROW, ELTERWATER, GT. LANGDALE,  
AMBLESIDE LA22 9HR. 015394 37105  
TYN TWR.....ANNE WALLACE, 22 CECIL STREET, SUTTON, ST.HELEN'S  
WA9 3LB. 01744 811864

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## INTRODUCTION

A few weeks ago the ARCC was given a set of Scottish Mountaineering Club Journals for the new library, dating from 1899 to 1949. The SMC then produced two journals a year (now I am not sure whether it is still the case) and obviously had a great deal of support from the members. In contrast, we re-started producing our own journal in 1988 so this years effort is only the eighth consecutive issue. Nevertheless, in this short period of time over sixty members have provided articles and some very interesting reading.

This years issue is longer than previous journals and has involved much more planning and setting out, (plus the loss of nearly eighteen thousand words by pressing the wrong key and having to start again), hence the delay in printing. However, my sincere thanks to all those members who took the trouble to put pen to paper for the benefit of others.

There is the usual variety of subjects covered and I am happy to see that many of the Club meets are reported. Hopefully my appeal on page 67 for the return of Club material will be taken seriously by those members to whom it applies.

Ad Altiora

Derek Price.



Whalewatch - Kaikoura -- New Zealand.



MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON SATURDAY 18TH  
NOVEMBER 1995 AT CHAPEL STILE VILLAGE HALL

Approximately 43 members were present at the meeting which was attended by Monsignor Slattery

Apologies were received from Alan Clarke and Dot Wood.

A summary of the minutes of the 1994 Annual General Meeting was presented.

Chairmans Report:

Derek welcomed everyone to the meeting. He would confine his report to the developments in the huts, the journal and the new library.

Quote: "In the huts we have followed our policy of improvement and maintenance and will continue along these lines whenever and wherever necessary. Dunmail is still being refurbished and a new brochure will hopefully be produced in the New Year with the intention of attracting more school parties. The family quarters at Bishop's Scale have been updated this year and heating is being installed. Anne Wallace continues to improve the facilities at Tyn Twr and our rented property, Beckstones, is becoming more and more popular thanks to the efforts of the hut warden, Joyce Kent, and her committee.

The journal appears to be accepted as a regular annual magazine, the 1995 edition being the eighth consecutive issue. We still need the support of members in the way of articles and it saddens me when I hear of some of the marvellous activities of our members that go unrecorded.

The Club library is now installed in the Lancaster Diocese Talbot Library in Preston, (Preston was Bishop Pearson's birthplace), and notices to this effect are displayed in the huts and will also go in the journal. May I remind members who are holding log books, letters, notices or any document belonging to the Club, that they must return them to me as soon as possible. They are all part of the history of the club and should be there for all to see.

My thanks to those who have already donated books and to others who have promised to donate in the future. Some of the books we have are very old and in a delicate condition and should only be used for reference. These books will have a small red sticker on the cover. Copies of the Club journal will also go into the library, so now that individual activities may be read by future generations, perhaps it will encourage you to report your outings in the hut log books more often and in more detail.

In June this year the M/C sent out a questionnaire to all members. It was designed to assist the committee in planning for the future and was aimed at involving members in the development of the Club. 106 members replied and as 88 of these were regular

hut attenders it means that 83% of the responses were from active members. Mike Lomas will give you a break down of the replies as best he can.

One area I would like to see improved in the Club is that graduate members, especially teenagers, are welcomed in a friendly manner when they use the huts. Show them where to sign in, where to sleep and how the hut operates and they should be especially reminded that everyone is expected to do a cleaning job before they leave.

May I give a special thanks to those people who organised the meets, especially the childrens' meets, to those who have assisted at the Old Counties Tops race, the CAFOD race and the Langdale Horseshoe races and the Bishop's Sponsored Walk, it all means that valuable time is given, but it is fully appreciated by those concerned.

1996 Meets. Will anyone planning a Meet next year please give the details to Alan Kenny so that it can be included in the meets card. This information should be given to Alan before the end of November and articles to me for the journal by december 22nd. Please type your articles if possible and don't forget the photos.

Finally my thanks to the Management Committee for all the work they have put in during the year and for their support and enthusiasm for the Club. It is a thankless task but one that is done well and with responsibility.

Secretary's Report:

John Meredith remarked that whilst the club's rules provided for a report for the year to be presented by the secretary, the Chairman's report had in recent years effectively fulfilled that function. He set out instead to outline some of the items which had come before the Management Committee during the past year.

He confirmed that constructive negotiations with the National Trust relating to the club's possible long term occupation of Beckstones were still ongoing. Following the expression of concern by the committee about:

- a) the extent of, on the one hand, the club's and on the other hand, the National Trust's commitment on repairs;
- b) the definition of the Trust's insistence that there should be no commercial use (but that future re-negotiation of the rent should be on an open market basis);
- c) the level of insurance premiums and rates and
- d) the question of the club's long term security (which the Trust proposed to excluded), he confirmed that he had written to the National Trust and their response upon these and other areas was awaited.

He confirmed that because of the increasing interest in



cycling, in particular mountain biking, amongst members of the club, it had been decided to lay a foundation for a future bike on the site of the old incinerator at the rear at the rear of Bishop's Scale; the Management Committee was concerned that bikes should be kept out of the Club's huts.

Following a report which was critical of the purity of the water supply at Dunmail, it had been decided to install a means of subjecting the water supply there to treatment by ultra violet light to purify it; the quality of the water supply at Beckstones was one of the concerns raised in correspondence with the National Trust.

He reported that although the possibility of a family quarters committee had been looked at, it was felt that a further committee was unnecessary and decided instead to appoint a family quarters representative to act as a link between the committee and those using the family quarters; Robert Green had agreed to act as family quarters representative.

Arising after last years AGM he confirmed that the content and format of the questionnaire on a Scottish hut (to buy or not to buy?), the future of Dunmail etc., had demanded a certain amount of attention but since the questionnaire or, more importantly, the members' response to it, would be the subject of a report by Mike Lomas, no further explanation at this stage was called for.

He confirmed that the committee had at times received requests or financial contributions from outside agencies for individuals and that, whilst the committee attached priority to securing the club's own financial security, they did not wish to be too insular and had agreed to make financial donations when the causes seemed worthy. For this reason donations of £100.00 each had been made to the John Muir Trust, a charity devoted to protecting wilderness areas of Scotland, and to the National Trust's Breast Route appeal (to fund the reconstruction of the path from Sty Head to the summit of Great Gable).

Concern had arisen at Bishop's Scale about the perennial problem of maintaining cleanliness and trying to encourage everyone to "do their bit" rather than adopting, as a minority will almost inevitably do, the attitude that the job of cleaning and maintaining the hut is always someone else's responsibility. To this end Derek had introduced a list of the main jobs which require regular attention, upon which members are invited to endorse that they have carried out particular tasks.

Arising out of the concerns expressed by Derek Price in his report at the last year's AGM, there had been some discussion of the desirability of having more formal safety guidelines for the club's activities, particularly in respect of junior meets. There was a divergence of views amongst the members of the committee upon the extent to which the club's activities should be made to comply with formal guidelines with concerns about the need for safety being weighed in the balance with concerns about stifling spontaneity; hoping that in respect of organised events the experience of the club's members would lead to common sense prevailing.

There had been some criticism during the course of the year of those dog owners who, rather than keeping their dogs under control on club land and cleaning up after them, allowed them to roam free; in particular it had been felt there was a need to reinforce the firm rule that dogs are banned from the huts themselves. Failure to observe these rules was a cause of resentment not only to those who do not own and do not like dogs but also dog owners who play by the rules but then see others doing as they please.

The committee had been asked to consider a plaque in commemoration of a deceased member being placed in the club's chapel. It had been felt that if any further plaque or plaques were placed in the chapel, there would be a risk of destroying its simplicity, a feature which many members regarded as its strength. As a consequence, it had been decided instead to introduce a book of remembrance, to be kept in the chapel so that those wishing to commemorate a deceased member could do so by a photograph and accompanying prayer, favourite reading or obituary.

Finally, arising out of unofficial, and unauthorised dispensations from paying overnight fees being mistakenly "introduced", the committee had to reinforce the rule that only active participation in working weekends and helping (as cooks, bottles washers and marshalls) on the club's official events, namely the Bishop's Walk and the Old Counties Tops, Langdale and CAFOD fell races gave a right to withhold payment of overnight fees: this dispensation does not extend to anyone who happens to be running in, or simply attending upon, such events.

#### Treasurer's Report.

Mike Lomas presented a commentary upon his written treasurer's report. An overall income surplus of £1688.00 for 1994/94, down by £4360.00 on the previous year, was a little disappointing. Tyn Twr and Dunmail both made small surpluses whereas Beckstones and Bishop's Scale each had modest deficits.

He reviewed longer term financial trends over the seven year period since 1988/89. Over that period the club has had an income surplus in five years out of seven with the average yearly surplus being £3490.00. Over the same period the club's capital balance has increased by 121% from a figure of £18,743.00 to the present balance of £41,434.00. Nevertheless, this balance is over £7000.00 less than the all time high of 1990/91.

The decrease in hut fee income by 9.8%, as compared with the previous year gave a little cause for concern, counterbalanced to some extent by the 3.2% increase in subscriptions.

The expenditure of £12,748.00, virtually the same as the previous year, upon repairs to and maintenance of the club's huts demonstrated the committee's continued commitment to this key aspect of the club's well being. Mike took the opportunity, upon behalf of the management committee, to thank those members who contributed to repairs and maintenance work either as advisers, tradesmen or at working weekends.



He reported that the annual net costs of the club's special events had increased by approximately 80% when compared with the net costs four years ago, in 1990/91, although the figure stood at only £1375.00.

Mike confirmed his view that the club's expenditure of £1949.00 on subscriptions to the British Mountaineering Club was well worthwhile because of the BMC's importance as a lobbying agent, reflecting their interest of club members and those with similar interests, on issues such as access rights.

He confirmed that he had achieved his aim of reviewing the club's insurance cover, which had increased by approximately 35% since 1990/91. A review of the results on individual huts during the period since 1990/91 confirms that:

- i) Bishop's Scale had made a net surplus over the five year period of only £196.00
- ii) Beckstones had made losses during each year although the trend was one of reducing loss.
- iii) Dunmail had made a profit during each year except 1992/93 when the very heavy capital expenditure had resulted in a deficit of £13806.00.
- iv) Tyn Twr had made a small surplus, namely £685.00 in 1994/95: encouraging against a background of repeated deficits in all previous years.

Welcome increases in the fees raised by each of the huts in 1993/94, when compared with the previous year, had unfortunately not been repeated for any of the huts in 1994/95 with the exception of Beckstones which continued to show a healthy upward trend. The reduction in the hut fees of Dunmail from £9241 in 1993/94 to £6041.00 in 1994/95 (a 34% reduction) gives cause for concern.

The club's auditor Mr. Brian Cheetham was reappointed for a further year.

Mike referred to the possibility of being able to reclaim VAT paid on subscriptions, amounting to a figure in the region of £4000 and confirmed that the claim was being dealt with.

Despite the fact that there had been no increase in annual subscriptions for almost three years, Mike did not propose any increase at this stage. He reviewed the pattern of increases in recent years which had been as follows:

#### Subscriptions

1989 increase from £12 to £20 per annum

1993 increase from £20 to £23 per annum (reflecting the amount of the BMC insurance premium).

#### Hut Fees

1989 increased from 85 pence to £1.50 per night  
1993 (1st June) increased from £1.50 to £2.00 per night  
1994 (1st January) increase from £2.00 to £2.50 per night

He rounded off by emphasising that any plans to develop or expand depend upon the bottom line and the bottom line is that such plans will depend upon additional income being generated.

#### Analysis of Replies to the Questionnaire

After completing his treasurer's report Mike Lomas went on to report upon his analysis of the members' replies to the questionnaire which was circulated by the Management Committee to all members, remarking that, whilst there was still work to be done analysing aspects of the one hundred and six questionnaires returned, it was clear from the analysis he had already done that it had been a valuable exercise, producing practical comments and positive suggestions for the future planning of the club's development.

A number of members expressed their appreciation about the very fact that their views were sought at all. On key areas:

- i) there was not a majority in favour of buying a Scottish hut;
- ii) less than one third supported acquiring a hut in place of Beckstones but if we lost Beckstones, then a significant majority would favour acquiring a hut in the Western Lakes;
- iii) one third supported acquiring a hut in some area other than Scotland or the Western Lakes: Yorkshire being the most popular alternative and the Peak District taking second place;
- iv) if we were to acquire premises, over 60% favoured renting.

To finance expansion:

- a) 42% favoured increasing subscriptions, 36% were against increasing subscriptions and 22% gave no response;
- b) 33% favoured increasing hut fees, 46% were against increasing hut fees and 21% gave no response;

one member was prepared to pay £12.00 per night and another suggested increasing guest's fees.

There was no clear majority in favour of raising mortgage finance, selling Dunmail or having a members' fund.

There were very few prepared to volunteer to act as hut wardens; some would be prepared to volunteer to act on a steering committee.

In response to the questions about the number of times members had visited hill area of England and Wales, 53% confirmed that



they had stayed in 9 areas, with the most popular being the Lakes and making use of a wide range of accommodation; in the case of Scotland, 43% had stayed in 22 different areas, again using a wide range of accommodation.

Mike confirmed that he still had some work to do, mainly in reviewing the wide range of comments and reasons supplied, far more difficult to analyse than the questions which simply demanded a yes or no response. He rounded off by commenting that the level of debate shown by, and perhaps to some extent fueled by, the questionnaire, demonstrated some vital signs of life and interest in the club.

The debate continued at the meeting with comments that the questionnaire should not have asked as many questions. Disappointment expressed by John Foster at the lack of interest in a Scottish hut and his dismay at the level of support for a hut in the Yorkshire Dales.

#### Membership Secretary's Report

Nev Haigh reported that the club's membership stood at 672 on 1st October 1995, six less than last years total which had been the highest in the club's history.

Nev reported a steady trickle of junior members applying for full membership. He expressed concern at the fact that only 40% of graduate members apply for full membership and suggested that there was possibly a need to be more welcoming towards new members with greater input by those proposing and seconding graduate members. Echoing this comment, Derek Price commented upon the intolerant attitude of some older members towards younger members, and cited an occasion when some women in their thirties had been "greeted" with a less than friendly response upon their arrival at Bishop's Scale.

Nev commented that the period which non-Catholic applicants wishing to join the club had to wait was a lengthy one and questioned whether the two thirds/ one third majority should again be looked at.

A question about the level of subscriptions for junior members and a discussion of the age below which hut fees were not payable for junior members (it was in fact confirmed that hut fees become payable for children aged 3 and over) was the first illustration at this meeting of a feature which then repeatedly cropped up at the meeting, namely the level of uncertainty about just what are the club's rules.

#### HUT WARDENS' REPORTS

##### Beckstones

Joyce Kent reported the continued increase in hut fee income and use by members. She confirmed that attendance upon family weekends had been low although there had been better attendance on the last weekend in October; whilst they had not proved economical, she would continue with them for another year.

There was then a discussion of whether or not there was a rule that, before attending the hut, other than on family weekends, families had to get the hut wardens permission. Joyce confirmed that she regarded that as the rule; John Meredith confirmed that at no management committee since we acquired Beckstones, had the management committee ever made such a rule or discussed it. George Partridge commented that he believed that there was a general rule that, except when using the family quarters at Bishop's Scale, families had to get the hut wardens' permission. John Foster confirmed that, during the period whilst he had been warden of Tyn Twr, there had never been such a rule. The club's rule book does specifically state that in relation to Buckbarrow the hut warden's permission is needed for use of Buckbarrow by junior members. The feeling of the meeting was that the management committee needed to make the position clear.

Joyce went on to confirm that the long walk had been a great success although for some, too long. The barbecue and biking weekend and the joint VE day party with the National Trust had likewise been successful. She expressed particular thanks to Roy Buffey for redesigning the fireplace and to Terry Kitching for his help and support generally. Leo Pollard expressed his thanks for the improvements in conditions at Beckstones.

##### Bishop's Scale

Alan Kenny explained that the apparent loss referred to in the treasurer's report was explained by his delay in collecting and accounting for the September receipts.

He reported on the improvements to the family quarters kitchen and confirmed that heating was in the pipeline.

Derek Price explained the background to his introduction of the cleaning sheets referred to in the secretary's report, namely his own experience of witnessing the mess sometimes left at the end of weekends and that the members who are the last to leave are the ones left with all the cleaning.

##### Dunmail

In the absence of Dot Wood there was no report.

##### Tyn Twr

Anne Wallace reported that the amount of hut income derived from members, as compared with visiting groups, had increased. She reported that some electrical work had been carried out and that the faulty cooker next to the sink had been replaced.

Although there had been a burglary, the nature of many of the items taken suggested a burglar of below average intelligence, possibly chimpanzee level!

She reported that since the death of Francon Hughes, Keith and Barbara Morgan now keep the key, which is now stored in their birdbox. They live at No. 6 Tyn Twr (across the bridge).



The shed has now been converted to a store for cycles and canoes and the old furniture from the lounge were burned on the bonfire and have now been replaced by better quality second hand furniture.

The wheely bin now provided by Arfon Council should be kept outside the gates, since the collectors will not come on our property.

Anne thanked those who attended and worked so hard during the November working weekend.

#### Election of Officers

The following were appointed to join, or continue upon, the management committee.:

Treasurer - Mike Lomas

Membership Secretary - Nev Haigh

Ordinary Members - Faz Faraday and Tony McHale.

#### Rule Change

Rule 5.4 concerning junior members: the management committee proposed that the existing rule 'that junior membership would not normally be granted to children of members who have not been full members for at least three years' should be changed, by the substitution of the period of 18 months for the period of three years. The vote in favour of the change of rule was almost unanimous.

Margaret Price mentioned the problem that, as a result of junior girls using the bottom bunks in the women's dorm, elderly members such as her sometimes had to use upper bunks; she suggested that the management committee should give consideration to the problem which this posed.

#### Any Other Business

Jim Cooper suggested that if Dunmail is to be retained, then the management committee should produce a strategy for the better use of the hut, to deal with:

i) wardening and management

ii) improvements

iii) how to make the best use of the hut including consideration of the hut's purpose, namely whether it is to generate income or is to be retained as a service to schools and children's groups.

Derek Price commented that a new brochure was being prepared to go to schools, with primary schools being targeted first. Jim Cooper felt that there was a lack of liaison amongst the people involved with the hut. Terry Kitchen commented that there had been a recent attempt to break into the generator house, loss of

the generator would be a serious blow and attention should be given to better security.

Peter Henry commented that it was the first AGM he had attended for 20 years; that he felt that the meeting's atmosphere had been more light hearted than he had once been used to; that it was still a thriving club, still concerned about many of the same issues and questioning its future direction. John Foster suggested the contrary and felt that the club was not going forward.

Derek Price expressed special thanks to Nick Smith, in his absence, for his efforts in reviving the club's climbing meets and finally reminded those present that Father Hughes had turned 80 in September and that a card for presentation to him at the annual dinner was available for signature.

Dave Hugill proposed a vote of thanks to the management committee



Derek Price.

In January, February and March of this year my brother Cliff and ARCC member Allan Brighton went on a trekking holiday to New Zealand. We had spent some time in Thailand (Bangkok) and Australia (Cairns and the Great Barrier Reef, Sydney and Melbourne) before flying into Christchurch on the South Island of New Zealand. Here we followed the footsteps of former Chairman, George Partridge, (Walking Downunder - 1993 journal) and walked the Routeburn and Greenstone tracks from Glenorchie on Lake Wakatipu. We also completed the Rees and Dart Tracks in Mount Aspiring National Park, travelling the last 25 miles down the Dart river in a jet boat - an experience not to be forgotten.

We had then driven up the west coast to the Franz Joseph and Fox glaciers which make their way down to the sea from the Mount Cook massiff, and admired the breathtaking scenery.

A journey through the Buller Gorge and Lewis Pass took us to the incredible landscape of the east coast, ridge crested hills filling the floors of deep valleys, all very arid but spectacular to view. Here we spent a day at Hammer Springs, hot springs with five pools varying in temperature from 35 C to 40 C. One pool actually flowed into a man-made stream where we could soak in the hot moving current. It is very popular in winter when the ground is covered with snow, as Hammer is a skiing resort and apparently people ski the hills then soak in the pools - probably with a G and T in the hand. (Yes, there is a bar there!).

We then moved up the coast to Kaikoura for the Whale Watch. Anyone visiting New Zealand must experience this magnificent sight. Whale Watch is a Maori based organisation and you can view the whales by boat or by air. We opted for the boat and had close up views of four sperm whales, firstly surfacing to take in oxygen and then the spectacular dive which displays the huge tail as it disappears into the depths. We also saw hundreds of brown dolphins and seals and actually walked amongst a colony of sea lions on the shore. I had read before our visit that Whale Watch had been named the most interesting and spectacular tour attraction in the world - a claim that we would certainly endorse.

From Kaikoura we drove to the beautiful town of Picton and boarded the ferry to Wellington, North Island. Sailing down the channel between the islands to the Cook Strait, is in itself an experience. I can't ever recall seeing scenery more attractive than that provided by the journey to the open sea.

We spent a couple of days in Wellington, the capital of NZ, whilst we took-in the local scenery and also hired another car. Our next stop was to be Stratford on the west coast, which would be our base for the ascent of Mount Taranaki, 3309ft. We had also planned for the Tongariro Crossing from Turangi, a track which bisects the Red Crater and Mount Tongariro.



As you can see from the photograph, Mount Taranaki or Mt. Egmont, (its English name), is a very impressive sight, and, like the Matterhorn in Switzerland, once seen must be climbed.

We started the climb at 8.00am. The first two miles traversing round and gradually up to the North Ridge were horrendous, with wood spacers to prevent erosion every three or four feet. The rain and thousands of feet had worn away the ground below the wooden spacers, so that steps varied between nine to eighteen inches and made walking very difficult. (They were even more painful to descend). From the North Ridge the track wandered through breaks in the lava fields until we came to the steep ground. If we thought that the traverse was bad, the first part of the North Ridge was something else. Probably about fifteen hundred feet of fine gravel scree, extremely steep, (it amazed me how it stayed on the mountain at that angle), fortunately followed by sound lava for another fifteen hundred feet or so, though again very steep, and this brought us onto the lower rim of the crater and into snow.

I was carrying my camcord camera over my shoulder, knowing that if I put it into my sac, the odds were that I would want to use it to take a shot of the scenery. So this meant that I lost the use of one arm having to hold the camera case round my back to prevent it swinging into the rock. So crossing the snow field and climbing the last couple of hundred feet to the top of the Sharks Tooth and the summit, was a bit of a balancing act. However I could record the splendid panoramic view of Mount Tongariro, our next target.

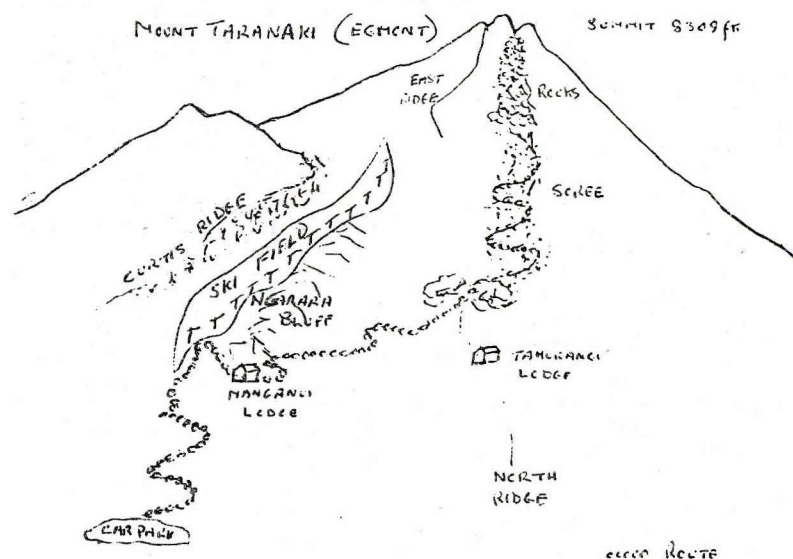
Our stay on the summit was curtailed by the presence of the dreaded sand flies, a small fly slightly larger than a midge but with the bite of a pit-bull terrier. Unlike midges the venom from the bite causes several days of irritation and swelling and Allan in particular suffered badly. This little monster had caused us (and everybody else) a great deal of discomfort on the



tracks in the South Island. There appears to be nothing that will deter them. A vet we met on the Greenstone Track reckoned that the only satisfactory defence against them was a flame thrower!

The descent of Mount Taranaki, as far as the traverse, was almost enjoyable, though several stops to 'degrit' the boots were necessary and the punishing walk from the North Ridge down to the car is best forgotten.

Many mountains we climb give us the pleasure of knowing that we satisfied our endeavour whilst not necessarily enjoying the experience; Taranaki falls into this category and unlike Mount Tongariro, which we climbed a couple of days later, did not fulfill our expectations. Nevertheless it does look, and is, a magnificent sight, standing proudly alone like a huge watch tower overlooking the Tasman Sea and guarding the entrance to the Cook Strait.



Our mountain trekking was now over though a week of walking in the Bay of Islands on the eastern tip of the North Island was enjoyable before our flight out of Auckland to Tahiti.

We had planned a week in Papeete, the capital of Tahiti, but the heat and dirt and a hotel overrun with cockroaches the size of crayfish, quickly moved us on to the next French Polynesian island of Moorea, about thirty miles away. This was an absolute paradise, the type of South Pacific island one sees in films, (right down to the grass skirts.) An idyllic few days rest before USA and a drive up the Big Sur - but that's another story.

## A WINTER MIGRATION

Angela Soper

Thailand, Australia and New Zealand no longer seem far away after the trip I'd always been saving for retirement. In all these places climbing proved a magic passport to friendship and hospitality, and my time away was entirely highs, no lows.

M (from the Pinnacle Club) and I flew first to Thailand for the exotic climbing on the shores of the Andaman sea. We went by bus and boat to Phra Naang, where you step off the beach onto steep limestone and climb wild stalactites until the route ends in jungle, then abseil down to enjoy a swim.

My base in Australia was with climbers who live in Sydney. Through them I discovered the sandstone crags of New South Wales, the finest being Cosmic County in the Blue Mountains. Walking through the bush to the crag we saw a lyre bird with a great jewelled tail. We spent a weekend at Boroomba rocks near Canberra, multi-pitch climbs on steep slabs with long run outs, like Scottish routes. But the scene was totally Australian, kangaroos, gum trees, noisy parrots and camp fires.

We climbed at Point Perpendicular, an impressive sea cliff named by Captain Cook. The climbs are on the highest tier and reached by abseil; some are bolted, others protected with big friends in horizontal breaks, and the rock quality is variable. Australian grades became meaningful; 22 was a challenging lead for me.

Christmas Day saw us in Tasmania, walking to Frenchman's Cap, a quartzite peak with a steep and serious face; the walk alone is a major challenge. It goes through rain forest, crosses several deep rivers (recently bridged), and negotiates miles of swampy plains, gaining and losing a lot of height on the way. I had only fell-running trainers and rock slippers, and got strange looks from bush-walkers, but my shoes were fine and I didn't even pick up any leeches. No climbing came of it though, just several days at Lake Vera hut sheltering from torrential rain.

Tassie was a special place, not to be missed. One evening at dusk we went to a lonely beach to see fairy penguins. It was nearly dark when they came surfing in from the sea, hundreds of small birds heavy with fish, and waddled over the shingle into the bushes, where their young waited in the nests to be fed. In the morning they would go out to fish again....until the nesting season is over.

Back in mainland Victoria, ingenuity and the kindness of local drivers took me to the camp site in the pines at 'the best crag in the world'. Mt. Arapiles isn't that good, though the rock is sound and there are hundreds of climbs. The much photographed route 'Kachoong' is world class, and I did it with encores, but the cutting edge has moved to Taipan Wall on Mount Stapylton in the Grampians, which is awesome. Other British climbers were in the area and the locals gave us a wonderful time.



My last six weeks were in New Zealand, mostly on the South Island. Christchurch has a climbing wall, where people recognised me, and I was quickly fixed up with climbing partners. Some were in training for the coast to coast race which starts on the west coast and finishes on the beach of Christchurch, after several stages of running, cycling and kyaking.

Jay was an American climber hoping to do hard ice climbs, but it was not freezing on the summit of Mt. Cook at 3754m. So he and I teamed up with two kiwis who knew the Darran Mountains of fjordland, in the extreme south. These are rocky and very rugged, like a version of the Cuillin with tougher vegetation, and my trainers could cope with the walk in. Two cols and several hours later we were in a comfortable bivouac under a boulder, surrounded by peaks, crags and waterfalls. Next day in glorious weather we climbed Sabre Peak by a direct line up its north west buttress, sum ten pitches with a crux of 19, and lingered on the top, picking out all the peaks of fjordland and Mount Aspiring further away. Sabre has no easy way up (or down!) and was first climbed only in the 50s. Back at the bivvy our food and sleeping bags had been ravaged by keas, fierce wild parrots but a protected species. We threw stones at them!

Later on Jay needed a partner for Mt. Cook, which is too dangerous to solo. Nor can it be done in trainers, but the wife of one of the rangers cheerfully lent me her boots and gear, so a dream opportunity arose. Nowadays it is normal to fly up to the snow plateau under the east face of Mt. Cook, using the skiplanes as one takes a telepherique in the Alps. The light aircraft at Mt. Cook airfield do a thriving trade in scenic flights for Japanese tourists and a more dangerous one in landing climbers on the plateau. We shared with four other Americans and it was worth every penny.

Plateau hut was heaving with people of many nationalities, several of whom had topped out on Everest. A guide told of an elderly Benedictine monk who said Mass on the summit of Mt. Cook. We intended to climb Zurbriggen's route, which follows the right edge of the east face until it joins the normal route at the summit rocks, some 5000ft of ascent overall. At midnight there was an exodus, everyone roped up and wearing crampons for the heavily crevassed plateau. In the dark Jay and I were the first to find a safe approach to Zurbriggen's, and soon were climbing over fallen seracs. Only one team followed us; the rest took the normal route up the Linda glacier. Jay had Black Diamond axes, and soon he insisted on exchanging one for my old fashioned borrowed axe, for safety as we moved together up the 50 degree snow, belaying only across the occasional tricky section. Our route choice in the dark was good, and the snow reasonable, so we made steady progress as day dawned. Several rope lengths up the summit rocks added variety, and now there were people from the ordinary route, some already going down. Hot and thirsty we pushed on to the summit, or at least the highest safe point rather than the tottering seracs that cap the unstable east face.

We looked down on Mt. Tasman and all the other peaks and glaciers. The west coast spread out below, with big rivers emerging from the rain forest into the ocean; it was very

exciting. Then followed the serious descent, tedious plodding through the deep snow of the Linda glacier. It seemed wise to keep crampons on in case either of us fell through. The path around the lower crevasses was so contorted that I wondered how anyone would ever find it after fresh snow or in poor visibility. Still roped together after 17 hours we regained the hut for celebrations, in hope that the planes could still land next day on even softer snow. They could, though only to carry four people at a time. So I started my journey home.

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#### PENNY ON SHEPHERD'S CRAG

Every climb has its moment  
It could have been that 'step across'  
On 'Little Chamonix' - tries - this way, that way  
every other way.  
(Pause for thought)  
Tried this way again, with conviction born of  
desperation  
And yielding instantly.

Or it could have been the breathtaking final push  
In which the remaining rope just made it round the  
tree.  
And the Derwent shore below me  
eccentrically fringed with silouetted cows.

But in the end - having soberly anchored there  
And taken in  
And taken in  
It was the reward of that eventual pair of hands  
so perfectly crowned  
by Penny's triumphant grin.

Bryony White



John Braybrook.

After all the wet weather of the previous days we were blessed with a clear and dry day for the 1995 New Year Langdale Race. Bishop Pearson, I am sure, looked down upon us with a smile as he does in the Bishop's Scale lounge.

Julie, Patricia and Mike started off five minutes ahead of the main field. Sheila Anderton did not attend this year and last year she asked for an handicap allowance. We tried our best Sheila!

The race started at the Dungeon Ghyll Hotel at midday and was up Side Pike and back. There were thirteen competitors.

The Valley bottom was icy though the runners reported that the sun had thawed out the upper reaches.

There was no fancy dress which is a regular feature. Is this a sign of the times and that feel good factor? Someone suggested we were becoming a bunch of miseries.

Thanks to the runners, marshalls and organisers for providing us intoxicated spectators with our annual New Year sport.

The N.D.G. New Year eve celebrations I did not attend. I was going down at 11 pm but several people returned reporting how crowded the bar was and that there was no room to dance. Last year I enjoyed the bash.

On New Years day Dave Hugill and Dot Wood showed mountain slides to packed houses.

The next day I looked through the pile of photographs in the lounge showing the juniors in Snowdonia in the summer. The sun was shining on the party which was climbing Tryfan with ropes. Tony and Pete McHale appeared to be the principal guides. Lake Ogwen sparkled in the background with the twisting A5 hugging the water edge.

These snaps brought joy to my inner eyes as I wandered lonely as a cloud that floats on high over vales and hills. When all at once I saw a crowd a host of golden daffodils.

That day I had visited Grasmere Church and once again I saw the cross for Private Peascod inscribed with 'Killed 1916 age 17 years'. I remembered those words 'Lest we forget' and the phrase 'the war to end all wars'.

Reports from Peter Dowker, Mike McGovern, Gordon Whitehead and Dot Wood.

Peter Dowker

Monday 20th February dawned dull and wet, but improved sufficiently to entice Maurice Heneghan, Mike McGovern and Pete Dowker to attempt A' Ghlas Bhien by way of the Bealach an Sgarne. The instant we set foot out of the door wet snow started to fall and continued all the way to the Bealach, the upper section of which involved wading through deep snow. Over a brew and a quick bite we decided to give the ridge a go, if we found it too much like hard work we would pack it in and return. As we ascended the ridge the weather cleared giving superb views in all directions. Suitably encouraged we carried on to the summit (another tick for the book). Conditions deteriorated slightly upon the descent but soon picked up again and the day ended in glorious sunshine for the walk down the glen. Unanimous decision seemed to be a good day well spent.

The Five Sisters

Mike McGovern

After watching the weather patterns over the previous three days; short lived snow storms and strong winds on the tops. I decided that if no deterioration occurred then a traverse of the ridge was feasible. So on Tuesday evening I got sorted for an early start the following morning. So, up at dawn and out on the hill at 8.15 a.m.

Poucher, in his Scottish Peaks guide recommends an east to west traverse climbing to the ridge at Bealach an Lorain from the Glen Shiel road. I decided because of a short day and possible poor weather to aim for the ridge to the east of Sgurr nan Spainteach. Leaving the Glen Shiel road at the site of the Battle of Glen Shiel. The last 400ft or so was over steep ice covered rock and snow. The approach shortened the route by about 2K. Once on the ridge strong winds from the S.W. blowing spindrift made conditions uncomfortable.

The first two tops of Sgurr nan Spainteach and Sgurr nan Ciste Duibhe passed quickly and easily. Onwards to Sgurr na Carnach the sky cleared, the wind picked up more strongly and the temperature dropped a lot. From the summit the views over towards the Saddle and along the Forcan Ridge were spectacular and all around wonderfully clear, except towards Skye where a deep gloom heralded another storm. Within 10 minutes it swept up Loch Duich and enveloped the mountain in howling wind-driven snow. These storms had been short lived during the previous days, this one was to be different. The last two 'Sister' of Sgurr Thuran and Sgurr nan Saighead were only won after hours of careful navigation in very wild conditions indeed. All the ridge had been blown clear of loose snow leaving ice covered rocks and



frozen snow, big cornices that were hard to judge the extent of. At the col above Coire na Criche the light was fading. From here I had two choices, to continue over Sgurr na Moraich and down the other side directly to the hut in darkness over craggy ground. Or down the Coire na Criche to the road at Ault a' Chruinn. This I took for the safer option. A mile walk up the Glen Morvaich road brought me to the hut at 7.15 pm, to complete an unforgettable day of sun and snow.

## First Impressions

### Gordon Whitehead

The Kintail trip was a first for me in more ways than one, a first to Scotland in winter, a first trip on an ARCC meet. So what impressions were created.

My first observations concerns this wonderful word 'hut' used to describe all climbing club accommodation. Its as inappropriate as describing Britannia as the royal 'yacht'. This hut was generally voted as being in the 'excellent' category and would probably have scored a 9 star rating in the Michelin guide. Any chance of it achieving a magical 10 was lost by it being at least a mile too far from the nearest pub. (I am aware that this serious fault would normally lose many more than 1 point - but it seemed we weren't too boozy a group).

Catering did pose me with some problems. Anyone who knows my partners Ben Carter and Ken Jackson will know that however rough the elements might be they won't rough it in the kitchen. I was worried whether they might find my chateaubriand a little too well done or my fricasseed eggs overspiced; fortunately I was relegated to breakfast chef and only had to supply a four course breakfast. I think I did OK, next year I might be allowed to do main course starters. The evening meal was a work of art. Poor David and John Ogden sitting next to us had to drool at Kens starters and main courses, followed by Bens apple pies and toffee puddings, finished off with a cheese board, all washed down of course with vino and port. It makes me wonder why I came home. Such food did of course cause problems. Each night I went to bed swearing I wouldn't eat as much on the next night, and each day I fought an unsuccessful battle to burn up the calories I'd consumed. I came back weighing more than I've ever done in my life.

Finally, what of the walking. My guide book described Kintail as the jewel in the whole of the Highlands. I don't think any of us will quibble. The 'baggers' came back with Munro scalps a plenty, I even got two myself - Ben Fhada and Cist Dubh. The latter was my first taste of high level winter walking and I found it totally different and exhilarating - crampons giving a secure perch on impossible steep slopes, snow bound corries and threatening cornices. Older hands talked of monster cornices in years of heavy snow, but these were impressive enough for starters. There was drama too. For Dave, John, Maurice and myself a savage mid afternoon blizzard made a simple valley walk into a desperately hard painful slog as hail stones played

trampoline on our eyeballs; but the same storm also made a traverse of the five sisters into a deadly dangerous business for Mike. I don't exaggerate. There were lower level walks a plenty, the spectacular Falls of Glomach, in fact had we stayed a month I think we'd still have had valleys, ridges and mountains to explore.

The weather too played its part. Every day we could see the tops, and in Scotland thats a bonus. Its probably churlish to grumble that the day we came home the weather was sensational, and the day after even better.

So a great week. Thanks to those I've mentioned and also to Dot and Ann, the two Petes, John and Lisa. I hope to see you next February, wherever we might be, if not before.

### Dot Wood

Arrived Monday evening to a warm, friendly hut and numerous club members. Mountains had already been climbed and even one or two epics had occurred.

Tuesday. It was a fine but very windy morning with occasional snow and hail showers. The 'others' told us to ignore the forecast as it had proved to be wrong the previous two days, but there was no denying that the wind was fierce. Plan A was to visit the Falls of Glomach via Bealach na Skaine, down to Glen Elchaig and back to Morvich via the Eas Ban. The 'others' had tales to tell of their trip and advised us accordingly so we adjusted to Plan B which was to just go and come back the same way. Plan C in my head was if all else failed was to go down to Camus Linnie and try to beg a lift back to Morvich but I kept this one to myself.

Pete and I set off and it was fine, a cold wind at our backs but the views were magnificent, the clouds were building out to the south and west though, and just as we reached the summit of the Bealach the blizzard hit us. The only way was forward on a compass bearing, ploughing through drifts with occasional cairns sticking out to show that we were still on course. It was difficult to keep Pete in sight as he went off in his seven league boots whilst I struggled along behind, occasionally falling into the three foot boot holes he left behind him. He had to wait for me a few times but he couldn't afford to lose me altogether as I had the map and compass and at least some idea of where we were. We found the falls eventually and we were sheltered from the worst of the wind though the snow fell continually.

The falls looked pretty dramatic but not as dramatic as I felt as I contemplated getting back to our base at Morvich. I didn't fancy heading back up into the wind and the blizzard conditions on the Bealach and the way down besides, the fells didn't look very inviting either. Pete said he didn't mind either way, which made it worse, as whatever I decided to do now would probably be wrong. It was. we went down and descended into the rain and lowering sky in the glen. I then presented Pete with the choice



of walking out along the glen and eventually to Dornie and then hitching back to Morvich, or trying to find the Stalkers Pass over the shoulder of the hill and back to Morvich that way.

After figuring out that it was probably 10 miles by road he opted for the Stalkers track and as it had stopped raining I agreed, much against my better instincts. We contoured round the hillside and eventually found the track. I'd had to dis-suade Pete from going up the first likely looking one, but the one we did find, was a good one. It was uphill and I was tired and even more tired when we reached the snow and the light began to fade from the sky. Pete went on ahead and I stumbled after him, he kept coming back to urge me on but there wasn't anyway I could go any faster. Every time I tried I fell into deep snow and then spent more time extracting myself than if I'd just kept plodding along. The path was badly drifted over and difficult to keep in touch with but we eventually went over the Pass and then we were floundering down through the deep snow on the other side.

The light had almost gone but the snow reflected what light there still was in the sky. We'd been lucky and the skies had stayed clear and free from the thick grey clouds that had obliterated it earlier. Pete was getting quite agitated by now and kept coming back to urge me on to greater effort and then we were at the edge and able to see the forest track down below, another five minutes and we were down.

It took us another hour to get back to the hostel after floundering around in the bog, but we managed to get back before the others had got round to thinking about rescue.

Wednesday. Pete went for a bike ride to Glen Ely and I went to Kyle of Localsh and had a swim.

Thursday. Didn't do the North Ridge of Glen Shiel. Pete eventually went for a bike ride and a bit of a walk. I had a walk up the glen and back.

Friday. We did do Ben Fhada, Gordon came with us. Good views on the way up but it clagged in as we gained the summit ridge. A good walk, snow deep and uneven. Icy patches in places.

## TALES OF THE MOUNTAIN RESCUE - NO. 3

### A TRAGEDY AT WHIT

John Foster.

May is usually the finest month in the mountains, and 1957 was true to form, especially the latter part of the month.. All week the sun rose into a cloudless sky, and out on the apron the heat was blistering as we worked on the aircraft. Left to ourselves we'd have been wearing shorts, stripped to the waist, but it was against regulations. During refuelling the AVTAG (kerosene jet fuel) was sometimes spilled and splashed about and was likely to cause dermatitis in contact with bare skin. Another regulation banned 'Promiscuous Urination on Aircraft Undercarriage' (the toilets were some distance away) as if we were terriers cocking a leg.

Would the weather hold? It did, and it was in a mood of euphoric anticipation that we boarded the trucks that Friday evening of the Whit Grant. Four whole days away from the screaming Vampires which it was our normal duty to groom and feed, leaving them silenced in their steel tombs until we returned and released them to roam the skies once more. We were in a holiday spirit as the convoy rolled along the A5, over the Menai Bridge, and up the Nant Ffrancon to Capel Curig. Our campsite was in a beautiful spot between the old road and the Afon Lluwy opposite the Gwydir Forestry School (now an army training camp) which is by the A5 half a mile west of the Ugly House.

The Saturday morning was just as perfect, the rock would be warm and dry, and our thoughts were on a fine days climbing. The day's orders brought us down to earth (literally). "You are mountain rescuers not crag rats. Navigation exercises are what you lot need", the sadist with the three stripes decreed. Gloom descended on the camp site as we were split into small groups and given the routes we were to follow. I and four others would be flogging over the Carneddau in all that heat.

There was one exception though. We had a driver called John Smith who had been detailed into the team and was therefore not a volunteer like the majority of us. Even so, he was a full member of the team because his nature was such that he made the best of whatever situation he was in and had fully participated in the teams training exercises as much as his main duty as a driver permitted. His five year engagement was drawing to an end, and he had requested the chance to do some more rock climbing before he was demobbed in September. Jock's wish (he was from Aberdeen) was granted, unlike ours, and Paddy Andrews (an Ulsterman) was detailed to take him onto the East Face of Tryfan.

Stoically we packed our sacks and climbed into the truck. Along the A5 again and at the head of Llyn Ogwen we disembarked. Enviously we watched Jock and Paddy climb over the wall to head



up past Little Tryfan towards Heather Terrace, while we crossed the road in the opposite direction, past Glan Dena (the M.A.M. hut) and Taly Llyn Ogwen farm. Up the side of Afon Lloer we slogged, the sun adding to the burden of our sacks. By the time we reached the lake what inclination we had for this so-called navigation exercise, over terrain we knew like the backs of our hands, was evaporating fast as the sweat from our brows. We threw ourselves down on the outfall slabs to drink, then rolled onto our backs. Ten minutes stretched to thirty, then to an hour, two hours, and it became obvious we weren't going anywhere that day. This was no mutiny, no barrack room revolt, just a tacit acceptance that we were all of the same mind. The sun began to drift towards its demise, the shadows to lengthen, and a faint breeze rippled the hitherto glassy surface of Ffynnon Lloer. It was time to move.

We decided to traverse the slope above the north bank of Llyn Ogwen, and by its outfall have a brew at Mervyn's Teastall on the A5. As we were about to order there was a shrill cry, and a girl running towards us. She was a nurse at the C and A (Caernarfonshire and Anglesey General Hospital, now but a memory) known to the team as Dairty Mary, for reasons of which I had no personal experience. She told us that Paddy had been down to the Mountain Rescue Post at Idwal Y.H. for the stretcher and first aid rucksacks. Jock was badly injured, his leg she thought, and Paddy had taken a few climbers back up with him. No more thought of a brew, off up the road we jogged. Over the wall by the tenth milestone, up past the Milestone Buttress, no grumbling about the heat now. The adrenalin always flows on a call-out, we were going like steam engines. I have never gone up hill faster than when I have had a stretcher at my back. Ever upwards, working round the North Ridge onto Heather Terrace.

Suddenly we were there. At the foot of Nor' Nor' Gulley we looked up and saw the stretcher coming down the right hand wall. Paddy was with a group of climbers 60 ft. above, paying out the ropes. Briefly he shouted down what had happened. Jock had taken over the lead half-way up, and was about to belay on a good stance when Paddy heard a scream and saw him fall, followed by a couple of large blocks. They landed on a ledge above Paddy and when he climbed up he found that one of the rocks, a couple of hundredweight, had landed on one of Jock's legs, smashing it. A couple of doctors were climbing nearby, but without equipment there was little they could do except apply a tourniquet to the shattered leg to stop him bleeding to death. As we knew, Paddy had dashed down for the stretcher and help, and poor Jock had remained conscious, in agony, until the morphia from the first aid rucksacks was administered. He was peaceful enough now, but his face was ashen from loss of blood. We had often used drivers as volunteer 'casualties' on stretcher lowering exercises, but this time it was real, there was blood dripping from the stretcher. The incongruity struck me, that a member of an RAF team was being rescued by a bunch of civvies, but that didn't matter now.

A few more team members appeared, and we took over the stretcher as it arrived on the Terrace, and untied the ropes. We began the carry along the Terrace, and all the time more team

members were popping up to help. Word had spread, it was as if the heather telegraph had throbbed saying 'Jock's injured, Jock needs help'. Down the Y Gulley, over the broken ground by Little Tryfan. One of the other drivers, Pete Crumpton, had been on standby back on the base, and as we approached Gwern-y-Gof Uchaf farm I saw that he had brought up the Landrover ambulance. Parked right in front of it was a large car, blocking it. My immediate thought was that it was some damn reporter determined to get a story. We were all on edge, and I shouted 'Who's the Hell is that car?' A police inspector said quietly 'It's mine, I'll go in front with my bell going (it was long before sirens), I said 'That's alright then'. I have never before or since been spoken to so meekly by a police officer. He must have felt the tension in the air, and realised that any provocation and we'd have tipped him and his car into the river. We loaded the stretcher aboard and felt helpless that we had now done all we could. A chill came over us as they drove off and disappeared round the bends, and though out of sight we could hear the inspector's bell clanging as they sped down to Bangor.

A truck had arrived, we climbed aboard and returned to our camp. There was much discussion of the incident, but we were never asked to explain how we appeared so handily on Tryfan when we should have been miles away across the Carneddau. We would not have wished such an injury on anyone, but kindly, ever cheerful Jock was the last person we'd have wished it on. We had brought other battered and bleeding bodies down, but none had upset us so much. This time it was one of us. The enormity of what had happened to our mate slowly sank in, and we were a sombre and sober bunch of lads in the bar of the Tyn-y-Coed that night.

I never saw Jock again, but I heard he made a brief visit back to Valley on crutches to be flown home to Aberdeen Dyce airfield (then still a RAF base) in an Anson, the leg Amputated above the knee. With his compensation he was going to set up a garage in his home city. Recent enquiries I have made in Aberdeen for a one legged mechanic called Smith have failed.

## Epilogue

Mountaineering is a dangerous sport, and for members of teams to be competent in rescue techniques they must first of all become competent mountaineers, in all weather conditions as accidents in the air or on the ground are more likely in bad weather. Additionally they must be rescuers, wireless operators, drivers, searchers and ambulance men, capable of operating as part of a team.

To achieve this standard all members are required to be out on exercise most weekends, the minimum being 3 out of 4 for single lads, and 2 out of 4 for married men. Attendance is also expected at lectures and briefings during the week, and at specialist courses from time to time.

The team leader is a sergeant or flight sergeant, a corporal is deputy team leader, at least one driver mechanic to maintain the



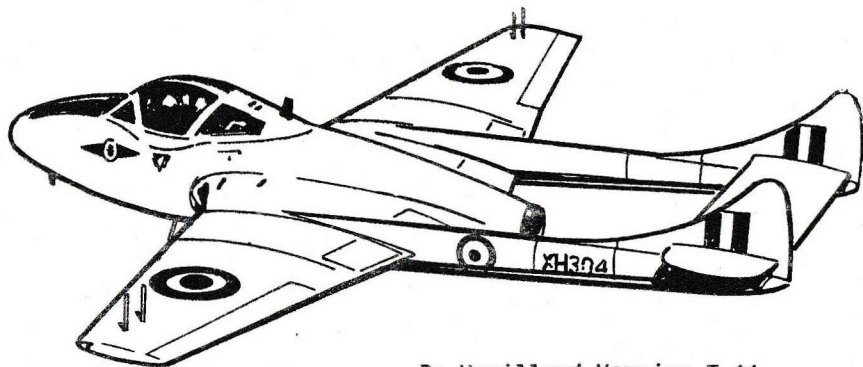
trucks and Landrovers, a wireless operator mechanic to look after the communications wagon (which aswell as radios contains a laptop PC, and a Sat Com terminal with Fax Modem) and hand portable sets, and a storeman who does everything else the others don't. All the rest are volunteers who receive no extra pay, and carry out their normal duties during the week. In return they are supplied with excellent equipment and training, with a good chance of being chosen for Joint Services Expeditions in various parts of the world. The team sometimes train outside their own areas of responsibility, jointly with other teams. For those airmen who stay in M.R. for several years is the probability that they will be members of teams in different parts of the UK leading to a thorough knowledge of British mountains.

In years gone by there were mountains/desert/jungle rescue teams in various parts of the world, but as the Empire was steadily whittled away they were disbanded so that for some years there have only been the 6 in the UK. The nominal strengths are 36 for Kinloss, Leuchars and Valley, and 25 for Leeming, Stafford and St. Athen. There is no doubt whether there will be enough volunteers to maintain these numbers since the RAF along with the other armed services is being cut back to 120,000 men and women, as the Treasury desperately seeks cuts in public expenditures. If the numbers of teams or their strengths are cut, all of us who go on the hill will be the losers since the civilian teams, excellent though some are, may not be fully available at all times.

As well as the cost of transport and equipment, there is another price to be paid. In July 1952 a member of the Valley team was killed by a fall on Cadair Idris. Since then 3 other members of RAF teams have died in climbing accidents, and at least one other leg amputation.

It is a British tradition to volunteer to help others in distress, as there but for the grace of God go we all. Long may it continue.

P.S. The RAF Escaping Society Trophy was awarded to the Mountain Rescue Service in September 1995 for pulling the Army out of the mire in Low's Gulley on Mount Kinabalu in Borneo in March 1994.



De Havilland Vampire T 11

## EASTER CLIMBING MEET - TYN TWR -15TH/16TH APRIL

Bryony White.

The first of a number of successful climbing meets this year was based at Tyn Twr over the Easter weekend. In fact it was officially inaugurated by Trevor MacKay and Faz Faraday taking a Thursday evening stroll to the slate quarries in Llanberis and quietly ascending an E2 called 'Massambula'.

On Friday, in mixed sunshine and showers the main party climbed several routes at Cwm Ogwen (the details of which I apologise for not having to hand).

Saturday dawned drizzly and cold and the party divided into two groups - one of determined realists - including Tom Walkington and Eric Barnes; who set off for Gogarth on Anglesey to find the sun. The other group - casuallly optimistic, comprising Jim Cooper, Faz Faraday, Ray Baptist and Bryony White, drove all the way to Cwm Silyn under sodden skies, lost heart and drove back to Tremadog. Here they were luckier, finding even the popular Craig y Castell had been washed free of climbers. A watery sun showed its face as the party found its way to the bottom of Creagh Dhu Wall, miraculously queueless - which was duly climbed and fully appreciated as a great classic. Monsa, Tantallus and Tensar (with aid under the overhang) were also climbed that afternoon.

Easter Sunday was equally dismal as far as the weather was concerned although the Mass at the church in Bethesda was heartwarming. In the afternoon a large group of frustrated climbers walked around the slate quarries at the back of Llanberis mesmerised by the strange other-worldly landscape and eyeing up potential routes for a summer afternoon in the future.

VS \* \* \* \* \*

The first pitch is a struggle  
(all wrong for the name)  
It was for the second pitch we came.

Here is the real start  
feet stepping delicately sideways  
Hands to balance upwards  
(Mouth to hold heart)  
Then  
Tip-toeing round the buttress  
Taking one step in the clouds  
Again, and Again  
And Again

Bryony White

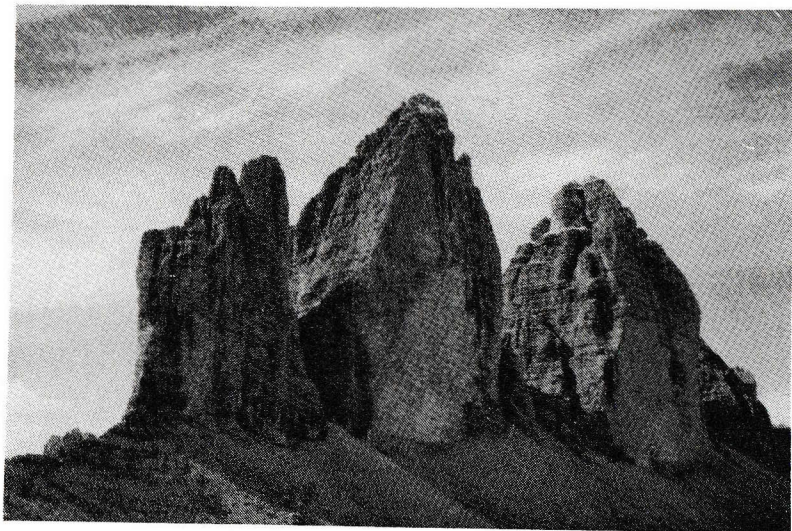


## MONTE PATERNO - THE "ROUTE OF THE WAR-TIME TUNNELS"

Keith Cooper.

The Dolomites of Northern Italy are unique, consisting of long and imposing ranges, but of isolated mountain groups divided by broad deep valleys. North-east of Cortina lies the small Monte Paterno group, despite its modest height of 2746m. its jagged profile attracts mountaineers from all over the world.

It was here in September, after three days of mist and low cloud and two days of non-stop rain Gerrard Doherty and I found ourselves on a beautiful, sunny and clear morning. We took the toll road from Misurina (£8) and parked near to the Auronzo Hut at 2320m., we then followed the path 101-104 beneath the huge towers of the world famous Tre Cime Di Lavaredo to the Lavaredo Hut at 2344m. A short pull took us up to the Forcella Lavaredo (2454m) and our first glimpse of the spectacular, smoothly eroded north walls of the Tre Cime which soar up vertically to almost 3000m. Seen from the north starting on the left is the Cima Piccola (2853m). then in the middle the Cima Grande (2999m) and on the right the Cima Ovest (2973m). The Cima Grande north face was considered invincible until August 1933 when, after a three day climb, the three guides G.Dimai, E.Comico and A. Dimai conquered it.

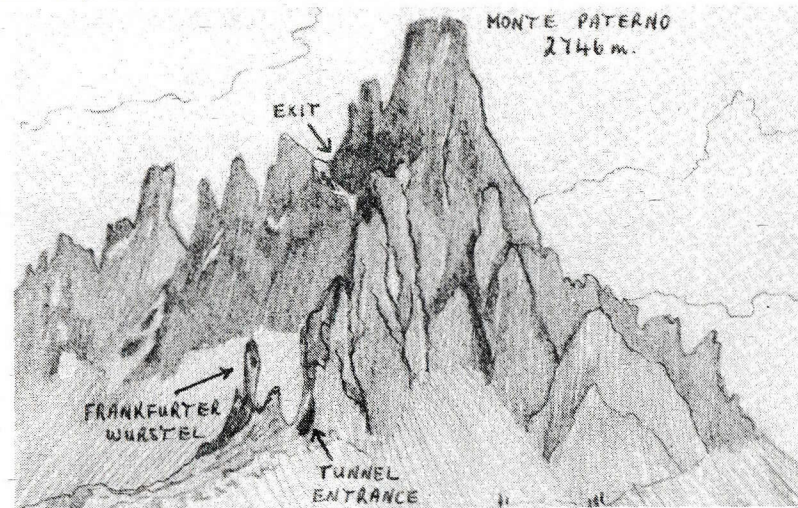


The Cime Di Lavaredo North Face

Leaving the col we took the higher level path which runs under the western side of Monte Paterno to the Locatelli Hut (2405m). Here, whilst having a cappuccino we got our first real view of the magnificent towers and pinnacles of this wonderfully shaped peak. During the First World War this area was the scene of much fighting between the Austrians and the Italians - although it is said that more soldiers died from the cold than the bullet. Some of the war tunnels made by the soldiers have been opened up and the most popular is the "Innerkofler - De Luca Path" named in memory of the famous Austrian guide and Italian soldier who died here during the First World War.

We left the Locatelli Hut suitably refreshed and headed towards the famous "Frankfurter Wurstel", a tall sausage shaped tower of rock which guards the entrance to the first tunnel. A helmet and a torch are very useful in this 600m long tunnel which at first is not very steep and is well lit by the side windows, but soon becomes very steep, dark and slippery in places. Occasional side tunnels lead to windows which give magnificent views of the Tre Cime and the Locatelli Hut. Eventually the tunnel turns to the left and ends in daylight at 2520m.

Now was the time to put on the climbing harness and check that the two four foot lengths of rope with a karabiner on each end were securely fastened. We then climbed on to the steel cable already in position and ascended the exposed and near vertical short pitch which leads upwards to rocky ledges and a steep stoney gully which in our case was covered in freshly fallen snow to reach the Forcella del Camoscio (2650m). From this small col the summit of Monte Paterno lies 100m above and is reached via a rather imposing rock face equipped with steel cables and supports and then by a series of paths and rocky ledges. The view from a large crucifix on the summit was stupendous and on the kind of clear day which we had, will live long in our memories.



Monte Paterno as seen from the Locatelli Hut



The descent back to the small col was a little confusing until we picked up the steel cables again. From the col we descended a steep and very loose gully before following an incredibly exposed path cut into the cliff face in a southerly direction to the Forcella Passaporto. Here a gap allows you access to the other side of the mountain where a series of protected paths and tunnels take you back to the Forcella di Lavaredo and from there back to the car.

The whole walk took us 6 hours at a very easy pace and for dramatic situations, stunning views and historical interest would be hard to beat. However, it is not for the faint hearted, for those who suffer from vertigo or who are not surefooted.

#### Penny on Sheperds Crag

Every climb has its moments  
It could have been that 'step across'  
on 'Little Chamonix' - tried -this way, that way  
every other way.  
(Pause for thought)  
Tried this way again, with conviction born of  
desperation.  
And yielding instantly.

Or it could have been the breathtaking final pitch  
In which the remaining rope just made it round the  
tree.  
And the Derwent shore below me  
eccentrically fringed with silhouetted cows.

But in the end - having soberly anchored there  
And taken in  
And taken in  
It was the reward of that eventual pair of hands  
so perfectly crowned  
by Penny's triumphant grin.

Bryony White.

#### DERBYSHIRE/STAFFORDSHIRE WHITE PEAK

John Braybrook.

North from the market town of Ashbourne, situated on the southern tip of the Pennines, stands a limestone dome which is dissected by the rivers Dove, Manifold and Lathkill. This picturesque countryside is spectacular as well as being genteel.

Dovedale is immortalised in Isaac Walton's book 'The Compleat Angler'. So, bring your rods with you.

A glance at the 1:25000 White Peak Ordnance Survey map will show you plenty of morsels for the rock climber, walker and mountain bike enthusiast. Catching names like Thong Cave, Tissington Spires, Dove Holes and Reynards Cave will attract your attention. The BMC climbing guide Staffordshire Area Volume 6 has a wide variety of climbs to entice the mountaineers to this area.

The fell runners in the club may be interested in the Dovedale Dash over five miles. The event takes place in November and starts at the Pevril of the Peak Hotel.

This countryside over the years has given me hours of pleasure and I feel at home amongst the hills and dales. They are friends. Nottingham where I live is only thirty miles away. I hope those who have not visited these uplands will do so and derive as much enjoyment as I have. One of the best spots to park the car is at Alstonefield and after a walk return to the George Inn for a pint. The George also has a small campsite.

Our paths may cross, in these limestone hills. I am to be found frequently rambling across this countryside or sitting in the George quenching my thirst with a pint of shandy.



DOVEDALE



# NATIONAL THREE PEAKS IN 24 HOURS (....WELL 25 AND A BIT ACTUALLY)

SATURDAY 27TH MAY - SUNDAY 28TH MAY.

Accounts of the event provided by: Alex Downie (Dad), Patrick Downie, Claire Wilson, David Meredith, Kate Meredith and Sarah Meredith. The rest of the group included Ciaran and Tristram Limmer, Christopher Daniels, Christopher and Andrew Wilson, Laura Broadbent and Catherine Stone.

## Alex Downie

The foregathering of some 20 hardy souls at Dunmail on the night of Friday 26th May was augmented by the arrival of a pigeon-burglar - the unfortunate bird, having crashed through a dormitory window, was still frantically flapping around, depositing blood and 'guts' (according to the children) in upstairs areas. The emergency was efficiently dealt with by Terry Wilson plus blanket, and peace was restored so that the assembled company could get their last unbroken sleep before their ordeal.



The Group (Before the ascent of Ben Nevis)

## Patrick Downie

We woke up at 5.00am! Then had breakfast and set off for Ben Nevis. It took a full 7 hours to get there including several stops. When we arrived at the foot of the mountain it didn't take long for us to get going. It was a long hard walk for us, but when we had trudged through the snow to reach the top and came down through the snow, or rather slid down, it was great fun.

## Claire Wilson

It took another 7 hours to drive to Westwater, at the bottom of Scafell. Dot and Joyce were there with tea and jam sandwiches for us. We set off up Scafell, it was raining some of the way up but most of the way it was fine. When we got up near the top, the ground was stoney and it was as foggy on the top as it was on Ben Nevis. We were all very much relieved when we reached the top because Arthur kept saying, 'It's not much further now', and we were all quite tired.

## David Meredith

When we came off Scafell we drove to Beckstones and had a fantastic breakfast. Then we set off on another car ride to the last mountain, Snowdon.

Finally, we set off up Snowdon, the last mountain of the Three Peaks. The weather was worse than the other two. The walk was hard and bumpy. I hated it. It was worse than the other two by far. I was very tired and very hungry. When I got to the top I was even more pleased than the top of Ben Nevis. I had climbed the Three National Peaks in 25 hours.

## Kate Meredith.

Then came Snowdon, the hardest of all. A strong wind was blowing and I felt shakey and scared. I had to cling onto the rocks, although I realise now I was probably more scared than need be. By the end I was very tired and it felt wonderful to get back to the cars. Although I was glad to finish, I was pleased with myself and felt it was quite an achievement to finish the walk.

## Sarah Meredith

When we got near the top of Snowdon it seemed to take for ages to reach the peak. We could only see the railway, the person in front and snow, so I did not know how far off the summit was until we reached it. I felt absolutely shattered but when we reached the top I was relieved, all I had to do now was get to the bottom. Thankfully we took a different, less steep way down which was much easier. Once at the bottom I could hardly believe I had finished. I had enjoyed myself very much and although the walking was hard in parts I'd found the travelling harder.