

During the period under review, several projected excursions had to be cancelled. The experiment in 1964 with more excursions on Saturdays rather than Sundays was unsuccessful, three out of the five being put off because of lack of support and one because of the typhoid outbreak. In 1967, the December excursion to Clachnaben was cancelled because of the foot-and-mouth epidemic that was widespread in England and Wales. It would appear that the now traditional pattern of 14 outings or meets per annum, largely on Sundays, satisfactorily meets the requirements of most members, and that changes in the nature of the programme seldom meet with enthusiastic support.

The outstanding excursion was, of course, that to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the founding of the Club. This is dealt with fully elsewhere in this number, as is the 1965 substitute for the midsummer overnight outing which, most exceptionally, failed to obtain the usual support, possibly because no traverse of the type traditional to overnight excursions was apparent from the circular. The 1964 midsummer excursion also failed to find adequate support, presumably because it did not venture outside Cairngorm country.

THE SIX TOPS

THE round of the six main Cairngorm tops in the day has become something of a classic since it was first done 60 years ago (June 20, 1908) by H. J. Butchart and four companions in 19 hours (*Cairngorm Club Journal*, vol. 6, p. 49). Butchart's route omits Beinn Mheadhoin (3,883 feet), which is actually 40 feet higher than Ben Avon. To include it and thus take in all seven of the highest tops would add another 1,500 feet up and down to what is already a strenuous day; but it has been done at least once (*The Cairngorms*, 3rd Edition, p. 18). Recorded times for the Six Tops up to 1932 can be found in *C.C.J.*, vol. 13, p. 98 (1932).

The "Butchart walk" is now accepted as having a standard course between Loch Builg Lodge (long in ruins) at one end and the Corrour Bothy at the other. The fastest practicable route is about 24 miles, with a rise and fall of a little over 9,000 feet. About a third of the distance follows some kind of path, the rest is more or less rough going. As Mr E. F. Johnston has said (*C.C.J.*, Vol. 17, p. 210, 1961), it is not so formidable as is generally believed. Having dry going underfoot is a very great advantage and so of course is good clear weather.

I have made the round three times, from west to east on June 23, 1963, and from east to west on August 11 and September 1, 1968. On each occasion the actual journey was between the locked gate on the Corndavon road at Daldownie at one end and Derry Lodge at the other, a distance of 33 miles. On each occasion also there was mist on Ben Avon and Beinn a' Bhuid, though otherwise the weather was excellent, and the hills very dry.

After making the trip on Sunday, August 11, this year I looked up Mr Johnston's note on his own times for the same course in 1960, and found that I had taken only 15 minutes longer than he did. In fact, I finished at the Derry with some energy still to spare and walked on almost to the Linn of Dee before meeting my homeward transport (kindly provided by Dr Adam Watson). Fortunately the dry weather continued and gave me a chance to better my time three weeks later on September 1. The August trip could then be regarded as a useful rehearsal; I knew what mistakes to avoid and how fast a pace to keep up. I travelled as lightly shod and

equipped as possible, made no stops of longer than a minute or so at any point, often trotted downhill on easy ground, and this time managed to knock 1 hour 36 minutes off Mr Johnston's record.

JUNE 23, 1963	<i>Time</i>	<i>Interval</i>
Carrour Bothy	5.40	—
Cairtoul	6.55	1 hr 15 min
Braeriach	8.11	1 hr 16 min
Ben Macdhui	10.22	2 hr 11 min
Cairngorm	11.47	1 hr 25 min
Beinn a' Bhuid	15.05	3 hr 18 min
Ben Avon	16.25	1 hr 20 min
Loch Builg Lodge	17.52	1 hr 27 min
TOTAL	—	12 hr 12 min
AUGUST 11, 1968		
Loch Builg Lodge	6.00	—
Ben Avon	7.44	1 hr 44 min
Beinn a' Bhuid	8.50	1 hr 6 min
Cairngorm	12.15	3 hr 25 min
Ben Macdhui	13.31	1 hr 16 min
Braeriach	15.15	1 hr 44 min
Cairtoul	16.29	1 hr 14 min
Courrou Bothy	17.25	0 hr 56 min
TOTAL	—	11 hr 25 min
SEPTEMBER 1, 1968		
Loch Builg Lodge	6.12	—
Ben Avon	7.44	1 hr 32 min
Beinn a' Bhuid	8.42	0 hr 58 min
Cairngorm	11.29	2 hr 51 min
Ben Macdhui	12.38	1 hr 9 min
Braeriach	13.59	1 hr 21 min
Cairtoul	15.04	1 hr 5 min
Corrou Bothy	15.46	0 hr 42 min
TOTAL	—	9 hr 34 min

The times for the three trips can be compared in the table. For the whole 33 miles between Daldownie and Derry my 1968 elapsed times were 14 hours 10 minutes and 12 hours 20 minutes respectively. (In 1963 I had a bicycle cached at L. Builg to save the last four miles.) I am now in my sixties, so the door is wide open for a younger man to better my time. In fact I would very much like to see the Six Tops looked upon as a rewarding and permanent challenge.

V. C. WYNNE-EDWARDS.

THE HIGHEST POINT IN THE CAIRNGORMS

WHAT is its proper designation? As a Club we committed ourselves to Ben Muich Dhui in our earliest publications. It is so rendered in the programme for the 1892 Summer Excursion and in the 1895 map. At this time, and for some time afterwards, the S.M.C. were of two minds. In the first volume of the *S.M.C. Journal* we find Ben Muich Dhui in an article (admittedly by A. I. McConnochie) in the initial, January 1890, number but Ben Macdhuì in the original Munro's Tables in the September 1891 number.

It may well be that our first recognition of Ben Macdhuì was in 1924 on the Lochnagar Indicator. Thereafter the *Journal* followed this practice—earlier, our only usage of this form that has been noted is in 1914 in a map of a proposed Feshie road based on a Bartholomew original. From then on the Macdhuì form seemed well established, having also received the blessing of the Ordnance Survey.

Sir Henry Alexander, in the *S.M.C. Cairngorms Guide*, notes that Ben Macduff was used in one of Timothy Pont's maps of about 1608 and that in the 1795 *Statistical Account* the mountain was referred to as Binn-na-muick-duidh, the hill of the black pig. This form presumably gave rise to Ben Muich Dhui and related variants. James Macdonald in *The Place Names of West Aberdeenshire* (1899) gives Ben Macdhuie from Beinn muic duibhe. In the local Gaelic vernacular, however, according to F. C. Diack, the form was Binnmach Duibh—the dark hills.

Despite this variability, one is tempted to question the grounds for the change by the Ordnance Survey in the 1957 Seventh Series One-Inch map to the apparently novel Ben Macdui. Even they appear to have had some qualms, as they append in italics an equally novel, but presumably intended as Gaelicised, form, Beinn Mac Duibh.

So was our 4,296 feet high summit designated—until the new Ordnance Survey Tourist Map of the Cairngorms appeared in 1964. Finding the name too recently established to change, the surveyor apparently could do little but consider the height. The original (1847) 4,296 feet trigonometrical point was a six-inch deep hole in a boulder, over which was built a cairn 22 feet in height. This cairn has suffered through the years from random causes, and the present survey pillar is erected on a truncated, but nevertheless artificial, cairn—presumably at a height of 4,300 feet. So now the highest point in the Cairngorms, call it what you will, is officially four feet higher. On the same basis, had the enthusiasts of 1878 built the foundations of the Lawers cairn more solidly we might now have a new 4,000-er awaiting recognition in the Tables.

Or can it simply be that reference has been made to that remarkable book by George Skene Keith, *A General View of the Agriculture of Aberdeenshire*? This, in 1811, included as frontispiece a map of the soils of Aberdeenshire, possibly the first soil map ever published. In this map we find Macdui H[ill] for the mountain—and the height, of course, 4,300 feet!

THROUGH THE HILLS

A ROAD through Glen Feshie is no new idea. When General Wade came to Scotland in 1724, one of the projects he examined was a road from Ruthven

Barracks to Castle Marr by the Feshie and the Dee, as a sketch map among the General Wade papers in the possession of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society shows. This map is reproduced in *C.C.J.*, Vol. XI, No. 62 (1924). The road was to take the place of an existing track on the south bank of the Dee from Braemar to the Eidart, and was to run on the north bank, passing over the side streams by means of arches with spans of 25 to 30 feet before crossing the Feshie beyond Achlean and swinging north of Killiehuntly to the barracks at Kingussie.

Wade's period of active roadmaking in Scotland came to an end in 1731 with the Corrieyairick, without the Feshie scheme materialising. Nor was it one of the projects completed in the spell of military road-building after the '45. With diminishing military requirement, ideas of a Feshie road apparently subsided and almost 200 years seem to have elapsed before the project was actively raised again. A letter in the *Aberdeen Free Press* in January 1913 advocating the construction of a driving road over the 17 miles from the Linn of Dee to Glen Feshie Lodge to stimulate the development of Deeside and Speyside is the earliest of the recent proposals of which we are aware.

In 1918, the Club decided to support the proposal, believing that such a road conveying by motor or electric traction visitors from near and far . . . would in no way interfere with the seclusion and charm of these glens and mountains! The Rural Transport (Scotland) Committee, in the same year, gave the project its blessing, estimating that the 17 miles of new road would cost £50,000. The Club renewed its support in 1924 and was informed by the Ministry of Transport that the local statutory highway authority had refused to consider the question of the maintenance of the road even if the cost of its construction were met from Government sources.

The matter was raised more recently at the 1960 Annual Meeting of the Club, but the motion was lost, indicating that the majority of members present considered that tourist traffic and unspoiled glen were no longer as compatible as they had appeared forty years earlier. The Glen Feshie road project has subsequently been the subject of debate in the correspondence columns of the Scottish press, notably in *The Scotsman*, where many letters, pro and con, appeared, especially in 1964. Some opponents disliked the scheme so much that they supported an alternative through the Lairig-an-Laoigh, although it would seem even more undesirable to have a road up Glen Derry. The matter appeared to rest following a Government statement in March 1965 to the effect that the expenditure of £2 million could not be considered at present, but the recent Cairngorm Area Report has revived it.

It is difficult to see what the real benefits would be. Little or no advantage to traffic from the south would accrue, particularly in winter, when Drumochter is generally preferable to the Devil's Elbow. From Aberdeen the new route would be around 12 miles shorter to Kingussie, but actually 12 miles longer to Aviemore, than by the Lecht and Nethy Bridge. Would not a small portion of the £2 million be better spent in improving this existing route? Even from Ballater the gain in distance to Kingussie would only be some 13 miles; only from Braemar and Upper Deeside would the distance to Kingussie be appreciably shortened.

One of the main arguments advanced in favour of the new road has been the tourist traffic. But might this not be a disadvantage to Ballater and Tomintoul, which could well be by-passed? In any case the touristic attraction of a car or coach trip through Glen Feshie with its relatively narrow valley and steep enclosing slopes is difficult to appreciate. Many tourists will, one suspects, have seen enough

of such scenery in Glen Shee and Glen Clunie and would welcome the open moors of the way via Corgarff and Tomintoul.

Perhaps the perusal of the continued, and, be it said, somewhat reiterative and unimaginative public presentation of the views of both sides has tended to make your scribe drowsy . . . he has just emerged into the sunlight again after driving through the tunnel from White Bridge to Feshie Bridge, under Cairn Geldie, Carn Cloich-mhuilinn, Beinn Bhrotain, Monadh Mor, Carn Ban Mor, Sgor Gaoith and Geal Charn. This snow-free route, combined with that from Gleann Beag to Glen Clunie Lodge under the Cairnwell, has been becoming increasingly popular with through traffic from Perth to Inverness, despite its somewhat greater distance, particularly as vehicles using it receive a subsidy. . . .

The time may indeed come when economic or social requirements would make such a scheme feasible. At present the cost would be colossal, but the benefits might justify it if it meant saving the flora and the fauna, the quiet and the dignity, of an area which the Nature Conservancy has decided worthy of inclusion in the Cairngorms Nature Reserve.

In Europe, the past few years have seen great developments in tunnelling through mountains. Previously, economic factors restricted tunnels to railways but now the increased importance of road transport has made road tunnels popular. In 1964 the Grand St Bernard tunnel from Bourg St Pierre to St Rhemy and in 1965 the Mont Blanc tunnel from Chamonix to Courmayeur were opened. These tunnels, 3.6 and 7.2 miles long respectively, serve rather different purposes. There was already a road, closed in winter, over the St Bernard, while the Mont Blanc tunnel eliminates a long detour and shortens the way from Central France to Northern Italy by some sixty miles. The alternative direct passenger route from Chamonix to Courmayeur, with two changes of téléphérique on the way, has had a somewhat chequered history. The driving time of only ten minutes through the Mont Blanc tunnel illustrates the benefit of a project which took six years to complete, and which involved massive access roads at least on the Chamonix side, but which does not suffer from the restrictions of an Alpine winter.

It is not only such major trans-mountain routes that qualify for road tunnels. The little village of Binn above Fiesch on the Rhone is inhabited in summer only, but is now approached by a 2,000-yard-long tunnel large enough for the post-bus run by the Furka-Oberalp Railway. Even the path along the north side of the Grimsensee to the Lauteraar Hut has a sizable tunnel, just after crossing of the Spitallamm dam (374 feet high and 300 yards long) which for a time was the largest in Europe.

The era of tunnels only for railways, canals and hydro-electric schemes thus seems to be being succeeded by one of road-tunnels, but probably it is optimistic to think of a snow-free route from White Bridge to Feshie, and even from Glen Clunie Lodge to Gleann Beag, in the foreseeable future. But we emerge from our fantasy to find, on the same dark day in March 1967, suggestions for a meter-gauge rack railway from Aviemore to the top of Cairngorm and, in the Cairngorm Area Report, proposals for the further consideration not only of the Feshie road, but also of roads through Glen Tilt, by Glen Lui, Clais Fhearnaig and Glen Quoich to Beinn a' Bhuird, and from Tomintoul to Crathie by Inchrory and Loch Builg, at total cost, including some access roads to the high snows, of over £5 million.

R. L. M.

THE CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL NATURE RESERVE

Two substantial additions to the Cairngorms National Nature Reserve have been announced. The original area, as established on July 9 1954, amounted to 39,689 acres and was described in *C.C.J.* No. 89.

On January 23, 1963, the Nature Conservancy declared an area of 19,133 acres of the Glenfeshie estate an extension of the original reserve. This area, which is included within the boundaries shown on the Tourist Map of the Cairngorms, extends from the river Feshie on the west and south to the earlier limit set by the Aberdeenshire boundary on the east and the Invereshie estate on the north. The area is rich in flora and fauna—perhaps particularly in birds, but it is difficult to interpret a statement in a leading newspaper to the effect that “the montane flora includes species either absent or very scarce in the Cairngorms”.

The second addition, of 5,296 acres, notified on May 21, 1966, is the area south of the Glenmore Forest Park, between Loch Etchachan and Cairngorm and extends to the north-east as far as the Barns of Bynack. It comprises Loch Avon and the high tops around it. This extension has been made possible by an agreement between the Nature Conservancy and the owners, Major G. S. Wills and Mr D. S. Wills.

The present reserve of 64,118 acres, or just over 100 square miles, now forms a compact area which with the Forest Park covers the whole of the high Cairngorms west of the Lairig-an-Laoigh with the exception of a narrow strip of the slopes to the north-east of the Allt Druidh.

DERRY LODGE, 1951-1967

THE original lease of Derry Lodge to the Club was for a period of 15 years, which expired at Whitsunday 1966. The annual rental was initially £15 but was latterly increased to £25. The Club carried out maintenance repairs in 1951 and regularly thereafter, without which it would today scarcely have been habitable. In addition, in 1955, very considerable improvements to the structure were effected under the able direction of the late Dr George Taylor, at large expense to the Club, and for which no compensation was obtainable.

Difficulties regarding Derry Lodge first arose when part of the Mar Estate, including the lodge, was acquired by an Investment Company. Soon new conditions were imposed with regard to the use of the road from Linn of Dee to Derry Lodge. These amounted to a substantial increase in the charge for the key to the gate giving access to this road.

More than a year before the lease was due to expire, negotiations with the proprietors, through their Agents, regarding terms for the renewal of the lease were commenced. At first the Club was informed that the future rent would be in the neighbourhood of £500 per annum. After considerable correspondence and consultation, the most favourable terms that could be obtained involved a rental of £100 for the Lodge plus a payment of £150 per annum to cover the use of the road by Club members and guests at Derry Lodge. Keys were made available to the Club who were supposed by the Proprietors to be able to reimburse themselves by making an appropriate charge to members. The duration of any new lease was restricted to one year, with three months notice on either side. This complete lack of security of tenure made it out of the question for the Club to



DERRY LODGE

consider carrying out the redecoration and repair urgently required to maintain the Lodge in habitable condition. In the meantime, the Proprietors, whose responsibility it was, had allowed the road to deteriorate to such an extent as to make it impracticable for an ordinary car to use it.

The Club agreed, after full consideration, to the terms of the new lease for a year from Whitsunday 1966 in order to retain the use of Derry Lodge, and access rights to Derry, not only on behalf of its own members, but also out of consideration for those of kindred Clubs who had enjoyed its amenities during the previous 15 years. It became obvious, however, during 1966-7, that it would be completely uneconomic to continue the lease any longer under the conditions indicated above and after further prolonged discussion, during which it became apparent that it would be impossible to obtain any improvement in the conditions for a future lease, the Club Committee reluctantly reached the decision that the lease should be terminated at Whitsunday 1967.

Apart from the question of cost, the two unsurmountable obstacles to the retention of Derry Lodge were the complete lack of security of tenure and the continual difficulties with regard to the access road. It was with considerable regret that the decision was reached, as it was realised how widely the facilities offered by Derry Lodge were appreciated by all with the true interests of the Cairngorms at heart.

THE LAIRIG IN OIL

THE Club in 1964 received the generous offer of an oil painting depicting the southern aspect of the Lairig Ghru, viewed from the lower slopes of Beinn Bhrotain, by C. Grey, R.H.A.

This landscape in oils was presented by Professor K. J. Franklin, F.R.S., to one of our members, Mr I. F. Rose, a London surgeon, in view of his interest in the Cairngorms. Mr Rose's recent death will be profoundly regretted by members, particularly those who recall the rockets which enlivened several New Year Meets at Braemar. In accepting the gift, Mr Rose indicated to Professor Franklin that the painting would become the property of the Club, but that as the Club had at present no premises suitable to accommodate it, it would meantime adorn his late father's house in Cults.

The Club is most grateful for the generosity of both donors, and looks forward to the time when a suitable location can be found for it in Club property.

DARE ME TO THE DESERT

AFTER his retiral in 1951 from the Survey of Egypt, in which he had served as Director of Desert Surveys and of the Topographical Survey, as well as Technical Expert from 1947 to 1951, G. W. Murray came to Aberdeen, where he and Mrs Murray entered with enthusiasm into the activities of the Cairngorm Club. For fifteen years members have enjoyed their reminiscences of Egypt and of the Alps, where both had climbed extensively, and were deeply grieved to learn of G. W. Murray's death in 1966, a few months after his 80th birthday which he celebrated by climbing Lochnagar. Now, thanks to the generosity of Mrs Murray, a copy of her husband's book *Dare Me to the Desert* (Allen and Unwin, 1967) is in the Club Library and members can read something of his travels since 1907 in Sinai and

Egypt, and of his ascents of many of their mountains. It betrays little, however, of the author's professional eminence or of the esteem in which he was held by other travellers and by the Arabs of the deserts.

The story is in fact recounted with the modesty which has been one of the predominant traits of both George Murray and his wife. One recalls, for instance, following a talk to Club members, his embarrassed reply to a questioner who invited an opinion of the maps of the Red Sea Hills, to the effect that he was scarcely qualified to judge as he was responsible for them!

Many members will welcome the opportunity of reading this book and recollecting with pleasure their outings with the Murrays and their Airedale.

BRITISH AND IRISH MOUNTAIN TOPS

OUTSTANDING new books which deal with the classification of the mountains of Britain are few and far between. One of these was W. M. Docharty's *A Selection of some 900 British and Irish Mountain Tops*, published in 1954, which we noticed briefly in *C.C.J.* No. 90. This listed 661 mountains and tops in Scotland between 2,500 and 3,000 feet together with selected mountains of interest below 2,500 feet, and gave similar lists, including tops above 2,500 feet, for Ireland (98 entries), Wales (70 entries) and England (104 entries). In addition, in an appendix were seven instructive panoramas from the North-West Highlands and two from Ireland.

A two-volume Supplement has been produced by Mr Docharty and, like the original, printed for him privately at the Darien Press, Edinburgh, in 1962. The inscription on the numbered copy (No. 57) presented to the Club reads "To all members of The Cairngorm Club whose own very special Mountain Tops have provided me with so much romantic pleasure, and with every good wish from W. M. Docharty". The Supplement is in fact twice as extensive as the original with 18 panoramas more magnificent than the first nine, and including a selection of 1,000 tops in the British Isles under 2,500 feet. There are also several fine photographs.

The short Part I of Vol. I of the Supplement gives further information on the mountains listed in the original text, while Part II covers mountains and tops between 2,500 and 2,000 feet together with a selection of those of interest below 2,000 feet, including Bennachie and Clachnaben. These tables, with map references and useful comments on the individual tops, provide a valuable source of information for anyone about to explore a new area who desires to cover the mountains comprehensively. The actual tables run to some 150 pages, and provide space for any fortunate owner to enter dates of ascent and other notes.

In Vol. II of the Supplement, an Epilogue collects, from A to Ω , a series of related memories of the author's mountain experiences, and is illustrated by a number of fine alpine views as well as by several pictures of the double-headed "Hielandman" on the West Highland line!

The 18 panoramas are mainly Scottish, but include a few from other mountain areas of the British Isles. The summits included are detailed in the captions but the pictures themselves are not defiled by identification marks: it is left to the reader to pick out the individual peaks. The time and effort that this entails is well spent, as it leads to a knowledge of the topography approaching that to be

gained on the viewpoint itself, but where so often lack of time unfortunately rules out such detailed study.

Of the panoramas we pick out No. 12 from Beinn an Lochain, from west, through north and east, to south by east, largely because it was made in 1960 on Mr Docharty's 500th excursion over his homeland hills, a far cry from his first to Ben Lomond in 1916. This was not followed by a second until 1933, after an interval caused by a war wound which incapacitated him for over ten years and indeed nearly cost him a leg. How successful the remedial treatment eventually proved could not be better illustrated than by these books which members of the Club now have the privilege of consulting.

It was with the most profound regret that we learned of Mr Docharty's death as this note was being prepared for the press.

ONCE TOO OFTEN

SOME years ago we reported the early Alpine exploits of Maccabeo, the Irish setter from Gressoney-la-Trinité. Since then she has apparently spent each summer among the high tops, leaving her hotel home in June and returning in early September. She has visited most of the huts and crossed many of the high glacier passes in the Monte Rosa area. We learn with regret from *The Times* that, in 1963 at the age of 11, she failed to return from her summer wanderings, and so another unaccompanied climber has disappeared in the Alps. She had previously been pulled out of crevasses, but this time, it is feared, no rescue party was available and her long career has ended in a remote glacier.