

Notes

BEN NEVIS RACE 1972

The race began officially in 1895 when William Swan, a local barber, ran up and down the mountain in 2 hours 41 minutes. From then on, the race was held intermittently until 1951, and since annually without a break. It is now held on the first Saturday in September. The route commences at the new Fort William Town Park at the foot of Glen Nevis and follows the tourist track for 7 miles to the mountain top at 4,418 feet. Weather conditions vary considerably from year to year, and in 1957 the only fatality in the history of the race occurred, when a young man died of exposure in atrocious weather conditions.

1972's race took place on a day of perfect visibility and very high temperatures. The event is efficiently organised, with medical and mountain rescue teams positioned at frequent intervals along the track. The runners' progress is monitored and relayed back to the park by radio. For a small entry fee, the competitor is provided at the end of the race with refreshments and a shower at the park, plus high tea later in Fort William.

This year, out of 153 names submitted for the race 115 completed the course. The winner, David Cannon of Kendal A.C. finished in 1 hour 32 minutes, a fine performance in the gruelling heat. I was running in my first race, and, due to my occupation, had not been able to train as much as I would have liked. However, I decided to have a go before I got too old (I am 53).

We started off from the park at 2.30 pm and immediately the hard men were away. I tagged along somewhere at the rear sweating profusely, and decided that if I got up and down in 3 hours, if at all, I would be content. Somewhere about the burn at the half-way stage, I seemed to be passing quite a number of young lads, and felt a bit happier. Not a great deal higher, the hard men passed me flying downhill, some shouting in pain. I never discovered whether this was due to muscular injury or to falls on the steep scree, I certainly saw blood on the rocks at more than one point. Crossing a small slushy snow field where a handful of snow cooled my face, I reached the top in 1½ hours. At the top, I received a small disc from a race official to hand back at the bottom as a check. Then came the jolting jog downhill. On the upper slopes, a good deal of effort was needed to retain control on the steep loose scree. In common with many competitors, my legs felt like jelly on reaching the level 2 miles at the foot. I jogged round the final circuit of the arena quite pleased with my performance of 2 hours 20 minutes, and in 67th place.

As I passed the finishing line the announcer commented 'It just shows what can be done', and I felt like remarking 'You can say that again!'

G. M. KYNASTON

ALL THE 4000s

Having joined the Munro-bagging fraternity from the ranks of long-distance runners in the spring of 1971, it was inevitable that a competitive element

should be present in my approach to the Scottish hills. Among the aims which sprang to mind were (a) to do them all, and (b) to do them as quickly as possible. Both were unsatisfactory from a competition/satisfaction viewpoint, the first being rather protracted and the second undesirable, as I wanted to spend a long time doing the '277' Munros.

The solution presented itself after a visit to the Club Library in spring 1972. In the 1920s, Eustace Thomas, president of the Rucksack Club, along with three companions, had scaled all the 4,000 feet Scottish peaks within 24 hours. The party had motored north from Borrowdale at Easter, at their leisure, and at 15.02 hours on the Friday afternoon started their walk from General Wade's old road on the north side of Aonach Mor. They reached the summit of the latter hill at 16.40, Aonach Beag at 17.01, Carn Mor Dearg at 17.50, and Ben Nevis at 18.44. They descended the west face of the Ben, and had dinner at Fort William before leaving for the Cairngorms by car at 23.30. Glenmore Lodge was left at 03.55 on the Saturday morning, and Cairn Gorm reached at 05.36. The north top and main top of Ben Macdhuì and Coire Sputan Dearg were reached at 07.08, 07.38 and 07.59; then, after the descent to Glen Dee, Cairn Toul and Angel's Peak were achieved at 10.50 and 12.12, followed by the Braeriach Plateau Top at 12.46, Stob Coire an Lochain at 13.25, and Braeriach at 01.40. The total time from the start of the walk to the final cairn had taken 22 hours 32 minutes, the weather being fine and clear throughout.

The prospect of tackling all the 4000s was an inviting one, so plans were made. My friend, Trevor Evans, who had just completed 100 Munros, was keen to tackle them and we decided, that as access to the mountains had improved in the half century since Thomas' walk, we would commence our attempt from Glen Nevis, and later drive to the Cairngorm car park. We considered utilising the same starting points as Thomas, but felt that by commencing at definite and obvious points, giving quickest access, we would set a 'norm' for future attempts.

On Friday, 23 June, we left Aberdeen by car in the early evening and motored to Glen Nevis, sleeping in the car, in the park at the foot of Allt Coire Eoghainn. After four hours' sleep, and a drowsy breakfast, we set off at 03.53 up the Coire in light drizzle and wind. It was quite a shock to see the amount of snow on the summit of Ben Nevis, after scaling the protected southern approach (05.53). After a brief stop, we followed the arête to Carn Mor Dearg (07.03), crossing then to Aonach Mor (08.12), and Aonach Beag (08.45). The underfoot snow diminished as we followed a burn south-west to Steall. We reached our car at 10.12 in a dampish state, after 6 hours 19 minutes, in which we covered 8 miles and scaled 6,200 feet.

We departed from the Glen at 10.25 and motored the 75 miles or so to Cairngorm car park, with a couple of stops en route, recommencing our walk at 13.16 hours. By this time, the day was fine and sunny, and the summits of Cairn Gorm, Ben Macdhuì (North Top), and Ben Macdhuì (Main Top) were reached at 14.18, 15.45 and 15.58 respectively. After a short stop, and in chilly conditions, Coire Sputan Dearg was attained at 16.21. Perhaps the most pleasant part of our walk was the descent to Glen Dee via Tailors Burn, although crossing the chilly Dee, our bare feet seeming to be pierced by the sharp stones, was best forgotten.

The summit of Cairn Toul was reached at 18.35, then mist encompassed us and delayed our arrival at Sgor an Lochan Uaine (19.20). Worse was to follow. In trying to stay clear of cliffs in the poor visibility (20 yards), we headed south-west for 10 minutes or so, before checking our map. However, the plateau top of Braeriach was attained at 20.14, Stob Coire an Lochain at 20.40, and finally Braeriach at 21.05. Our time from the start of the walk was 17 hours 12 minutes, a new target for '4000 baggers', and by the time we reached the car, we had walked approximately $26\frac{1}{2}$ miles, climbed 13,350 feet, and been 'on the go' for 20 hours 27 minutes.

We descended to the Pools of Dee as dusk fell, clambered 1,000 feet up to the Curran Bothy, and walked through the dark and rain until the car was reached at 00.20. Trevor drove to Ballater, where he rejoined his family in their caravan, leaving a half-asleep Edwards to continue to Aberdeen. At 02.15 my eyes refused to stay open, so I slept in the car at Aboyne for four hours before completing a memorable journey.

We hoped that our attempt would be of interest to others, and in favourable conditions, no doubt a faster time is possible.

MEL EDWARDS

ALL THE MUNROS

Well, it's all over! Just under four years from Cairngorm to An Teallach, with 275 others in between, I find myself sitting wondering why, when discovering what a Munro was, I said that I was going to climb them all. Initially it was simply a challenge, latterly a fetish, and finally a relief to get finished. Now I feel that I can approach the hills from a different point of view – perhaps linger a little longer on some, even try less high hills, but perhaps more interesting ones, and even repeat the more rewarding. I have no regrets, though, about being a Munro-bagger.

The very fact that my aim was to climb more than Munro himself has opened my eyes to the natural beauties of Scotland, taken me to remote areas, given me companionship in strange places, shown me the power of the elements in the mountains, and made me aware of the magnificent country in which we were born. Ignorance of one's own country is embarrassing. This has been rectified to some extent by my travels in these wild and isolated zones where nature still is the master and litter rare. No! I have no regrets!

I have to thank many people for their help and friendship over the last four years. First the Aberdeen Grammar School hillwalking Club for starting it all off – especially Ian Stephen and Jim Will: also several boys in the school who were kindred spirits, and who accompanied me on many ventures. Secondly, the Cairngorm club and its members, for companionship – who can forget the warm 'spirit' which flowed on my last Munro, An Teallach! And thirdly, my long suffering wife, who, when I had climbed three and said there were still a few to do, replied, 'For goodness sake, go and do them – you'll not be happy till they are all done'. My dear, I thank you for your tolerance!

IAN C. SPENCE

BOB SCOTT'S RETIRAL

The Mar Estates divided, Derry Lodge lost to the Club, and now Bob Scott has retired! There will always be climbers and walkers to frequent the area, but things will never quite be the same again.

If my memory is good, Bob once told me that his father had been keeper at Derry, and that he himself had been born there. Other information is that he was born at Linn of Dee. This is an academic detail of no real consequence to any other than Bob himself. Those who have read of Neil Munro's famous character 'Para Handy' will remember that that worthy claimed that 'he had been born all along Loch Fyne side'. There is a precedent, therefore, for saying that Bob Scott, a character in his own right, was born 'all around the Derry'.

After the war, he had a brief spell at Linn of Dee before moving to Luibeg where he remained until his recent retiral. During the Club's tenury of Derry Lodge, he acted for the Club in a care-taking capacity. This was not an easy position for him to be in, for he had his main employers' interests to consider as well as ours, which, as an ex kind of factor myself, I could appreciate. I am sure that he kept a fair and reasonable balance between the two interests.

Bob, besides an imposing figure, has a fair command of language, and, in his own inimitable way, was able to convince minor wrong-doers of the error of their ways. On occasion, he had to write to me regarding more serious crimes which might upset his superiors. Such complaints were never frivolous and always, on investigation, justified, so he had my full support when dealing with them. It was after all, in the Club's own interests that the Estate should not be upset in any way.

So much for the record. What of the man himself? Those meeting Bob for the first time were perhaps inclined to be over-awed by his commanding presence and stentorian voice, developed over the years, no doubt, by calling to his favourite stags across the water on Meall an Lundain, or up the slopes of Sgur Dubh. Given time, however, one realised the underlying kindness, the sense of humour, on occasion extremely subtle, and the explosive laughter which are inherent in the man. The former was evident in the warmth of the welcome given by the late Mrs Scott and Bob to many callers at Luibeg. There are many examples of the latter but perhaps one gem will suffice. One sunny summer Sunday I arrived at Derry. Bob had been taking his usual look round, and, as we were chatting in front of the Lodge, a car passed by and stopped at the stables. There was, perhaps, nothing unusual in that, but when four men got out, complete with fishing rods and baskets, it was clear from the astonished look on Bob's face that something very much out of the ordinary had occurred. He stepped out into the middle of the road, and drew the party's attention to his presence. One approached diffidently, not quite sure of the reception he would get, and asked if there was anywhere around where they could be given permission to fish. Bob explained with great courtesy that the only place where he could give them such permission was Loch A'an. After a momentary pause, he added 'and that's not in my beat'. The interview terminated with a burst of his explosive laughter.

While Luibeg was no doubt, a lonely place at times, the Scotts were friendly people who liked the transient company of the thousands of young folk who, over the years, called at Luibeg looking for shelter. This they usually

got, for a nominal charge, in the several outbuildings, although I understand that the pony stable was a bit more expensive, since the pony provided company and warmth! Many visitors came again and again, and Bob got to know them, and to know how they were likely to behave, and where they were likely to go. All in all, I am sure that he always had a pretty good idea of what was happening 'on his beat'!

The Cairngorm Club and its members, as well as the thousands of others who have passed his way, will, I am sure, be glad to join me in wishing Bob Scott health and contentment in his retirement at Allanquoch.

ROBERT BAIN

LOCH TURRET

Activities of the Central District Water Board and of the North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board have led to changes to the footpaths through the hills west of Crieff. Old maps are out of date, so it is hoped these notes may be helpful to wanderers in this area.

Loch Turret has been increased in length by the construction of a dam about $1\frac{1}{4}$ miles downstream from the original outflow. The road along the lochside to Glenturret Lodge has been submerged, as have the foundations of the Lodge itself. During the past year, a track, presumably for shooting purposes, has been bull-dozed north out of the side of the hill. It is undulating, but about 200 feet above the loch, and extends beyond the head of the new loch to the base of Auchnafree Hill. From here, a loop rises steeply for 800 feet round the SE shoulder, then swings right round the valley to the plateau above the Blue Craigs, from where it descends to Glen Turret. For climbers coming off Ben-y-Hone, there is a sheep track above the south shore of the loch. This ultimately joins a wider track leading to the dam.

The public footpath from Invergeldie to Ardeonaig on Loch Tayside has also been affected by the building of a dam above Spout Rollo in Glen Lednock. The new loch thus created is about 2 miles long, and has submerged the old footpath for this distance. The hillsides are steep, and, though an intermittent sheep track exists on the north shore, this is no longer the accepted route. Walkers coming from Ardeonaig should leave the footpath half a mile before it reaches the loch, and go round the head to a Hydro Board building on the south shore. From here, a track goes over the water shed into Glen Maik, whence it follows a route roughly parallel to the original, which it joins below Spout Rollo.

ROBERT BAIN