

THE ORDNANCE SURVEY AND THE CAIRNGORMS.

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THE Ordnance Survey publishes maps of the Cairngorms in three forms:—6-inch, 1-inch outline, and 1-inch hachured. The forms are here placed in the reverse order of their satisfactory character. The 6-inch maps are deplorably defective for all the higher ground; they show no contours; they give a very inadequate and often misleading selection of heights; when they represent crags they do so in a curiously indefinite and incomplete manner; they are decidedly lacking in place-names; and, generally speaking, they are quite disappointing to the mountaineer. The Ordnance Survey explains these facts by saying that the intention was not to produce a topographical map, but only a map to show the civil divisions of the country, and to facilitate transactions in land. The two forms of the 1-inch map are much more satisfactory; indeed, the hachured map is a really admirable specimen of orographic cartography, its only real drawback being the smallness of its scale. But in the Cairngorms both these small-scale maps suffer from lack of place-names, many more of which should and easily could appear.

Now, one of the prime requisites of a mountaineer is a good map of his district, and it seems quite certain that we who are interested in the Cairngorms shall not get a satisfactory mapping of our ground unless we bring pressure to bear on the authorities, and ourselves lend not a little assistance. And who are the authorities? Well, the Ordnance Survey is at present under the control of the Board of Agriculture, the head of which is Mr. Long, M.P. for the West Derby division of Liverpool; the Director-General of the Survey is Colonel Johnston. Between these two stools we rather seem likely to come to the ground, for obviously the gentleman at the Board of Agriculture is not

necessarily an expert in maps, or specially acquainted with or interested in the Survey that has been put under his charge; and the Director-General is an executive officer, holding his office for only a limited time, with, apparently, no power of initiative, and bound by that red tape that hampers all our officials. Of course, in our admirable Constitution everything is done under the supervision of the High Court of Parliament, and if our M.P.'s who vote the supplies—insufficient, alas!—for the Survey, knew enough about the matter, there might be some hope that they would demand and insist that all our land should be adequately and beautifully mapped. There need be no doubt as to the entire ability of our Ordnance Surveyors to produce maps of any degree of excellency that may be demanded. The service that produces the 1-inch hachured map can produce if needful a 6-inch hachured map—and the British Association has asked that it shall do so.

Among our readers are many who can bring pressure to bear on M.P.'s—possibly there are M.P.'s themselves—and to all we appeal for help in this matter. The thing most needed just now is the adequate mapping of the higher ground on the 6-inch scale, and every opportunity should be taken to show up the present defective condition of the Ordnance Survey maps in this respect.

But short of this much may be done. The maps of Scotland are now undergoing revision, and the Cairngorm district is being worked at. The Surveyors are quite willing to receive suggestions and information; and all who have knowledge that might be useful should at once send in their notes to the Secretary of the Cairngorm Club, who will forward them to the proper quarters.

As suggestive of what may be done I propose to narrate briefly some of my own action in this direction. I had long been much dissatisfied with the inadequate mapping of the Cairngorms, and after some correspondence with the Ordnance Survey office and the Board of Agriculture, in which I found myself vainly beating the air, I began to compile an ordered series of criticisms of the maps of the district I knew best—*i.e.*, the Central and Western Cairn-

gorms. It may perhaps not be amiss to place on record here some of the errors of omission and commission that I noted; similar mistakes may have occurred elsewhere, and should be pointed out wherever possible. One of the most surprising has already been referred to more than once in the *C.C.J.*—the misnaming of the chief tops of the Sgoran Dubh ridge. There is as yet no map published on which the names “Sgor Ghaoith”, “Sgoran Dubh Mor”, and “Sgoran Dubh Beag” are correctly placed. Then on the northern part of this ridge appears as a *mountain* name “Inchriach”, really the name of the *low moorland* to the west of it. The name “Garbh Coire” is placed high up on the ridge between the summits of Cairn Toul and Sgoran Lochain Uaine. The well-known corries on the north face of Braeriach, and the no less striking ones on its south face, are left unnamed. The curious gully along the south-east side of Creag a’ Chalamain has a direction approximately N.E. and S.W.; it is mapped at an angle of 60° with this! The cairn that stands on the edge of the Lurcher’s Crag is mapped as if nearly 200 yards back from it! These and very many such I submitted to the officers in charge of the revision, and I was pleased to find that my action was appreciated; the specific points were inquired into; errors were admitted and corrected; omissions were in most cases supplied, and the revised maps will thereby be to some extent improved. Now, there are many members and friends of the Club who can do as I did, with, in many cases, fuller knowledge, and consequently greater result.

During this last summer holiday I had the pleasure of meeting some of the Surveyors on the ground, and spent one day actually working with the Superintendent Surveyor in Glen Eunach and on the Sgoran Dubh ridge. One morning in the early part of August we drove from Inverdrueie to Loch Eunach, having an interview on the way with some road-mending gillies, who had vague notions as to the functions and powers of Ordnance Surveyors. We set up our plane table at a known spot in the glen, where the driving road crossed a stream, and thence fixed the positions of the tops of Sgor Ghaoith and of Sgoran Dubh Mor and

Beag, not previously accurately placed on the Ordnance Survey maps. Near the upper bothy we repeated this process, and also definitely located the corries whose names were to be added to the map. Then following Ross' Path, we similarly determined the positions of the Cailleach and the Bodach, and the lower limit of the crags falling from the Sgoran Dubh ridge. We then went up on to the ridge itself, and from the summits successively of Sgor Ghaoith, Sgoran Dubh Mor, and Sgoran Dubh Beag, we checked the directions previously taken by others to well-known points. Proceeding further north, we came to the neighbourhood of the two tors of doubtful name, the Argyll or Atholl Stone and the Clach a' Chuidsich. We could not, of course, determine the rightful naming of these—can anyone?—but we did at all events determine within small limits their positions on the map.

Thus in the course of one day's very pleasant strolling I had the satisfaction of helping to secure a number of corrections and improvements in the map of that one district. Other members and friends of the Club may as easily and pleasantly accompany Ordnance Surveyors at their work, and place their special knowledge at their service.

My little article will have amply served its purpose if it shows the need of such work, and if it stirs up other helpers in the ways I have indicated, so that our maps of the Cairngorms may eventually become really complete and satisfactory.