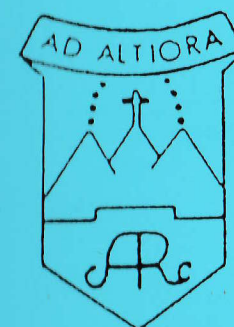


ACHILLE RATTI CLIMBING CLUB



1996
JOURNAL

ACHILLE RATTI CLIMBING CLUB

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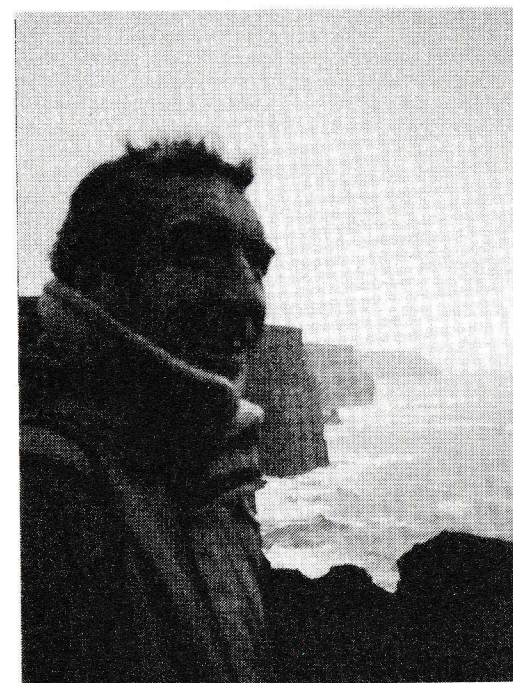
INTRODUCTION

It is a great relief to see this issue of the Annual Journal finally printed and distributed to members, perhaps a little later than usual, but completed and reasonably full of articles. At the AGM in November I had only one article and three relatively short reports and was doubtful whether it would be worthwhile going to 'print' this year. However, members rallied and we have quite a decent production.

It is rather disappointing that out of 17 meets this year (excluding working weekends) only one was reported on, so all the activities that took place on other meets are buried in memories or possibly lost forever.

Fortunately, we do have some interesting reading from members who have seen fit to report on their experiences both here and abroad and I am, as ever, very grateful for their contributions.

D.W.P.



The Editor and the Cliffs of Moher

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON SATURDAY 16TH
NOVEMBER 1996 AT THE CHAPEL STILE VILLAGE HALL

38 members were present at the meeting which was attended by the Club President, Monsignor Slattery.

Apologies were received from Angela Soper, John Foster, Dorothy and Roy Buffey, Neville Haigh, Joyce Kent, Anne McWatt, Pat and Bernard Margiotta and Leo and Freda Pollard.

The secretary read a summary of the minutes of the 1995 AGM. presented.

Matters Arising. Nil.

Chairman's Report.

This is another year in which the club has been involved with many activities one way or another. Apart from members experiences on the hills and rocks there has been much activity in the huts especially at Dunmail, where David Ogden and his team have made some very significant improvements to the heating and lighting and there is still more to come. Plans to extend sleeping facilities for the ladies at Bishop's Scale are also in hand. Some of you may have already viewed the drawings showing the various options. Also in the pipeline is the construction of a shed, for the want of a better word, to house cycles and the odd canoe. Improvements to the lounge and kitchen are also on the agenda. And an ultra violet system on the water supply is soon to be installed at Bishop's Scale.

We are still in discussion with the NT re a long lease at Beckstones. This seems to be taking forever but we must ensure that we examine our responsibilities thoroughly before we enter any agreements. At the moment we are investigating, with the aid of a lease specialist from Barrow, whether what the Trust is offering is value for money. However, in the meantime our rent is the same as it was at Buckbarrow nearly ten years ago.

The library is in operation and whilst it is not used much at least we have a base for the club records.

The journal is a worry. Trying to get members to record their activities for the journal is difficult. I have run out of ideas and live in hope that articles will come from somewhere. It will be a great pity if we have to drop it for the lack of support, so please, if you have had good day on the hill and you want to tell your friends about it, put pen to paper and send it to me.

Guidelines for junior meets. This subject was mentioned in the secretary's report at last year AGM. The fact that it is still being discussed is not because we are dragging our feet but simply because it is a complex issue and we want to get it right. A document titled Guidance to the Licensing Authority on The Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations 1996, this is the Young Persons Safety Act 1995 and gives most of the information we require. It states that a voluntary association does not

need a licence to provide training for its own members. However, our exact position is rather vague since we do charge junior members overnight fees for accommodation, which might just change our voluntary position in the eyes of the law. In any case, I would argue that we do have a responsibility to our members and their children to take every precaution necessary when they are involved in caving, climbing and walking, which by the way is now referred to as trekking in the guidance regulations. This is over and above the signing of a consent form by parents. So it may well be that in the near future we will be asking certain members to attend a single pitch qualification course. Faz Faraday will be producing the guidelines in the near future. The same argument for safety should apply to fire regulations. whilst as a private organisation there is no law that enforces fire precautions, common sense tells us that we would be foolish to ignore advice given by the fire prevention authorities.

Hut usage this year has been excellent, hopefully those members who have enjoyed their weekends will be prepared to give a little back to the club and attend working weekends which will be on next years meets list. Which reminds me to ask members to let Alan Kenny have all info on next years meets as soon as possible.

May I thank all those members who have helped on the various meets, races, walks and working weekends, we couldn't manage without you.

Finally, I would like to thank the members of the Management Committee for their valuable time, their advice and their interest in the ARCC. In particular, I would like to thank retiring secretary John Meredith for his work and expertise over the last six years.

Secretary's Report.

It seems unlikely that the Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations 1996 were ever intended to govern the activities of organisations such as the club and, since junior members attending junior meets pay the same for their accommodation as they would if there were no organised activities and since no charge is made for any of the other facilities, it is unlikely that the club's organisation of junior meets would accidentally bring us within the regulations; in any event, the club's safety policy is moving more and more towards an insistence upon a parent being present during activities, a feature which would itself preclude the regulations.

There have been no entries to date in the book of remembrance introduced last year and so the book has still not been placed in the chapel.

Items which have concerned the management committee during the last twelve months (some already referred to in the Chairman's report) are as follows:

1. A strategy for the future development and use of Dunmail (referred to in David Ogden's report).
2. Water purity at the club's various huts, with ultra violet purification systems either installed or planned.
3. The ongoing negotiations with the National Trust for the club's occupation of Beckstones. The National Trust has "shifted the goal posts" and is now proposing a progressive increase in the annual rent to £3,600.00 instead of the previously suggested figure of £2,500.00 but with the NT taking on responsibility for the main structure after the various items of repair and improvement have been carried out. A written structural report prepared by Michael Pooler is with the NT for consideration and a rent valuation report is awaited. There has been concern about the use of the hut at prime times by the National Trust Acorn Groups.
4. Continued concerns expressed at various stages about the maintenance of hygiene in the huts.
5. Concern about the need for a systematic approach to safety not only at junior meets but also at any of the events organised by the club; illustrated by the injury suffered by a runner participating in the CAFOD Grisedale Horseshoe race; fortunately there happened to be a marshal with a first aid kit and some first aid knowledge at the nearest checkpoint.
6. Decision (again) to go ahead with the construction of a bike shed at Bishop's Scale.
7. Possibility of updating and upgrading the kitchen and lounge facilities at Bishop's Scale.

The report ended with thanks to Arthur Daniels for his initiatives in organising what have become annual junior

"expeditions" starting with the Three Yorkshire Peaks, then the Three National Peaks and, during the Easter weekend this year, the Cumbria Way, the entire 70 mile length of which was completed by youngsters ranging in age from 9 to 14 years: well supported by adults and a good example of the club's members of all ages co-operating together.

Following a question from Rita Baron about how to have an entry placed in the Book of Remembrance she and others confirmed that they felt that the book should be properly used and should take up its place in the Chapel.

Treasurer's Report:

A written financial statement and accounts were circulated for the report.

A brief outline of the Treasurer's Report.

1995/96 Results

This year as a whole has been successful, with a surplus of £12,820.72.

Accumulated Fund	£54,255	
Turnover	£40,025	All the highest
Hut Fees	£24,964	ever.
Subscriptions	£11,431	

Hut Results

Surplus		Deficit	
Bishop's Scale	£833	Beckstones	£905 (Down from 1418 last year)
Tyn Twr	£1404		
Dunmail	£3910		

Club Balance

Increased over the last 7 years from £26,790 to £54,255. This is £5282 up on the previous peak of £48,973 in 1990/91.

Major Heads of Account: Comparison 94/95 & 95/96

	%
Income	Up 10
Expenditure	Down 22
Subscriptions	Up 0.3 (Highest ever and over £11K for last three years)
Hut Fees	Up 16 (Over £21K for last three years)
Bank Interest	Up 8

BMC Subs

Continuing importance of organisations like BMC/FRA/Ramblers in representing our interests at national level.

We need to rely on umbrella bodies to do their best on our

behalf.

The practical contribution we can make is to help by our continuing financial support to BMC.

Insurance

Review of insurance is overdue. It will be looked at in 1997.

Hut Fees

	92/93	93/94	94/95	95/96
	£	£	£	£
Beckstones	894	1060	2568	2039
Bishop's Scale	7415	8921	8881	8408
Dunmail	6668	9241	6041	10762
Tyn Twr	2672	4611	4007	3755

Continuing good work by wardens and their helpers are deserving of congratulations for some very good results.

Reclaim of VAT paid on subscriptions to be dealt with.

Subs	£	%	Approximate reclaim £
90/91	7654	15	1148
91/92	7912	17.5	1385
92/93	<u>8137</u>	17.5	<u>1424</u>
	<u>23703</u>		<u>3957</u>

Charges

A bit of background.

Subs 1989 Increased from £12 to £20
1993 Increased from £12 to £23 (BMC)

Hut Fees 1989 Increased from 85p to £1.50
1993 1.6.93 from £1.10 to £2.00
1.1.94 from £1.00 to £2.50

In the current year the hut fees at £24,964 met the running costs of the huts £19,722, and left a contribution of £5242 towards the overall surplus.

Proposed increase in the annual membership subscription to £25 from 1.10.97.

Surplus at £12,820

Accumulated Fund, Turnover, Hut Fees, Subscriptions:

	95/96	80/81	75/76	70/71
Years Ago		15	20	25
	£	£	£	£
Acc.Fund	54,255	10,158	1,555	834
Turnover	40,025	13,416	4,169	2,830
Hut Fees	24,964	9,364	2,889	1,644
Subs	11,431	2,669	1,017	823

Jim Cooper commented that the increase of approximately £3500.00 in income derived from hut fees appeared to be explained by the increase of over £4500.00 in Dunmail's hut fee income, when compared with the previous year's figures.

Subscription Secretaries Report

The membership of 663 for this year is down by 9 from last year. However, looking back over our records for the past 8 years the total membership is static at around the 660 mark.

75% of full members now pay by Direct Debit.

As the catholic membership is just under the 2/3rds allowed in the Clubs rules, no non-catholic graduates have been accepted since January 1995. There is a waiting list of 15 non-catholics awaiting graduate membership.

Hut Wardens Reports

Beckstones - Joyce Kent

Apologies for my absence at the Meeting, but presently I will be toiling up Dead Woman's Pass - I hope it isn't aptly named - part way along the Inca Trail in the Peruvian Andes, en route for Macchu Picchu. Assistant Hut Warden Terry Kitchen is trekking to Katchenjunga base camp in Nepal, and we are both sorry we can't be with you.

Beckstones has been well used again this year, slightly more bed nights and all of them by members and guests, no visiting groups. Fortunately it is a hut that most people generally leave clean and tidy. It is a haven from the outside world and apart from catastrophe does not need an awesome amount of effort to keep it running. My major concern is that as people liken it to a holiday cottage rather than a hut, they try to recreate the temperature of their own homes. Please be sensible, stop turning the dials of the heaters up.

The Climbing Meet at the time of the autumn equinox, really should have the date changed. Some climbing was accomplished on Kendal Wall, some stayed away because of the forecast and the beck excavation earlier in the year proved worthwhile. Logan beck became a torrent.

Discussions with the National Trust drag on. Who will do what in repairs and what our exact responsibilities will be before the lease is drawn up. Meanwhile we have enjoyed six years of very cheap accommodation, which has begun to attract its own group of users. There is plenty of room for more bed nights, more bunks are being prepared, and also a ceiling pulley clothes airer for above the fire. A new water supply has been surveyed and is promised by the National Trust.

The working weekend in the spring will probably be in February, look out for it in the meets card, and please don't try to use Beckstones when the Acorn Group is there. The hut is closed for one week in July and one week in September, (Acorn Groups) please

check your meets card, the dates are in there and also in the newsletter.

Dunmail Raise Hut

David Ogden

ARCC acquired Dunmail in 1946 for the sum of £799.

At that time our founder President told the AGM:

- a) that the place was too big to be used as a climbing hut and that the club should divide the property so that a small part could be used by members whilst the rest was let out to youth groups,
- b) that the hut was to be fitted out with the best equipment possible so that it would be a show place and model of what a mountain hut should be,
- c) that it was a cold place and central heating would be needed.

I took over as warden last March. I gave a report to the management committee detailing a long and expensive list of improvements needed to bring the hut up to an acceptable standard to let out to schools and other groups all the year round.

The list included the replacement of the central heating system (the Bishop did have a system fitted at the outset but it was destroyed by frost damage) and the installation of a fire alarm and emergency lighting system.

The committee gave me the go-ahead and I can report that the initial improvements are now 95% complete.

In addition to general maintenance work the following jobs have been done:

- a) new commercial grill installed capable of cooking 70 steaks per hour,
- b) new steel tables in kitchen,
- c) installation of a fire alarm,
- d) installation of secondary lighting which allows safe movement around the hut during silent hours when the generator is shut down,
- e) alterations to the generator controls to allow it to be controlled from within the hut,
- f) installation of central heating in the dining room and above.

In addition to making the hut more comfortable the heating system will also provide frost protection.

In early November a gale took off a large portion of slate on the Grasmere side of the hut. Dave Hugill went up to survey the damage and take some pictures to support a claim to our insurers. Don Woodburn has now repaired the damage.

The hut is reasonably well used at present but now that it is in good condition it is our intention to try to attract more bookings from schools and youth groups. We particularly want to attract more mid-week bookings.

I hope to organise a working weekend in the new year to get some painting and cleaning jobs done. All are welcome, it will be a good time to look at the improvements.

I would like to offer my thanks on your behalf to Dot Woods for her work as Warden. My wife Joan is constantly saying that she does not know how Dot managed the job on her own.

I would also like to thank Joan who looks after the bookings; Mike Crawford and Dave Hugill who have done a great deal of work at the hut and who both help me to do the Wardens job.

Bishop's Scale

Alan Kenny

The hut continues to be well used by members. There are no visiting clubs at weekends, all non-ARCC groups are restricted to mid-week bookings.

There was a working weekend last April. Seven people turned up on the Saturday and a further two on the Sunday. Despite the small turnout the majority of the hut was cleaned including the Chapel and various painting/creosoting jobs were done.

A back boiler has been installed in the lounge fire and has been connected up to the hot water system.

Various improvements are in the pipeline including further alterations to the hot water system, water treatment by means of a UV filter and alterations to the ladies dormitory and washing area.

Tyn Twr

Anna Wallace

Use by visiting groups was down with 14 bookings whereas for some years the average had been 20. Usage by members is good. So, the fees banked between October '95 and September '96 were over £4000.

When the wheelie bin arrived it soon became obvious that it was too small and a larger one was delivered a couple of months ago.

I would ask members to let me know if the coal supplies are low. Alternatively, hut users could ask Griffiths Coal Merchants to deliver 10 bags, or ask Keith and Barbara Morgan to sort out the order. The bills are sent to the treasurer.

Most people try to leave the hut as it should be. Not so some others, a number of times during this year the hut was left in a dirty condition.

The working weekend earlier this month had a very good turnout. Willing hands painted walls and ceilings, plastered and filled various crumbly bits, washed doors, shelves and windows, washed,

dried and ironed curtains, weeded pruned and re-planted the front garden. A suggestion of re-seeding with a good quality grass was made. This is planned for next spring. A hover mower and thirty metres of cable are now in the hut.

Election of Officer

Austin Guilfoyle was proposed as honorary secretary by Peter McHale and seconded by Derek Price; he was elected un-opposed.

The Chairman confirmed that Bill Mitton was prepared to continue as an ordinary member of the management committee and would be co-opted for the next twelve months.

Any Other Business

Margaret Price proposed a vote of thanks to the hut wardens for their contributions and reports and a vote of thanks was also proposed to John Meredith for his period of office as honorary secretary.

Tom Baron suggested that those with life membership should be encouraged to make a voluntary contribution to help club funds, in view of the proposal to increase annual subscriptions for other members to £25.00 per year. The possibility of creating a fund for, say, the maintenance of the Chapel was raised.

Margaret Price commented that, at the last AGM, it had been proposed that the club's bye-laws should be sorted out and recorded in writing. John Meredith responded that, since the rules in the club's constitution require that a copy of the bye-laws must be displayed at each of the huts (a rule ignored at present) the committee's response to her suggestion could only be a positive one and that a lot of uncertainty about just what were the club's rules had been evident at the last AGM. In response to Margaret Price's suggestion that a start should be made, the Chairman commented that the new secretary would no doubt look forward to it and David Ogden commented that hut wardens need simply to write down the rules for their huts and get the management committee to approve them.

Mike Lomas commented that it was, in any event, not a case of members not knowing what the rules are but of members choosing to ignore rules that do not suit them.

The Chairman gave advance notice of the proposed New Year party at Bishop's Scale, which all members are welcome to attend. Jim Cooper enquired on behalf of an un-named member whether there would be children and drink at the party and the Chairman confirmed that there would.

Monsignor Slattery suggested that, whilst the new millenium might be considered a long way off, it may well be worthwhile giving some thought to ways in which the club might plan events to mark the occasion, a sentiment which was welcomed by those at the meeting.

As there was no other business the meeting was closed.

Exploring Patagonia

Angela Soper

In January 1996 I took off for Santiago de Chile with the usual summer kit, including a new pair of fell-running trainers, some not-very-new climbing gear, and my Christmas present from Jack, a map of southern Argentina and Chile. Santiago has a superb International Youth Hostel, open 24 hours, with the most helpful staff imaginable, an ideal base for exploring the city and finding out the best way to travel south. First I had to get to the Chilean-Argentinian Lake District, to climb with my friends Marlene and Geoff, who had left home before Christmas to cycle down the Carreteros Austrel.

Public transport in Santiago is amazing. Yellow buses rush around everywhere and for a fixed fare, only a few pence, one can ride all the way to the foothills of the Andes - I did so by mistake one evening. There is also an efficient underground Metro, and 'collectivos', shared taxis which are good value. For longer journeys one is spoiled for choice at the 'Terminal de Buses', and the trains are both transport and a step into history.

I travelled to Osorno on the huge, comfortable, but slow, train, which crossed the Bio-Bio river during the night. Patagonia, named from the Patagon Indians, extends from here to Tierra del Fuego, hundreds of miles south. Then I caught a bus across the pass to Bariloche in Argentina, on the shore of Lago Nahuel Huapi, which means Lake of the Tiger Island. Bariloche is an expensive resort which thrives on tourism and chocolate-making, and the 'lake' is more an inland sea. My friends and I had a vague arrangement to make contact at the Club Andino in Bariloche, and to my delight there was a message to say where they were.

Before long we were organised to camp and climb in the Catedral mountains. It took several hours to walk up to a small lake surrounded by granite pinnacles, rugged and beautiful in the powerful sunlight. The climbing was comparable to Skye in scale, and we enjoyed it so much that we went down for more food and returned. The reason for bringing not-very-new climbing gear then emerged. Just before moving on, we chalked on our tents in big letters 'Grand Liquidation....' and local climbers appeared, literally out of the bushes which sheltered their camps from the wind, and bought everything we would part with.

Thus lightened, M and G reverted to cycling and I made long bus journeys to the Fitzroy, crossing to Rio Gallehos on the Atlantic coast then back west over the pampas, impressive for their vast emptiness and the ceaseless wind. The Fitzroy National Park is compact, and spectacular viewpoints of the famous granite towers, including Cerro Torre, can be reached by just a few hours pleasant walking from El Chalten, where I camped by the river. I was very lucky with the weather, which was actually fit for climbing, but M and G met the usual wild conditions some ten days later. As I gained height up the moraine under the Fitzroy, I passed climbers toiling up in double boots, carrying equipment

and food for several days on routes. Earlier starters could be seen on the hanging snowfields. I felt no envy; high cloud was racing over the towers; it would be very exposed up there and the rock would be icy. It suited me to be travelling light, with the option of leaving when I chose.

Bus rides again, to Puerto Natales in Chile for the Torres de Paine. This National Park is bigger, and most people go in for several days, as I did. The resources of Puerto Natales, indeed of all the settlements, were much better than I expected; there was plenty of simple accommodation, backpacking equipment could be hired, Gaz cylinders were available and it was easy to phone or fax home and receive a reply. Argentina was expensive, Chile reasonable.

For the Paine National Park visitors have to register at the entrance, pay 12£, and give their date of leaving. Don't overstay, or you will be treated as missing and charged for your rescue. I decided not to walk round the extremities of the park, but to do an inner circuit which was better for side trips towards the towers. The longest 'leg' was along the northern shore of Lake Nordenskjold, under the Cuernos (horns) de Paine, with the Glacier Grey and the Patagonian icecap in the blue distance. Again the weather was kind. I had wonderful views, didn't meet many people and saw no climbers - they must all have been at Fitzroy where there were no peak fees. The most impressive mountain was Cerro Paine Grande; it looked impossible to climb, because the continuous avalanches and terrible rock, unlike the granite of the towers. I went up to the high 'camp Britannia', from where British climbers of the '60s made first ascents. Old pieces of tins with well-known names punched out in holes were still pinned to the trees, Chris Bonnington, Derek Walker, and the late Ian Clough. It was a major expedition to get to Paine in those days.

Back at Puerto Natales I managed to book a berth on the ship to Puerto Montt for a memorable four day passage northwards through the Patagonian channels. The ship called at the tiny settlement of Puerto Eden where native people make a living from shellfish. It was truly paradise on that glorious morning, with a riot of flowers, including honeysuckle and Magellanes fuchsia. We passed the fjord where Shipton began his crossing of the Patagonian icecap. The Captain and Officers let me spend time on the bridge and in the chart room, 'helping' to navigate. All the economy-class passengers were adventurers of various nationalities; we quickly became ship-mates and were sorry to split up at Puerto Montt.

Finally, it was good to have a few days exercise high in the volcanic Andes before the time came to fly home. I had been away for six weeks and seen everything I wanted to. The weather in the high mountains was consistently better than expected, windy but sunny. The Spanish I had learned proved essential, though English and German are spoken in the tourist places, where local residents are often of European origin. Many other people were travelling alone, including young women, in these wonderful places where honesty and helpfulness still prevail. I would recommend Patagonia to anybody.

When The Italians Came - Joyce Kent.

In recent years I have spent many happy holidays in the Italian Alps. My friends live in Bormio in Valte Valtellina in the Stelvio National Park, and some years ago being fascinated by the name of our club, invited me to join their club, the Club Alpino Italiano.

Last winter they asked me to organise their major meet of the year, in Britain. And so they came, in April at the end of their ski-season, forty three of them, happy, noisy, excitable, fit and fast, handsome and pretty, colourful stylish gear, headbands and shades, no mistaking the Italians were here. Most had never been to Britain before and did not expect to be impressed, but they were, they loved it. Heathrow and then a whistle-stop tour of London and north to Ambleside. I had suggested that they stay at Bishop's Scale, but they delicately said, "We're on holiday, what about 'the Matrimoniale'?" And so they stayed at the Queens Hotel in Ambleside. Two days in the Lake District, they scattered over the hills to see everything, do everything. Threequarters of the way up Jakes Rake a phone rang, someone in Naples wanting to book a holiday in Bormio in the summer, he was asked to ring again please! That afternoon I lost them at Waterhead whilst waiting for the Steamer. They were lying on the pavement taking photos of the swans and ducks, delighted with them. They live 50 miles from Lake Como, but thought Windermere was better as they cruised along gulping bilberry flavoured grappa to keep out the cold. "Que bella, que bella," they said waving their arms about, and it was. From Wansfell past Fairfield, to the Pikes and beyond to Conistown Old Man I appreciated our fells as never before, so grateful for lovely weather. They wanted to see the Ocean, some had never seen it, so to Blackpool, Sea Life World, The Pleasure Beach and the Big One, the aspirant guide rode it three times. Fantastico!

Then off to Scotland, Fort William via Princes Street and Edinburgh Castle. They did cliff walks on Skye, no time for Sgurr nan Gilleann, routes on the Ben and fast up and down, they were fascinated by Loch Ness and Nessie, the Devil's Staircase to Kinloch and back to Fort Bill, drinking all the beers and ceilidhing all night and shopping! The Highlands were completely out of cashmere jumpers, and the weather stayed fine and sunny for ten days. They loved the sheep the Highland cows, the red deer, the eagles, the steak, the bacon, the chocolate and sweets and the cream cakes in Ambleside. "You don't get cakes like this in Italy you know!" "Why doesn't the British Government advertise on Italian television to tell us how beautiful Britain is?" "Why don't people knit jumpers out of Highland cow hair?" "Why don't you milk your sheep?"

As we shepherded them onto their coach for the last time and sent them south for a night in Chester, we breathed a sigh of relief. All had been impressed, all intend to come again and do more climbing and walking next time and for longer. We waved them off, we were well kissed, to echoing "Ciao, grazia", they disappeared. We drove to Mallaig and sailed round the Small Isles on the Mail Boat on a smooth, blue sea and relaxed for the first time in days. How quiet it was without them.....

Kq Cock-up

John Foster

This tale is almost a sequel to the last. Having lost Jock Smith, the team was short of a driver for some weeks, and we borrowed from other sections at times. In August two new drivers were posted-in straight from training. I remember our flight sergeant, the team leader, saying "They may have passed the course but we'd better see how they cope on some of the hill tracks we get onto".



On active service, somewhere in Wales.
The Bedford QL is on the left, Austin Kq signals truck centre.
You can make out the telescope aerial which could be wound up to 40 feet by a handle inside. Portable generator just to the right

One of the great advantages of being based so close to the hills was that on Sports Afternoons (Wednesdays) in summer we could be up at Ogwen in little over an hour and get a couple of routes in before dark. Then fish and chips and a pint in Bangor as we rolled home. But this particular Wednesday afternoon we headed up the coast road (A55) to Conway and turned up the valley. Johnny (the team leader) was driving the lead QL, with one of the new drivers in the second and the other lad driving an Austin Kq one tonner we had borrowed. At Tal-y-Bont a narrow tarmac road heads steeply westwards into the foothills of the Carneddau. It winds about, and then becomes a straight single track dirt road heading south west towards the broken dam of Llyn Eigiau reservoir which supplied the turbines at Dolgarry power station. Above the reservoir the road is supported by a low stone wall along its right hand side, and one of the 2 foot cube coping stones is missing. The road terminates at some old quarry workings at the head of Cwm Eigiau, and there we parked the trucks.

This time my request to climb was successful, and I set off to lead two others up the Ampitheatre Buttress of Craig-yr-Ysfa, a classic 900 foot diff. not far below the summit of Carnedd Llywelyn. I remember that for some strange reason I was wearing my tricouni nailed boots in the height of summer (worn more in winter, rubbers in summer).

The climb was uneventful, I had led it before, and dusk was gathering when we returned to the trucks. The other parties were back, and the engine revved as we clambered aboard. The order was as before, the Austin Kq bringing up the rear driven by Derek Rutter with Titch Morris riding shotgun, and I was with a few others in the back of the second QL.

Here I must give some detail. These Austin one tonners had been designed to an army specification as tractors for light A.A. guns, with a very wide track on the front wheels but a narrow track at the back so that the wheels could be double-banked if the going got heavy. Coming up in daylight Derek easily avoided the missing block which was on his side of the road, but returning in the dusk it was at his nearside and less easily noticed. The Kq was about 200yards behind us when we saw its side lights whiz round and move sideways then disappear.

We stopped our driver and ran back-up the road. The Austin was on its side a few yards below the road. Derek had forgotten the missing block, the nearside front wheel had dropped into the gap, dragging the truck off the road. It must have rolled over at least once, and when it came to rest he called "Are you alright Titch?" There was no answer, and he was groping about in the gloom of the cab for an unconscious body when, from outside he heard "I think I'm alright, but I've hurt my back". Titch had been pitched out through the machine gun hatch in the roof, and was damn lucky he hadn't been crushed under the truck. There was no chance of recovering it, and all we could do was pad a Thomas stretcher on bed-rolls in the back of a QL (we always had all our gear, call-outs could come at any time) for Titch to lie on.

He needed to be checked in a hospital and we phoned ahead for a

civilian ambulance to meet us in Conway. As the time was getting on towards 10 o'clock we were getting worried, rather anxious we might miss our pint, and so the agreed rendez-vous was outside the British Legion on the principle that as a serving unit we'd have a better chance of being served in there after hours than in a pub. It worked. The ambulance was waiting, we slid Titch in, then all trooped into the Legion and drank 'to absent friends'.

I didn't see him again either. I heard he had been taken down to the big RAF hospital at Gosford with his back injury, and he hadn't returned by the time I was demobbed at the end of November. Then 13 years ago at the Valley Christmas dinner I found myself looking at a balding old man thinking that he reminded me of Titch Morris. It couldn't be, he looked old enough to have been in the Royal Flying Corps. But it was, and no doubt he had been looking at a grey whiskered old geezer thinking much the same. Only then did I get the whole story.

The doctor on duty in casualty at Llandudno hospital had checked him over and decided his back was only bruised, but some X-rays were taken to be sure, which were only developed the following morning. He was sent back to Valley in an ambulance and told to report to the M.O. with a letter. By the time he did so next morning he was feeling pins and needles down one leg, and his back was worse. The M.O. took no notice, thinking he was swinging the lead and said, "Pull yourself together corporal, I think you are fit to return to your duties", (as an engine fitter). When Llandudno developed his X-rays they showed a couple of cracked vertebrae, which result was phoned through to Valley, and only then was he admitted to sick quarters. It was January (after I had gone) when he returned to the team, fit for the hill once more.

He is one of a small group of my contemporaries from the mid/late fifties who meet every May Day weekend in Capel Curig, and I join them occasionally. Titch Morris made the service his career and came out only three years ago with the rank of warrant officer, after what must have been almost 40 years in uniform. Not for me man, not for me.

The rescue team at R.A.F. Valley is now down to 12 part-time volunteers, the half dozen permanent staff have been transferred to R.A.F. Stafford. It is likely that in the next few months the rescue team at R.A.F. Valley will cease to exist as the maintenance of the aircraft is progressively 'civilianised', and the pool of uniformed personnel dwindles dramatically. It is sad that as the very first R.A.F. rescue team was set up at Llandurrog in 1942, North Wales will no longer have its own rescue team, but will be covered from Stafford.

Stubai Alps

Ann Gaitskell and Anne Wallace

The idea was formed when Ann Gaitskell and Barry Rogers read a magazine article about the Rucksack Route. It gave the impression of a good tour in the area with fine views. Ann said "Shall we do it this summer?" A recommended book was 'Hut to Hut in the Stubai Alps' by Allan Hartley, Cicerone Press.

Ann and Barry asked various members to join the trip. On Saturday 27th July, the two with Austin Guilfoyle, Dave Hugill, Anne Wallace and James Green (Barry's nephew) left Manchester Airport for Innsbruck. Our rucksacks weighed in at about 12 Kg, except Barry's which was 15 Kg. We were a bit concerned when the Captain seemed a little confused as to whether we would touch down from the west or the east.

Saturday is half-day closing, so, there was nothing to do. A bus took us to Neustift. Barry got B & B at Haus Ofer, Kampl. We walked the 3 Km, got caught in a thunderstorm and drenched. When the sun came out we had to pose on balconies while Barry twiddled with light meter and Hasselblad.

Saturday 28th July. The guide gives the walk to the Innsbrucker Hut (2369m) as, 5 hours, 10 Km and 1405m, but there is a jeep/bus to Pinnisalm which cuts 6Km and 545m off the day. cost was Schilling 90.

We had seen something of Pinnistal from the house balcony and photographed the serrated ridge. Austin and Dave set off in fine style. The group as a whole made standard time for one and half hours. On the steeper section, the mountain goats kept close to the others for a while. Then, drew away to arrive at the hut about 1230pm. The others got there at 1310.

It was interesting to watch how we went about booking into the hut with only a few words of German between us. Some mistake led to three Bergsteigeressen (mountaineers' food) having to be consumed by Barry, Austin and James, within minutes of arrival. A man spoke to the fellows and Anne heard a familiar name. He was working in a school Anne had worked in.

The peaks of the Tribulaum were admired and photographed. A little rest was taken before the evening meal. After the meal, the woman came for payments. She seemed surprised that we all had Austrian Alpine Club cards.

Monday, 29th July. 0600, breakfast. Anne realised that an abdominal strain done a few months previously had been aggravated by sac buckle pressure, considered the nature of the route indicated in the guide, and decided to go down.

0745 the five set off for the Bremer Hut (2413m). A long day. Given as 6 hours for 9Km, the ascent is described as 'Lots'. This was later worked out as about 668m.

Up and down, crossing ridges with fixed ropes in places. About

1 Km before the hut Austin and Dave took a higher path which went past the Lautersee. They came upon a set of iron ladders on a crag and fixed rope just below the hut, reaching it in about 7 hours. Barry, Ann and James scrambled up broken rocks to a broad plateau below the hut. A hard section at the end of a 8 hour day.

Tuesday, 30 July. To Nurnberger Hut (2280m). 3 hours, 5Km, 351m via Simmingjoch. Austin and Dave set off at 0845 to arrive 1215. The other three left at 0900. It is a steep climb to the Police hut, where there should have been excellent views of the Feuerstein and Wilder Freiger but rain and hail obscured them. A tricky descent over slabs with fixed ropes. Then, down steep rocks with more ropes. A brew and snack stop by the Langtal river, before climbing, aided by another two sets of fixed ropes, followed by a pleasant walk for the remaining distance. Some time was spent in taking photographs.

A challenging and exciting day but could be considered quite frightening by some.

Wednesday, 31st July. This was supposed to be the day to climb the Wilder Freiger. Ann woke Barry at 0355. Barry, Austin and Dave took one look at the sky and instantly returned to their beds. It ended as a day off, lazing around the hut, drinking, taking photos and talking.

Anne was hoping that a few days rest would ease her back problem. Then valley to hut walks would be made.

Thursday, 1st August. To Sulzenau Hut (2191m). 3 hours, 4 Km, 347m.

Up at 0500 for breakfast outside the hut. Then Austin and Dave set off, with Ann, Barry and James following soon after.

From 0815, Ann waited with the sacs at the col Seescharte (2812) while the men went up the Wilder Freiger (3419m). They reached the summit at 1030 with good snow conditions all the way. Barry and James returned to the col first. Austin and Dave appearing as the brew was ready.

Descended the Kleiner Grunaufer Glacier, past the Grunau See, to arrive at the hut in about the time given.

Thunder and lighting began shortly after 2200, increasing in intensity until one strike could clearly be heard nearby. All the hut electricity went off and remained so next morning when the group departed.

Anne decided to go to the Franz Senn Hut (2147m). Bus to Milders. From there a road goes for 8 Km to Oberib Alm (1742m). Wondering whether there was a jeep/bus, an enquiry was made at a hotel. The man rang somewhere to ask a minibus to stop for one person, otherwise, hitching would have been tried. In retrospect, hitching would have been better, for the cost of the minibus turned out to be Schilling 150.

From the Alm, the hut is Km and 407m. A pleasant walk through shrubbery and then pasture for about an hour. As the hut was approached a helicopter came in. Someone must have been injured and lifted out.

Descent was by a path nearer the river. It may be the old way to Oberib Alm for it goes over slabs and protruding rocks, rather than a maintained path.

The minibus would return at 1600. Some hours to wait. Not knowing whether the money already paid was a single or return fare, and if single, thinking there was no way so much would be shelled out again, the thumb was used and a lift to Neustift obtained.

A note for anyone driving up to Oberib Alm. It is private ground and payment is made to take a car all the way up.

Friday, 2nd August. To Dresner Hut (2302m). 3 hours, 4 Km, 485m via Peiljoch, or, 4 hours, 4 Km, 710m via Grosser Frogler. The Peiljoch route was chosen but proved to be technically difficult.

Set off at 0815 over rocky ground along the left moraine of the Sulzenau Glacier. There were fixed ropes in places and a wooden plank across the edge of a rocky slab. Continued NW up a steep path to a col where there were many cairns. It was a strange, eerie place to be. Unfortunately, there was a thunderstorm while on the col, so good views of the Wilder Pfaff, Ferner Stube and Sulzenau Glacier ice-fall, could not be seen. There was a steep descent along layers of rock and boulders which was very exposed in places, aided by fixed ropes.

The mountain goats arrived at 1000. The remainder were taking photos and arrived at 1130.

Anne headed up the valley. There are bus stops by the paths to four huts beyond Volderau. The stop for Sulzenau hut is at 1600m.

At 1000, crossed the river and headed into the forest for the 3 Km, 591m ascent. The top of the forest was a 1800m. A little after, the view opened into the flatter Sulzenau Alm and beyond with the hut near the top of a waterfall dropping from some 400m higher. Out came the camera. The hut was reached at 1200.

Saturday, 3rd August. To Regensberger Hut (2286m). 8 hours, 11 Km, 'Lots' (about 708m).

Set off at 0745. No view whatsoever on the cloudy and rainy day. It seemed to be uphill for ages until we reached the Hohe Grube, a small lake, before continuing over rocks to the pass at 2500m. Some contouring, more ascent to 2760m, contouring, then zig-zagging up to the col Grabagrubbennieder (2888m), the highest point of the route. We were cold and wet with sweat but Barry took time for photos at the col, although nothing could be seen. Ann was sitting on a boulder, contemplating the steep drop immediately below.

From the col, we descended in zig-zags over loose and awkward ground with fixed ropes to the Hochmoos Glacier. The snowfield was mushy, hard to get a firm foothold, legs sank in or slipped. Barry and Ann descended about 10m roped up. Then, Barry decided to traverse onto loose rubble, moving as quickly as possible onto safer ground. Rockfall could be heard in the distance. A big boulder field was not difficult to cross. A good path led along the Falbersen Ertal, when, suddenly, the Regesberger Hut appeared out of the mist at 1645m. What a relief!

Austin, Dave and James, had arrived at 1305. A steep ascent in mist turning to rain. Progressed quickly for the first hour to the small lake. Pressed on to the highest point. The three each tried different routes down the snowfield. There was lots of loose rock next to the snowfield, posing dangers for those below. The remainder comprised of an almost flat corrie floor with a river. After 5 hours and 20 minutes, came upon the hut, surprised to have done it in less than the standard time.

All said that it was the hardest day so far.

Anne had semi-decided to have a rest day. Over breakfast clouds were seen to build up and up. The cloud base was about 1300m. Rain started. It was to be a rest day. OK, I admit to festering again.

Sunday, 4th August. The cloud was down, nothing to see or do. Barry had a chill, so spent most of the day in bed. The others sat around talking.

Anne had intended to go to another hut but the clouds were right down in the valley. Frau Ofer searched among books and magazines left after the guests. She took a map and opened it to show some low level walks. It is a map to buy if possible. Wanderparadies Stubaital, 1 : 30000. The only drawback is that crevasse lines are not shown, whereas they are on 1:5000 and 1:25000 maps. When the clouds had lifted somewhat, a walk to Neustift and along a route Frau Ofer had described was taken.

Monday, 5th August. Barry, Austin, Dave and James, to the Franz Senn Hut. Given as 4 hours, 6.5 Km, 420m.

A steep ascent, an easier descent through pleasant countryside which was lushier than on other parts of the route.

Barry went into the hut. A lass working there asked, "Are you from Achille Ratti?" and "Do you know Faz Faraday?" Judy Poynter is a graduate member. Faz had taught her to climb. As soon as Barry told Austin her name, he realised she lives up the road from him in Widnes. Moreover, her father had taught Austins three sons.

The fellows were amused by a young ram, head-butting a goat. The goat began to fight back and things got quite aggressive. The goat was much better at it than the ram and won in the end.

Ann decided to return to the valley, tired and with strained knees. Left the hut at 0845 to reach Ochsenalm in 1 hour. A

cherryade there before continuing on the vehicle road between Alm and the valley. At 1040 saw Anne making her way up. In the valley at 1130. Sandwiches were enjoyed under a tree by a lake. There was a terrace walk to Volderau and bus to Neder. Arrived at Kampl 1300.

Anne got off the bus at the Regesberger halt. The ascent began at 0945. Popped out of the forest to walk a short distance on the road to the next way into the forest when a surprised sounding "Anne?" was heard. It was some coincidence for us to have met in that minute or so within all the space and time. A photo from the Alm had to be taken. Another waterfall poured from 465m above, with the hut to one side. The hut was reached at 1230.

By the time the descent to the Alm was made a knee sprain could be felt. The vehicle road was a more gradual way down than the forest path but the last 200m had to be in the forest in order to reach the bus stop.

Tuesday, 6th August. Austin and Dave remained at the hut. Barry and James headed for the Starkenberger Hut (2237m). Described as 7 hours, 12 Km "Lots" (about 460m). It was a cloudy, rainy day with very low visibility. They just plodded on, having one stop for a brew, until the hut was reached.

In the evening, the sky cleared, revealing a magnificent vista of virtually the entire route. Barry used up the last of his films.

Ann and Anne went to Neustift and looked around. Headed back and relaxed by a small lake.

Wednesday, 7th August. Barry and James took the road from the hut to arrive in Kampl at dinnertime.

Austin and Dave moved to the Starkenberger Hut. The day started clear and bright but clouded later in the morning. Before the hut is a huge limestone corrie with towers above, just like the Dolomites. They got to the hut in 5 hours.

Thursday, 8th August. Austin and Dave woke to find very low cloud and drizzle. So they decided to walk down to Neustift on a narrow path through the woods and pastures, which took two hours. Then rushed to the bank because Dave had only Schilling 4 left. They walked to Kampl to unite with the rest of the party.

Impressions.

James considered himself fairly fit but still found it a shattering experience during the first three days.

Ann thought the route was much harder than they expected but when there were breaks in the clouds, the views made the effort worthwhile. Many friends were gained, re-meeting people at different huts.

Austin thought it was very exciting from day to day, never

knowing what was coming next.

Dave had a good trip. Some long days some short days. The weather made it very interesting. No two days were alike. Every hut was a bit different. People were met along the way. Worth doing again sometime.

Barry thought it was very demanding but enjoyable. Stubaital houses were the most beautiful he had seen.

Anne commented that the paths from the valley were narrow. If someone passes another, it is often necessary for one to step aside, or stop. They would please those who feel that mountain paths should not be hacked away, rather than the trippers-day-out routes found in some areas.



James, Austin, Dave, Barry, Ann.

Junior Meet. Bishop's Scale. 21st. September.

Bryony White.

First of all I have to confess that this report is written in retrospect, so if details lack a certain clarity you now know why.

The forecast for the Saturday was rather dubious, and the meet leader (hitherto to be referred to as F.F) was a little concerned that very few might actually turn up. However, by Friday evening the hut was literally heaving with junior members not to mention their extensive entourages - cooks, sandwich makers, personal valets, etc., and the meet leader's anxiety transferred itself to numbers of suitably qualified assistants. In the event there were five of us - Neil Hodgkinson, Helen Russell, Fiona McLlhinney, Ray Baptist and myself. How suitably qualified we actually were is a moot point - certainly to keep ourselves out of trouble climbing and certainly very willing to do the same for the juniors.

Saturday dawned as forecast, cloudy, windy and threatening rain. F.F. up preternaturally early, paced outside the hut with a cooling cup of coffee in one hand, an inordinately long list of names in the other, and a (more than usually) furrowed brow. His expressed opinion always having been that above all the juniors should *enjoy* themselves, the distinct possibility of the day deteriorating and huddles of wet and cold juniors watching miserably from below whilst their even more unfortunate siblings were flying like kites off the face of the crag was obviously not far from his mind. As much by act of faith - as befits our particular club - the decision was made to go ahead anyway.

A forward party consisting of F.F. and aforementioned willing assistants set off into the teeth of the wind (by car, of course) to Three Shire Stone, and then by foot up towards Black Crag.

Once there the suitability of the chosen site became evident. On slightly higher ground before us was an accessible crag perhaps sixty feet high with relatively safe walk-offs on either side, suitable for older climbers. Down to our right there was a delightful little slab out of the wind and ready to catch the afternoon sun should there be any, (there was). As the older climbers were already on their way the rest of us lost no time in admiring F.F. and Neil as they ran around setting up topropes. Of course we crawled around rather gingerly proffering bits of gear and generally getting in the way as helpfully as possible - none of us fancied taking the somewhat awe-inspiring responsibility of dangling the future hopes and dreams of the club from anchors we had set up ourselves.

No sooner was the last rope in place when the older juniors and game parental entourage hove into view. The enthusiasm with which ropes were seized and tied into, and climbs were begun, completed, climbed again was impressive. It would be invidious to pick out any one of these young climbers individually, they were each and every one of them surprisingly able. Trying to imagine

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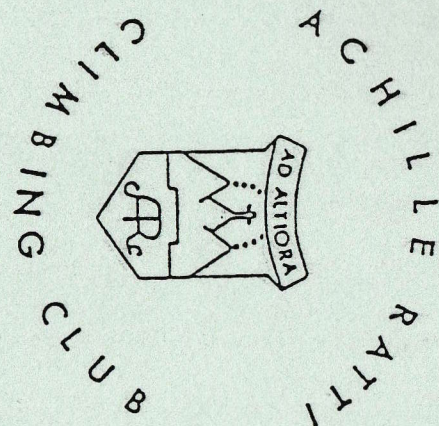
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1997 MEETS CARD

myself, at their age, tackling anything so daunting - not to mention athletic - brought a smile to my face.

The younger youngsters walked over to join us for a picnic lunch undaunted by the whipping wind and intermittently lowering sky. As far as they were concerned they had come to climb, and climb they would - and did!

I volunteered to belay down on the little slab and spent a wonderful afternoon blessedly out of the wind and thoroughly enjoying the wit and wisdom of some of the smallest club members. Most of them having been taught by F.F. at some point in their short lives, they were alarmingly educated in the arts of tying in and belaying. I must get F.F. to remind me all about "mummy snake and baby snake" - and front doors and back doors before I have to face this discerning audience again - some of whom did not miss the fact I seemed occasionally suspiciously at sea.

Even the tiniest climbed amazingly well. Parents helped wherever they could, and all were indispensable in keeping the "untethered" safe and happy. All in all it was a very good day. Above all I was constantly struck by how incredibly nice, polite, and well-behaved the juniors were - grateful to us and remarkably supportive and encouraging to each other. Even - or I should say *particularly* brothers and sisters in the same families! Just as the papers never tire of saying - what is happening to the youth today?

turned out beautiful and we got sunburnt - we hadn't brought the sun lotion and baseball caps!

On our return to Oaklands we had the most beautiful shower ever and got into some fresh clothes - doesn't one take normal comforts for granted! The momentum continues and at 6 pm we had a lecture from Helen Flynn about Mountain Safety and Hypothermia. After dinner we were driven over to Ogwen and District Mountain Rescue Headquarters. John Evans - who gave us the talk - was the first rescuer to gain paramedic qualifications. He is an engineer by trade and told us some hair-raising stories which illustrated how easily people without knowledge and understanding of the hills can get themselves into trouble. Apparently many people think that mountain rescue teams are paid for their activities! Finished off with a pint in Capel Garmon.

Tuesday.

We changed instructors today - Helena Flynn replaced John Moxham. Today was spent in the Tryfan area doing lots of rope work - belaying, abseiling, etc.

After dinner we set off towards Penmachno and into a very wild remote area of moorland round Llyn Conway. We had a night time orienteering exercise which we did with partners. John kept me going and we found 8 of 10 posts - only one other group beat us and he was an ex-marine officer. We saw the comet in between Venus and Cassiopea. One never gets such star-lit nights in towns! After waiting for about an hour for the others to return we managed to get a terrific couple of pints in the Machno Inn.

Wednesday.

Today was spent round the Glyders practising making emergency arrangements on steep ground, i.e., making stretchers out of rucksacks, etc., and walking across steep snow-covered ground. We were treated in the evening to a great game of football on the T.V. in the pub when Liverpool beat Newcastle 4-3!

Thursday.

Our last full day! Drove over to Llyn Eigian Reservoir in the Conway Valley. This dam bursts its banks 50 years or so ago and demolished the village downstream - fortunately no-one was killed because the whole village was out watching a circus on high ground. We did lots of navigating in the Carneddau and then walked down to Bethesda. We had swapped minibuses with another group doing our walk in reverse.

In the evening John Moxham drove us down to Betwys-Y-Coed for a drink - what a decent fellow!

Friday. After breakfast we had a de-briefing individually and set off for home about noon.

This weather was terrific most of the week so we weren't challenged much in that respect. It was a great exercise in leadership and cooperation and we all learnt so much about

navigation. The course was the most stimulating I have ever been on and John felt the same way. After he's graduated he wants to make a career in outdoor education. He will no doubt do the assessment course for the MLTB certificate - whether I do or not is a matter of conjecture.

The four men on assessment were all deferred for one reason or another. Only 20% of those who do the training ever take the assessment and about 60% of them pass eventually - so it is a difficult certificate to obtain.

Was this a con? Or just good business.

OUR NEED IS URGENT!

PLEASE FILL THIS IN AND SEND IT TODAY

Date

- ☐ I should like to become a Patron of the Achille Ratti Climbing Club, and I enclose subscription of (£10 or over) In addition I should like to nominate

to become a Full Life Member of the Club.

- ☒ *We* I should like to become ~~an~~ Associate Life Member of the A.R.C.C., and enclose my subscription (£5) which entitles me to be an Associate Member of the Club and to receive news of the Club in the same way as Full Members.

- ☐ I enclose a donation to the Funds of the Achille Ratti Climbing Club.

SIGNED *Elizabeth Prince (MRS) & Mr F.T. PRINCE*

ADDRESS *32 Brookvale Road,
Southampton*

☐ Tick in the appropriate box

We never had Associate Life Membership!

myself, at their age, tackling anything so daunting - not to mention athletic - brought a smile to my face.

The younger youngsters walked over to join us for a picnic lunch undaunted by the whipping wind and intermittently lowering sky. As far as they were concerned they had come to climb, and climb they would - and did!

I volunteered to belay down on the little slab and spent a wonderful afternoon blessedly out of the wind and thoroughly enjoying the wit and wisdom of some of the smallest club members. Most of them having been taught by F.F. at some point in their short lives, they were alarmingly educated in the arts of tying in and belaying. I must get F.F. to remind me all about "mummy snake and baby snake" - and front doors and back doors before I have to face this discerning audience again - some of whom did not miss the fact I seemed occasionally suspiciously at sea.

Even the tiniest climbed amazingly well. Parents helped wherever they could, and all were indispensable in keeping the "untethered" safe and happy. All in all it was a very good day. Above all I was constantly struck by how incredibly nice, polite, and well-behaved the juniors were - grateful to us and remarkably supportive and encouraging to each other. Even - or I should say *particularly* brothers and sisters in the same families! Just as the papers never tire of saying - what is happening to the youth today?

Mountain Walking Leadership Certificate Training Course.

Ed. and John McWatt.

The training course was held at the Wirrals Outdoor Education Centre - Oaklands - near Betwys y Coed in North Wales for one week before Easter.

We arrived Oaklands at 7.15pm on Friday 29th March 1996. We had a warm welcome from John Moxham, the Centre Director.

Eventually fifteen people arrived for the course and four more for assessment. Out of the fifteen only two were female. Ages ranged from 19 to 53 (me!). We managed to squeeze in a couple of pints in Betwys y Coed before hitting the sack. We shared a dorm with a fellow teacher from the Wirral and a bank employee.

Saturday. The course started in earnest at 7.30 am and after a hearty breakfast and subsequent briefing we were transported to Capel Curig in fine but cool weather. We spent the day learning micro-navigation, using map and compass in the Grampian area - all of us were made consecutively to navigate for the whole group. No rest when we got back - after a quick shower we had to attend a lecture on weather - then dinner - then another lecture by Chris Smith (now an instructor but previously managing director of a small firm in Bolton!) about access and conservation. We finished the evening with a well deserved pint at the White Horse in Capel Garmon, just a couple of miles down the road.

Sunday. Today was going to be our preparation for overnight camping. Packed our bags ready for inspection and drove out to Hafodydd Brithion in the Moelwynns and again took turns in navigating to Llyn Edno, way up in the Moelwynns. Pitched camp - I managed to break an aluminium pole in our domed tent - a manufacturers fault I subsequently discovered. John Moxham showed his adaptability by using special tape and a tent peg to make a temporary repair. The weather had been good but soon deteriorated into snow flurries. We rested and then cooked our survival rations on a "trangia". At 7.30 pm we set off for a night navigation exercise. It was the most difficult navigation we have ever done. The temperature dropped to -5C on Foel Baethwel. Our leader put us all (six of us) in a large survival bag and the temperature shot up to be very comfortable in a very short time. We got to bed at midnight. With all clothes on in a sleeping bag we were still terribly cold and had a fitful nights sleep.

Monday. Got up to a misty start at 8.00 am and had to smash the ice on the Llyn to get water. The trangia provided us with some warmth and cornflakes in frozen milk and beans on bread had never tasted so good.

We spent the rest of the day navigating. This time John Moxham didn't correct our mistakes and actually allowed us to make a mistake which cost us an extra couple of miles. The weather

John Foster.

In the late forties and early fifties as I and my mates steadily improved our capabilities on the fells, we believed there could be nowhere else in Britain as beautiful and exciting as the Lake District. Even when we bought our first motorbikes and began to venture into Wales, we still felt most at home in The Lakes, particularly Langdale. Then a couple of older lads in the parish had a holiday in the Highlands, and returned with tales of epic days.. They had been up Ben Nevis and others around Glen Coe, and claimed they knocked The Lakes into a cocked hat. We didn't believe it, nothing could possibly beat Langdale. but inwardly we wondered, the seeds of doubt had been sown.

We heard that the Scottish Council for Physical Recreation had bought an old hunting lodge up Glen More, and was using it to run courses in rock climbing and mountaineering. As we had managed our first rock climbs (with a hemp rope) in Langdale at Easter '54, John Liptrot and I decided to have a fortnight at Glen More Lodge that August to improve our skills and see what Scotland had to offer. We realised we had better go by train, as it was rare for our ancient motorbikes to reach Langdale or Ogwen without a breakdown.

The train was overnight from Liverpool, and after changing at Glasgow we reached Aviemore about mid-day. The vehicle sent to pick up us and others from the station was an ex-army Bedford three tonner, and we soon realised why. At Coylum Bridge the tarmac petered out and we felt as if we were in a concrete mixer as the truck bounced in and out of pot holes along the single track dirt road to the lodge.

We could have had our holidays at anytime after our exams in early June, but so ignorant were we of Scottish weather we had chosen one of the wettest and midgiest months. But it was a big exciting new country, and difficult to grasp that we were already over 1000ft above sea level. And the frequent mists sometimes added to the charm, and gave us our first Brocken Spectre at the top of Aladdin Buttress in Coire an t' Sneachda. As we travelled home we agreed we'd had a wonderful fortnight, and we'd come back to Scotland sometime.

The following April I was 21, and with my apprenticeship complete was liable to call up at any time, so ambitious planning would have tempted fate. I confined myself to long weekends with my mates in our Welsh barn or camped in The Lakes which we arranged at short notice, except for the September week we had at Rawhead barn, which is now Bishop's Scale. The Sword of Damocles fell at the end of November, and within days I was all shaven and shorn doing my square bashing at R.A.F. Padgate, through the worst months of the winter. That summer of '56 I had met Joyce in the Old D.G. and we maintained our relationship after I was posted to Valley to join the rescue team.

We spent Easter '57 in Langdale, and the talk in the pub was of summer holidays. Skye was suggested and decided on, and I arranged a fortnights leave at the end of June. I had by then a 650cc Triumph Thunderbird, a superbike of the day, and Joyce rode behind me, but the rest of the Langdale regulars had to use a mixture of bus, ferry and thumb.

As we rode down Glen Brittle to camp by the beach (no campsite then) I realised I had found the Promised Land of rock climbers. Looking up at Sron na Ciche I saw acres and acres of rock, with routes of 1000ft and more. This was no fell walking country, these were real rough mountains. I was hooked, and Joyce loved Skye too, and year after year we spent our main holiday there.

Then we heard of a house on a croft going cheap, and once that was acquired I spent all my holidays there, and the rest of Scotland was ignored. How many times I have driven through Glen Coe as I dashed north at the start of my holiday, then as I dragged myself reluctantly back to work, I'll never know. I was not oblivious to the great hills I was passing by, and promised myself I would get on them someday, but as I was approaching fifty it began to dawn on me that if I didn't do so soon I might never manage it. My main holidays at Christmas, Easter and summer were still spent on the croft, but I began to look for huts in the Southern Highlands for the bank holiday weekends.

So it was that on the last Friday of April 1983 I finished my last class at 3.0'clock and drove to Blackburn to pick up Wilf Charnley as he finished work at 3.30. Before eight o'clock we were cooking our meal in the Ochils M.C. hut at Crianlarich, with comfortable time for a can or two in the Rod and Reel before bed. We had the hut to ourselves, and on a beautiful Saturday morning set off up Stob Garbh and over Cruach Ardrain, and down the ridge by the Grey Height.

As to Sunday Mass, Crianlarich is in the middle of a desert, and we had to head down Glen Lochy and through the Pass of Brander to Taynuilt 29 miles away. It was mid-day as we came out, but we had time to manage the western summit of Beinn Cruachan, which was under deep snow. On both days the weather was perfect, and with the clarity of early spring the views in all directions, of ridge after ridge and top after top, were beyond words. I wondered if the weather was as good in the Lakes and Wales, and thought of the hordes around Ogwen and up Langdale, but I don't remember seeing anyone.

The weather held, and after an earlyish breakfast on Mayday we packed up all our gear and headed for Lochearnhead. From the south Loch Earn road we headed up Glen Uorlich and encountered our first humanity. From half a mile behind came a great shout 'put that dog on a lead', evidently a keeper. Zeke was trotting quietly just in front of us, but now we could see the haze of the Central Belt to the south. Down Glen Ample back to the road, and we were ready for our fish and chips in Callander.

By 6 o'clock we were heading home, tired and happy, and at 9.15 I dropped Wilf at his front door in Darwen. I can't remember what it cost us in petrol and hut fees, but with new hills, no