

## MAPS OF MOUNTAINS

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WITH the publication in 1964 of a new edition of the Ordnance Survey Tourist Map of the Cairngorms (paper : 10s. 6d.), it seems appropriate to look at some of the maps which serve the Scottish hill-walker, since this Tourist Map can be considered to owe something to the early efforts of the Club. In 1895 the Cairngorm Club Map of the Cairngorm Mountains, on a scale of 1 inch to 1 mile, with 250 feet contour intervals and no hill shading, was published. It was presumably based on the current O.S. maps, but no information concerning it appears in the *Journal*. Some forgotten names such as The Green on the lower slopes of the Sron Riath are included. It provided for the first time a coverage of the whole of the Cairngorms on a single one-inch map.

The new tourist map is based largely on Sheets 38 and 41 with parts of Sheets 28, 37 and 48, of the Seventh Series Ordnance Survey maps, fully revised in 1954-5. It covers the area from Carr Bridge, Grantown-on-Spey and the Ladder Hills in the north, to Marble Lodge, Spittal of Glenshee and Clova in the south. It is thus larger than the 1936 Ordnance Survey Map of the Cairngorms, based on the Popular Series, including three miles more to the east and north, and eight miles more to the south, but seven miles less to the west. From the climber's point of view the northward extension is excessive and the map has become even more clumsy to handle out-of-doors. Possibly it was with the skier in mind that the bounds were extended to include Grantown-on-Spey and Spittal of Glenshee.

This map differs in a number of respects from those of the Seventh Series. Most obvious is the very dense hill-shading on a brown background, as a result of which it presents an appearance much less pleasing than the 1936 map and in fact much of the contouring is obscured. This makes it less useful to the hill-walker, as it is difficult to decipher the detail of the topography. In many places the shading renders almost illegible the contour heights, which can be of considerable value to the climber if the conditions are poor. As an example, the reader might examine the contours between Braeriach summit and the Lairig and decide for himself how easily their heights could be read in the wet mist of a late autumn evening.







This exercise will disclose another alteration, namely that several of the names of secondary features, which were bold enough already, are printed in still larger and heavier type, for instance Cnap Coire na Spreidhe of Cairngorm, and are more distracting than in the Seventh Series maps, sometimes covering useful detail.

Additions to the map include the boundaries of the Nature Reserve (before its 1966 extension) and the Glen More Forest Park, an indication of Rock Climbing areas, rather indiscriminately placed above or below the cliffs in question, the Cairngorm access road and the chair-lifts in Coire Cas and on Cairnwell. A strange omission is the failure to identify the Lairig-an-Laoigh pass.

The current Lorn and Lochaber Tourist Map is much more pleasing in style. It is now designated Ben Nevis and Glencoe, but reaches as far south as Cruachan and Lui, and should serve the purpose of those who get to this area only occasionally.

Generally, the standard maps of the Seventh Series will serve the climber better. Sheets 38 and 41 both cover the Cairngorm-Ben Macdhuì area adequately, as there is a large north-south overlap, but not Cairntoul and Braeriach, as the Garbh Choire strays into Sheet 37 and, a strangely retrograde step, there is no east-west overlap whatsoever. So two changes of map are needed on the walk from Cairntoul to Braeriach when using the Seventh Series. This recalls the time when four sheets of an earlier series met near the summit of Macdhuì, the vagaries of whose name and height are considered elsewhere. There was indeed a lot to be said in favour of Sheet 43 of the Popular Edition!

Apart from the unfortunate abandonment of the one-inch overlap, there are a number of features of the Seventh Series maps which cannot be considered to be satisfactory from the point of view of the hill-walker, and at a time when more and more relatively inexperienced people are being persuaded to go into the hills, every safety precaution is desirable. Most obvious is the alteration in the marking of many summits, on which the triangulation point symbol has been replaced by a simple dot that is much more difficult to identify on a well-used map, particularly among rough pasture symbols. Apparently only the main triangulation stations now receive the symbol and in other instances only the type face used for the height indicates whether or not it has been surveyed by levelling. It is difficult to understand why, if some change were necessary, some new symbol such as  $\odot$  was not introduced to locate summit cairns, so that when reached in conditions of poor visibility, the precise location could



readily be established from the map and the exact compass bearing of the next objective determined. There are places where a few yards can make quite a difference !

The construction of dams at many places throughout the highlands has resulted in the enlargement of some lochs and the creation of others where no water was before. The walker in an unfamiliar area can thus sometimes be faced with an unexpected and often difficult detour at the end of a long day, a tricky situation if darkness overtakes him in country inadequately covered by his map. This is the situation in several areas, as the Seventh Series ignores many of the hydro-electric schemes that were approaching realisation at the time of revision.

The standpoint of the Ordnance Survey regarding the modification of mountain heights and the revision of features such as reservoirs on maps has been set out in a number of letters in the May 1966 *S.M.C. Journal* (No. 157). It is stated that the revised heights now being introduced are accurate to  $\pm 1$  foot and give the natural ground level above mean sea level at Newlyn in Cornwall. They are considered to be more accurate than those previously used and are being introduced as maps are revised and reprinted to replace exhausted stock. This explanation appeared after the note on Ben Macdhuil (*vide* p. 275) was written, but it still seems strange, if this is the explanation, that only Macdhuil of the triangulated summits in the Cairngorms map area appears to have required alteration. Full revisions of maps of the Scottish Highlands are made only every 25 years, but such features as dams and extended lochs are said to be included in special revisions made every eight years, provided they exist when surveyors cover the ground. It is stated that it is very rare for information to be omitted for security reasons. Access roads other than Class I roads are, however, not subject to this more frequent revision. This means that the Land-Rover track up Glen Quoich to 3,750 feet on Beinn a' Bhuid, although likely to be the highest practicable access road in Britain, will have to wait some 15 years before it appears on a one-inch map. Quarter-inch maps are reprinted every three years with, at least, these special revisions. It is interesting to note that despite the use of Macduil in the Tourist Map of 1964, the Director General of the Ordnance Survey is shown to use Macdhuil in a letter in the *S.M.C. Journal* of July 1965.

Returning to the features of the Seventh Series maps, it is probable that the replacement of mileage points on roads by MS and MP symbols, not necessarily at one mile intervals, was inevitable, but the earlier usage had numerous advantages for the hill-walker.



Despite the full revision of this series, Beinn Tarsuinn does not yet seem to have received its just reward (at least in the early printing consulted). But that head-water of the Allt-na-Glaise, south-east of Beinn Udlamain, no longer flows happily over the col as it was formerly shown to do, to the momentary consternation of at least one route-finder in mist who at first trusted not in the contouring but in the maxim that water should flow downhill. Now the stream appears to have found itself a tunnel!

Despite these minor complaints, the one-inch maps of the Scottish hills are something for which all climbers must be grateful, particularly if they have tried to cover similar ground in Austria, Italy or France using the best maps readily available to tourists, namely those on a 1 : 100,000 scale. Even such maps at 1 : 50,000 as can be found leave much more to be desired than do our one-inch maps. Only the magnificent Swiss 1 : 50,000 sheets of the high Alps seem able to express the character of the land better and provide nearly all the detail the climber needs in difficult terrain.