



BEN MACDHUI FROM THE LUIBEG, MAY 11, 1924.

M. J. Robb.

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INAUGURATION OF THE BEN MACDHUI
INDICATOR.

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THE outstanding feature of the Club's activities in 1925 was the erection and unveiling of the mountain indicator on the summit of the monarch of the Cairngorms, and the second highest hill in the kingdom. No more fitting memento could have been selected, and the Club is to be heartily congratulated on associating itself in such a happy fashion with the range from which it takes its name. The unveiling ceremony took place on Saturday, August 1, and was in every sense a complete success. A week earlier a building party, under the skilled and enthusiastic leadership of Mr. James A. Parker, had successfully erected the indicator. The attendant difficulties, especially those of transport, were far greater than those encountered in the similar erection on Lochnagar the previous year, and the most cordial thanks of the Club are due to Mr. Parker and all those associated with him in the laborious task—professional builders and Club members alike. The indicator, which is constructed of Doulton ware, and is an exact replica of that erected on Lochnagar, has been dedicated to the memory of that grand old mountaineer and Club member, the late Mr.

Alexander Copland, who did so much, by his wonderfully accurate pictorial panoramic view from the summit of Ben Macdhuì, his writings in this *Journal*, and otherwise, to foster a love of the hills among his fellows.

As in the case of the ceremony on Lochnagar, a general invitation to the public was issued for the unveiling. Considering the remoteness of the scene of the day's doings, and the fact that the holiday season was in full swing, it was a pleasant surprise to find, when the ceremony began, that almost as many people had found their way to the summit as had been the case on Loch-nagar. [A list of those present, believed to be absolutely complete, is appended at the end of this article.—Ed.] As was to be expected, a large proportion of these came from the Deeside end of the range, but contingents from Speyside helped to swell the crowd. The Larig also added its quota of, at least, one camping party, while the Corrou bothy in Glen Dee—which of recent years appears to have attained the dignity of a climbing hut—contributed a quartette of ardent young spirits.

Derry Lodge—redolent of happy memories to the older school of Cairngormers—was the Mecca of the Deeside contingent, the all-conquering motor car and motor cycle being the most favoured means of transport thither. From thence the party had to foot it by either Glen Derry or Glen Luibeg to the summit. Judging by the paucity of climbers encountered in my progress up the latter, Glen Derry must have got the popular vote, even though the Luibeg route was specified in the official “book of words.” It was not too inviting a morning as we set forth. Most of the high hills were cloud-capped, a sharp wind from the north-west was blowing, and there was a smell of moisture in the air which might eventually become much more than a smell. However, one is ever an optimist when hill expeditions are afoot, and one was doubly so on such an occasion as this.

It was my good fortune to have as immediate companions Dr. W. Douglas Simpson and his troupe of Boy Scouts—released, for the day, from the gentle task of

navvying at Kindrochit!—and up the glen we went in great spirits. An early discovery one makes about Scouts is that when they are out for any particular object they implicitly believe in attaining that object without the loss of valuable moments. In the bright lexicon of these nimble youths there is no such word as—halt! No grass gets the slightest chance to grow under their lightsome feet. All was well with us so long as the glen was being traversed, and one managed to hold them in talk and keep touch satisfactorily enough. But once the steep slopes of the Sron Riach were reached a distinct breach in our companionship set in, for up these they fluttered like a flock of yellow birds, what time Age ascended in the more sedate manner suited to his years and heart-beat! All ordinary traffic was speedily overhauled and left far behind by these roving blades. A strict regard for truth, however, compels the admission that—either out of compassion for their less ardent companion, or from the discovery that steepish hillsides can only be “rushed” in moderation—the pace of the two parties seemed to gradually synchronise as the top was neared, and we all reached the Sappers’ bothy together, delighted with our different methods of mountaineering!

Though the weather had brightened considerably during the ascent, a keen wind was blowing on the summit, and the shelter of the bothy walls was welcome in the interval prior to the start of the day’s proceedings. Quite a number of people were already here and also in the lee of the cairn, and it was very interesting to make the acquaintance of several men who had been keen lovers of the Cairngorms for many years, and who had come considerable distances from Speyside to be present. As the time approached for the ceremony to start the numbers on the top from Dee and Spey gradually grew till a company of nearly 140 surrounded the, as yet, veiled indicator. Most of the well-known Aberdeen and district Clubmen were there, as also numerous climbers from a distance, while many ladies—enthusiasts all—were of the company. One was specially pleased to see

the number of children of both sexes present—future stalwarts of the Club let us hope; while at the other end of the gamut were several hardy veterans whose love of the hills is still as keen as in the days of their far-away youth. One notable absentee from this group was Mr. William Porter, Woodside, whom only illness prevented being present.

Cameras were clicking on all sides, and the photographic record of the afternoon's happenings must have been very complete indeed. As a picture of masculine sartorial styles this must have an interest all its own. The garments affected by the "mere men" mountaineers were varied in the extreme, ranging from the kilt through the various nuances of plus-fours to what had a suspicious resemblance to that acme of contemporary male taste, the delightfully graceful Oxford "bags"! There was also keen competition in the head-gear class, but it was generally conceded that a well-known Aberdeen University lecturer had achieved real greatness with a pyramid-shaped nightcap with bright crimson edging, the exact replica of what his grandfather must have donned when he retired to his slumbers. But if there was variety in the covering of the heads, there was but one the hearts of those present—the Brotherhood of feeling in the Hills was the link that bound them fast together—and one could see at a glance that everyone was keenly interested in the ceremony that was about to begin.

A ring having been formed round the indicator by the Boy Scouts, Mr. William Garden, the President, in a characteristically genial speech, explained the reason for such a large gathering on the second highest mountain top in the kingdom. After expressing the Club's indebtedness to the Princess Royal for her permission to erect the indicator, and the general regret at the inability of Lady Maud Carnegie, her daughter, to be present to inaugurate it, he referred to the enthusiasm with which the Club had taken up the project, after the previous year's success with the Lochnagar indicator. He described the many difficulties that beset Mr. Parker and



UNVEILING THE BEN MACDHUI INDICATOR, AUGUST 1, 1925.

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his assistants ere the present one was erected, and amid applause expressed the deep gratitude of the Club to them all. No fewer than 77 view-points were shown on the dial, so that what could be seen, and was not shown, was practically negligible. After paying grateful tribute to the late Mr. Alexander Copland, who had done so much to popularise mountaineering in the district, and to whose memory the indicator is dedicated, he concluded by expressing the hope that long after those present had followed the setting sun the indicator would stand to commemorate their love for the Cairngorms—their own particular range of mountains. A modest and pawky reply from Mr. Parker was followed by a splendidly-phrased little speech by Mrs. Garden, who, to the accompaniment of loud cheers, cut the ribbon that held the cover over the indicator, and expressed the hope that it, like its big brother on Lochnagar, would prove a source of pleasure and information to all who went there. As a memento of the occasion she was presented with the silk covering, and she, in turn, distributed small pieces of the ribbon to those around. A vote of thanks to Mrs. Garden, proposed by the evergreen Mr. Walter A. Reid, brought the proceedings to a close.

After the ceremony we crowded round and admired the beautifully-finished dial and workmanlike pedestal. Unfortunately the distant view in most directions was largely blocked out by cloud masses, and thus the "pointing" powers of the indicator were not permitted much scope. In those limited portions of the sky which were clear, however, its help in picking up outstanding points was at once apparent; and its erection on this glorious plateau commanding such a magnificent prospect, and encircled by mountains of almost equal grandeur, should be the means of sending still more people to the hills to enjoy that grand sense of physical and mental elation which no other sport is capable of bestowing.

The afternoon was now wearing on, and the record company, after a final feasting of the eyes on a scene upon which many of them had gazed fondly and frequently

in past years, went their several ways, the Speyside-contingent heading for Rothiemurchus, while we of Deeside in one solid body, about 100 strong, descended by the Luibeg route to Derry Lodge. It was an interesting sight to see the long ridge of the Sron Riach punctuated with so many people making the best of their way to the valley—a sight that probably had never been previously witnessed, nor will be again. By this time wisps of mist were beginning to trail across the mountain's brow, ere long the low-lying clouds had completely swallowed up the summit, and taken it into their keeping, and Solitude once more stalked in undisputed possession of the scene. Our newly-born indicator, brought to life amid such happy auguries, was indeed to be "sleeping out and far to-night," but perchance the benign Spirit of the Mountain administered that solace which is never denied to those who seek her inner shrine.