

## ERECTING THE INDICATOR.

### DIARY OF THE BUILDING OPERATIONS.

MR. JAMES A. PARKER has kindly furnished the following notes upon the various ascents and other technical details involved in the erection of the indicator on Ben Macdhui and they convey a vivid impression of the undertaking, the most ambitious and arduous enterprise of the kind yet achieved upon any Scottish mountain. The design of the indicator was executed by Mr. Parker, in part from the panorama prepared by the late Mr. Alexander Copland, but largely from original observations and calculations made by himself, and his name will always be associated with the work, for it is almost superfluous to say that without his expert aid as a topographer and enthusiasm as a mountaineer it would never have been carried through.

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*April 19, 1925.* J. A. Parker made the ascent alone from Derry Lodge, carrying a complete surveying outfit of plane-table, 5 inch compass, maps, binocular, etc., weighing in all about 14 lbs. Was rewarded with perfect weather conditions and a view in every direction of 50 to 60 miles, and was able, by direct observation, to verify the direction of 60 of the hills shown on the indicator drawing. Continuous hard snow from 2,500 feet up and about three feet in depth on the summit.

*June 21, 1925.* The following party motored from Aberdeen or Ballater and ascended the hill by the Lui Beg route.—J. A. Parker, J. Murray, F. Fowlie, Roy Symmers, W. Garden, C. Robb, M. Robb, H. Butchart,

and E. M. MacGregor. Objects in view :—to select site for indicator, locate nearest water supply, test stones on summit as to their suitability for building, and see if Glen Derry path was good enough for pony transport. Weather on summit was of the very worst, viz., strong north wind with driving sleet and rain. Anything in the nature of careful work was impossible. The mason, Fowlie, said that the stones were suitable by merely looking at them from the lee side of the cairn, while four of the others rushed out into the open and, with the help of compass and the drawing, hurriedly fixed on a position for the indicator. Searching for water or anything else was entirely out of the question and the party retreated from the mountain by the Lui Beg route as fast as possible.

*July 5, 1925.* H. Alexander and J. A. Parker ascended the hill from Boat of Garten, by motor to Inverdrue, and thence via top of Lurcher's Crag to the summit. Weather perfect so far. The site selected by compass work on the 21st ulto was found to be correct, *i.e.*, the only part of the horizon that from it would be masked by the cairn was the middle part of the Ben a Bhuird ridge. The slopes of the hill near the summit were then carefully searched for water and the nearest source was found to be in the headwaters of the Garbh Uisge Mor about ten minutes due E.N.E. from the cairn and only 250 feet lower. The route to this source was carefully marked out by small cairns. The weather was still fine; but ominous clouds were banking up with heavy rain about ten miles off in the east. Nothing daunted the party then proceeded to the top of the Fiacail Ridge of Cairngorm and wasted a valuable hour descending it. At the end of which period the weather broke down and the three hours' tramp back to Inverdrue was done in drenching rain with a "shower" now and again. Boat of Garten was reached about 8.30 p.m. or roughly fifteen hours after it had been left in the morning.

*July 18, 1925.* Messrs. R. Leith, J. Massie Milne,

and W. Nicol set up a backwoods camp on the east side of Glen Derry about half a mile north of Derry Lodge.

*July 19, 1925.* J. A. Parker motored up from Braemar to Derry Lodge and with the three campers and W. Falconer, who was "week-ending" with them, ascended Ben Macdhui by the Glen Derry and Corrie Etchachan path, the object being to make sure that the path was good enough for pony transport and was marked by cairns so that it could be rigidly followed by the ponies in the densest mist. It was found necessary to repair the ford across the Glas Allt Mor and also to rebuild about fifty cairns and to erect about a dozen or so new ones. The source of water E.N.E. of the cairn was visited and found to be all right, although the snow in its immediate vicinity had disappeared. Weather so far had been very good but mist now came on and a compass course had to be set for the descent of the Sron Riach by which the party returned. The campers then treated the engineer to a magnificent tea at Derry Camp.

*July 20, 1925.* Two ponies with drivers, Innes, Jr., and Morrison, proceeded to the stables at Derry Lodge, along with the following materials for the erection of the indicator :

- The granite capstone in four sections.
- Four two-gallon petrol tins full of portland cement.
- Two bags each containing  $1\frac{1}{4}$  cwts. of clean sharp sand.
- A heavy bag of mason's tools.
- A tarpaulin eight feet six inches square.
- One pail.
- One shovel.

The total weight of which was about six cwts.

*July 21, 1925.* Messrs. Leith, Nicol, and Massie Milne, with the ponies and drivers, proceeded to the top of the hill with about one half of the above materials. Left Derry Lodge at 9.30 a.m. and got back at 6 p.m.

*July 22, 1925.* The same party made a second trip to the top of the hill with the remainder of the materials less one tin of cement. The ponies returned to Braemar and the officer in command at the camp sent the following very satisfactory telegram to the engineer at Aberdeen. "Parker Railway, Aberdeen. Everything scu-

cessful, all very fit but dry, Derry Camp." On receiving which the said engineer began to see things moving towards success.

*July 24, 1925.* Young Innes took the better pony, "Bob," to Derry Lodge in the evening and the other members of the "construction squad" reported at the Fife Arms Hotel, Braemar, having travelled from Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Nairn.

*July 25, 1925.* The first party, viz., the building party, consisting of the masons, Frank Fowlie (foreman), and Wm. Fleming and H. Butchart and Marshall Robb, left Braemar at 5 a.m. (4 a.m. G.M.T.) Reached Derry Lodge at 5.40 a.m. and the top of Ben Macdhuì via the Lui Beg route at 9.10 a.m. Ascent made through thick mist until well up the Sron Riach when the party emerged above the clouds and had magnificent views the photographing of which accounted for  $3\frac{1}{2}$  hours having been taken for the ascent. On arrival at the cairn a ration of hot coffee was served up after which jackets were thrown off and the work began. The materials were found to be undisturbed, and while the masons were busy working the other two ran out 1,000 yards of white linen thread down to the source of water in case mist might come on.

The second party, the slab carrying party, consisting of Dr. J. R. Levack, Dr. D. P. Levack, D. S. P. Douglas, and J. A. Parker, left Braemar at 7.55 p.m. with the Doulton slab and reached Derry Lodge at half past eight, where they joined forces with the three campers, Innes and the pony, "Bob." The latter was at once loaded up with the slab on one side and the tin of portland cement on the other to balance, and a few superfluous rucksacks on the top, and the party moved off via Glen Derry at 9.10 a.m. En route the party split up into three groups, namely, a fast pack who arrived at the summit at 12.15 p.m., a slow pack which arrived there at 1.15 p.m., and the pony party proper which arrived at 12.45 p.m. with the slab all safe and sound.



*H. Alexander.*

INSPECTING THE SITE OF THE INDICATOR, JULY 5, 1925.



*M. J. Robb.*

THE MASONS AT WORK ON THE SUMMIT, JULY 25, 1925.

The masons were found to have made good progress and expressed great satisfaction with their two labourers whom they said were much more efficient than the three that they had on Lochnagar.

Work on the indicator never ceased from the time that the masons arrived until the tarpaulin was placed over it in the afternoon six hours later. When the masons had placed the four sections of the granite cap they adjourned for a substantial mid-day meal and while they were enjoying that the engineer performed an abstruse orientation ceremony with a five-inch magnetic compass, there being no distant view. He also prepared and placed inside the central cavity in the cap a small bottle containing a record of the building parties' doings and the names of those present, not forgetting "Bob." The masons were then called first by the compass and again by a sight on to Ben Avon which was the most distant point visible. The masons then finished the pointing and the indicator was then covered up with sacking, straw and the tarpaulin and was securely roped up.

This completed the labours of the parties but before they left a short masonic service was held at the indicator by Bros. J. A. Parker, P.M. No. 1 ter., F. Fowlie, I.P.M. No. 1269, and Bro. H. Butchart, D.M. No. 1 ter., who declared it to be "well and truly laid." Undoubtedly the highest masonic service ever held in Britain! The "cowans" present called the ceremony a "pagan rite."

The pony had not been loaded up and after a final perambulation of the summit, to make sure that no litter had been left, the final party left the summit at 3.20 p.m. The total time occupied by the erection of the indicator having thus been just over six hours.

The weather which thus far had been ideal for working now showed unmistakable symptoms of going to pieces and did not look very rosy for the pony party when "Bob" struck work when only a few yards beyond the sappers' kitchen and apparently utterly oblivious to

Over and the  
Doubtless slab  
was placed in  
position and  
finally checked  
thor by compass  
and again by a  
sight on to Ben  
Avon.

w/

things

a tremendous thunderstorm which was rapidly approaching! The pony's difficulty was apparently improper loading and thirty valuable minutes, if not more, were spent in reloading it in a proper, *i.e.*, a ~~systematical~~, *organized* manner after which there was no trouble.

Fortunately the thunderstorm almost avoided the Glen Derry route until about half past six, by which time the pony party was within half-a-mile of Derry Lodge. Braemar was reached at 7.30 p.m. But Innes and the pony did not get there until midnight and experienced the full force of the thunderstorm which was the worst experienced in the district for many years, and which, incidentally, washed the campers out of their tents and forced them to run to Derry Lodge for shelter.

#### SIGNATURES AT THE INAUGURATION.

In order to secure as full a record as possible of the company present on the summit of Ben Macdhuì, at the inauguration ceremony on August 1, a note-book was kindly carried round by a Boy Scout, and everyone was invited to enter his or her signature. The following is a list of the signatures in the order in which they appear. Where no address is given Aberdeen is implied. An asterisk denotes a member of the Club. The list extends to 136 names. The list of those present at the unveiling of the Lochnagar Indicator on July 12, 1924, comprised 146 names.

J. A. Parker\*; G. Innes Laing; J. S. Abernethy, Fettercairn; George Laing; Malcolm Smith\*; A. Dickie Gorrod; Robert Clarke\*; Douglas H. Johnston; James McLeod; C. A. G. Savidge; R. F. Skinner, H. J. Morris and R. Crawford of the Dundee University College Rucksack Club; A. C. Gray, Boat of Garten; W. R. Scott; C. M. M. Murray; George W. Bower; J. E. Smith; W. W. Ross; W. Douglas Simpson; D. L. Macdonald, Braemar; D. R. Harper; T. L. Taylor; K. R. T. Matthew; D. M. Marr; J. A. McDougall; C. P. Skene; A. G. Nicol Smith\*; Murray Watt; Alistair Nicol Smith; Ed. W. Watt\*; Alice J. Watt; Herbert Smith\*, Glasgow; William Smith, Glasgow; Marjorie Watt; James Iverach\*; C. Mitchell, William Ewen, A. D. McHardy, Mrs. R. S. Bell, Jas. A. Salmond, and S. M. Bell, Ballater; G. R. Symmers; L. Welsh;

J. Bisset, Ballater; E. Cruickshank, Drumtochty; D. Mitchell, Auchinblae; D. M. Clark; Harold E. Young, (Climbers' Club) and D. C. L. Key, Blundellsands; Charles P. Moir, John Watson, and William Stewart\*, Alford; Arthur G. Hutchison; Harry D. Christie; Wm. Mitchell\*; Wm. Mitchell, Jr.: D. L. H. Hay, and J. H. Sturrock, Kilmarnock; D. Stewart; J. A. Nicol\*; J. Rennie\*; H. J. Butchart\*; Marshall J. Robb\*; H. D. Garden; Muriel Garden; Hugh S. Hunter, Braemar; William Garden\*; J. Lewis McIntyre\*; Geo. Grey Brown, and C. M. Lawrence-Smith, Banchory; Rev. S. J. Ramsay Sibbald, Glasgow; Miss Macleod, Cheltenham; Jean Macleod, Pearl Macleod, and Helen Macleod, Glasgow; G. S. Fraser\*: G. Robertson; J. F. Tocher\*; James McCoss\*; Iain D. Campbell\*, Banchory; Marjorie G. Brown; D. Lindsay; M. Sinclair; J. R. Leslie Gray\*, Edinburgh; Ian Struthers Stewart\*, Banchory; R. Leith, Jr.; Wm. A. Falconer\*; Mabel Stewart, Drumduan\*; C. P. Robb\*; Rev. Edward Miller, Cannes; Robert Leith\*; William Massie, Dyce; John Stewart, Glasgow; William Barclay\*, Scone; Jas. S. Finlayson, Perth; William Small, Scone; P. J. Fisher; A. M. Shirran\* and Mrs. Shirran\*, Braemar; George Lyall\* and Miss Lyall, Turriff; Charles Ludwig; D. Taylor; Mrs. Ross Mackenzie\*; H. G. Drummond\*; John R. Levack\*; Walter A. Reid\*; J. Massie Milne\*; J. B. Rennett; James Conner\*; Geo. P. Benzie; G. D. Allan\*; James A. Hadden; D. M. Milne, Kuala Lumpur; M. Moreau, Braemar; C. Bruce Miller; H. Grant Cumming, Grantown-on-Spey; Alex. M. Craig\*; H. Forbes MacIntosh, Braemar; Hugh Massie, Dyce; A. T. Lawson and Robert Lawson, Bradford; Hamish Hastings, Grantown-on-Spey; Gordon M. Dean; Thomas E. Anderson; Major Sir J. D. Ramsay, Lady Ramsay of Banff; N. A. Ramsay, Yr.; D. J. Ramsay and Miss MacGregor; C. Stirling; S. Smith; David Stewart, Yr.\*, Banchory House; and Miss E. Brand\*, Ballater.

[NOTE. One signature in the list was illegible, and had therefore to be omitted.]

The inscription on the Indicator will be found in the special plate at the end of this number. The Hon. R. Erskine of Mar, who is a well-known Gaelic enthusiast, has suggested the following Gaelic version of the inscription as more suitable to the genius of the spot:—

Tha an t-lul-seòlaidh so a'nochdadh suldheachadh nam beann is mò a ghabhas anharc orra o fhior-mhullach Bheinn Mhuic-duibh—sllabh a tha 4296 troidh air àirde—an uair a bhios sid mhath ann. Chaidh a chur suas mar chuimhne air Alasdair Copland, a bha uair 'na cheann-suidha air Cairngorm Club, Abareadhain. Is a J. A. Parker a thog an t-lul-seòlaidh so.



