

NOTES

RECORD RUN

Congratulations to Mel Edwards who, on the 9th July 1979, ran over the four 4000ft peaks of Braeriach, Cairn Toul, Ben Macdui and Cairngorm from and to Glenmore Lodge in a record time of 4hrs. 34 mts. 8 secs. The distance was 25 miles and involved 7600ft of climbing. The previous record was held by Eric Beard who ran the same route in 1963 in a time of 4hrs. 41 mts.

COMPARATIVE TIMES

| | BEARD (1963) | EDWARDS (1979) |
|----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Braeriach | 1.36 (1.36) hrs | 1.29 (1.29) hrs |
| Cairn Toul | 2.12 (0.36) " | 2.04 (0.35) " |
| Ben Macdui | 3.23 (1.11) " | 3.14 (1.10) " |
| Cairngorm | 4.03 (0.40) " | 3.58 (0.44) " |
| Glenmore Lodge | 4.41 (0.38) " | 3.34.08 (0.36) " |

Mel Edwards has been training to make a record breaking run from Glenmore Lodge to Ben Macdui to Glenmore Lodge in September 1980 in order to set a standard for the distance. This run like the four peaks run, will be for charity.

A DAY IN GLEN OGIL

or

TADPOLES IN DECEMBER

Tadpoles in December? Impossible! Never heard of them! but – a day in Glen Ogil could be possible, if one could find Glen Ogil.

The Cairngorm Club circular said that a meet would be held on the second of December 1979 in Glen Ogil, map number 44. Now, map number 44 is a big one and includes a good part of the River Dee area and Southwards to Glens Prosen and Isla. After a search with a strong magnifying glass the glen was eventually found on the southern part of the map at 447653. But beware Glenogil (all one word) 2.3km due south of the 'O' of Ogil!

It was dreich in Golden Square at 8 a.m. on that Sunday, and the club members crawled silently into the bus hoping to have another hour's sleep and to wake up at least semi-refreshed at Redheugh beside "The Noran Water" in Glen Ogil.

Our walk took us northwards through a beautiful wooded glen along the east bank of Glenogil Reservoir. A buzzard gave us a passing glance but decided that we were no use for either a late breakfast or an early lunch.

After walking about two miles in a gentle drizzle we left the Noran Water and climbed north-westwards up the ridge between the Trusty Burn and the Toardy Burn eventually topping Duthriss Hill. There was a small herd of about twenty-five deer on our left, but we could see ahead a large herd of about five hundred moving from east to west which had probably been disturbed by a party of walkers in the region of Bettywharran or Birse Shades.

Dog Hillock was our next point of ascent, then right turn on to Hill of Glassie and Shank of Peats – the latter well-named due to the house sized lumps and banks of peat rising from the eroded gravel of the almost level ground. The young boys of

the party including Richard and myself had to scramble to the top of one of the very unstable lumps – just to show we could do it!

One of the larger banks gave us shelter from the cold fairly strong wind while we had lunch and decided at the same time that our compasses all pointed in the same direction. This came as something of a surprise to us.

A dip down and a crawl up this time on to Birse Shades and Mount Sned, after which it was a fairly straight route due south into Glen Ogil.

A few hundred feet below us and about half a mile away we saw again the big deer herd moving quietly across our line of descent. In the previous sighting the deer had been going from east to west but now they were traversing from west to east casually jumping the fence on the ridge.

It seemed quite a time before they saw us descending in their direction. It even gave some of our keen photographers time to get within a few hundred yards of them. But, when they did see us they did a quick about turn and eventually gave us an unforgettable sight of a Deer Derby at Beechers Brook as they undulated back over the fence. We discovered on our way down that they had broken the top wire of the fence in a few places.

The sun was now shining on various parts of the hills giving some very beautiful light effects, while a pale new moon looked down and said "Frost tonight"!

Soon we entered Eastside Wood on our way back to the bus. There was a glade in the wood in which was a pool surrounded by sphagnum moss at approximately 400 metres above sea level. It was no ordinary pool because Richard (him again!) stooped and then he glared, and then he pointed. Then we all stooped and glared and pointed and said Oh! there is another one, and another, and another and many more tadpoles.

As I said at the start of this account, Tadpoles in December? Impossible! but there they were swimming around in a pool of about twelve feet in diameter – and we all saw them.

We sat on the grassy bank of Glenogil Reservoir watching the rising trout while we ate the last of our sandwiches and pondered on the magic we had seen that day in December.

Robert L. Harper

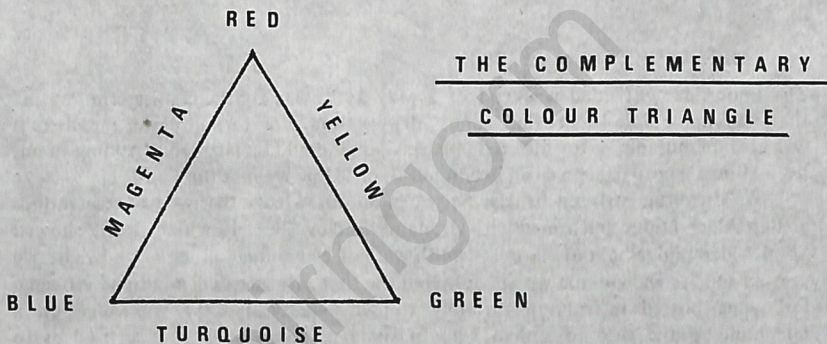
AN OPTICAL ILLUSION – BENNACHIE, 16TH DECEMBER 1979

The pre-Christmas meet was a traverse of Bennachie from east to west. Several members, when descending from Hermit Seat to Black Hill and down the flank of the mountain towards Keig, with the sun in their faces, remarked upon the brilliant iridescent blue colour of the patches of snow lying between the heather. The effect created was so striking that the Editor asked Ann Hay of the Department of Medical Physics, Aberdeen University and a member of the party, whether she could provide an explanation of the phenomenon. Ann Hay puts forward the following hypotheses:—

On the meet of 16th Dec. '79, a certain illusion was noted by some of the walkers: As they were walking towards the sunset, patches of snow, which were in the shadow of the sun, appeared a brilliant peacock blue. At first I attempted to explain this in terms of interference, but I realised that this was impossible as the sun is not a

monochromatic source of light. It then occurred to me that this was probably more of a physiological phenomenon than anything else. Let me explain:—

The sun, as it gets lower in the sky, appears yellow — red, because the shorter wavelength components of white light, i.e. purples, blues & greens, are scattered out more by the atmosphere because of the greater distance that the light rays have to travel through this media. This bright yellow — red light was entering directly into the eyes of the observers and it is in the colour — sensitive cones of the retina of the eye where the physiological reaction takes place. Subjection to bright light produces fatigue of the retina, but when it is light of one part of the spectrum, then only the cones sensitive to that part tire. When the same retinal area is subsequently subjected to white light, all the previously inactive cones respond more vigorously than those which were originally stimulated and a complementary colour is seen. This is illustrated by a standard physics colour triangle which shows all the components of white light and the resultant hues when these are added or subtracted.



The sunlight was yellow tending towards red, which gave a complementary colour on the opposite side of blue tending towards turquoise, when the white snow was observed. It must be pointed out here that the snow was not directly illuminated by the yellow — red of the sun, but had all the components of white light, including re-scattering from the sky.

Another possible explanation is the Purkinje effect in which the rods of the retina have the effect of shifting the eye's maximum sensitivity to the blue — green part of the spectrum, but really the illumination was far too bright for this, so I adhere to the colour fatigue theory.

This is not the last word on the subject, and it would be nice to hear other people's opinions. I have not enlarged on the colour triangle as a full explanation would take too long, but it is a well established fact through experimentation.

Ann Hay

70 YEARS AGO — JANUARY 1910

CCJ, Vol.VI, No.34 — James Gray Kyd wrote an article entitled "Twenty-one Years or our Club".

This is a small extract: —

" The last twenty-one years have seen great changes in our sport in Scotland. In the late 'Eighties the mountains were visited oftener by elderly people than

they are now. I have been told that twenty-one years ago it was not uncommon to see as many as four parties ascending Ben Muich Dhui, each with a guide and ponies. Nowadays the profession of Mountain Guide has almost died out in our country. This no doubt is the result of greater knowledge of the mountains fostered by our club and the clubs of similar constitution. Further, there is more climbing among young men of the less leisured class than there was twenty years ago; the great frequency of holidays and the cheaper travelling that now prevail have opened the "large religion of the hills" to many that could not enjoy it in years gone by. The great passes now figure less in the lives of the people of the Highlands than they used to do. Were it not for tourists, such passes as Glen Feshie and the Learg Ghru would seldom be crossed.

In closing these notes of the first score of years of our Club, we would express the hope that our membership may increase as our age grows and that the good work that has been done in the past may flourish as the years roll on."

BEN ALDER – 2 MAY 1980

The Ben Alder extended weekend of 2 May 1980 was another Cairngorm "extra" that was memorable for its fine, sunny, dry weather. For certain newer members it was also memorable – for different reasons – and could be labelled: "Adding to our list a Munro whose name we can pronounce", or "How we met the Laird".

We drove up early on Friday. Secure in our knowledge that we had reservations at Ben Alder Lodge and armed with Ordnance Survey Sheet 42 which clearly showed "Ben Alder Lodge" about six miles south-west of Dalwhinnie along Loch Eicht, we pressed on. At Dalwhinnie we encountered the first gate guarding a railroad crossing. Following posted instruction carefully (under penalty of £25) we called on a telephone by the gate to a man who in some mysterious outpost advised us to proceed across the right-of-way. At this point a small boy on a bicycle was consulted as to the direction to Ben Alder Lodge. His instructions confirmed our map readings.

After passing several other open gates, we arrived at our destination, an imposing pile of rock nestled in a dark grove of pines. In the deepening shadows of early evening the setting, to romantically inclined Americans, had a brooding element of mystery, a haunt for the likes of Heathcliff. Only one other car was parked behind the lodge. We banged the front door knocker but there was no response. After waiting for some minutes in the brisk late afternoon air, we decided to enter the lodge and ask for the inn-keeper. A log fire was burning in the lounge and an open guest book lay on a table in the entry hall. We sat down in the lounge near the fire, and I began reading *Time* while Audrey pulled out her class notes on Buddha's "Middle Way" or path to enlightenment, in preparation for a coming exam. After forty-five minutes with no other member of the club arriving and no inn-keeper, a certain uneasiness began settling in. Finally, a noise in the kitchen area was heard and a lady appeared with a startled expression on her face. We introduced ourselves and explained that we represented the vanguard of a group of hill walkers that had reservations at the lodge. Her started expression changed to one of alarm and she said that she would call her husband. After a short interval, he appeared and we repeated our introductions.

At this point the "inn-keeper" quietly said, "but this is not a public lodge. It's a private residence." At this point if it had been possible to dig a hole in the floor and

pull ourselves in, we would have done so. We went outside, abject apologies following one after another until Audrey nudged me saying, "That's the fifth time you've said we're sorry."

By this time it was determined that the gates along the loch were now closed and that one was locked. It was now necessary that "his man" precede us out to unlock the gate. After saying yet another apology, we departed. In retrospect, the only saving grace to hill walkers was that this intrusion could have only been carried out by brash Americans. Happily, we weren't brash enough to ask for tea.

Dick and Audrey Vincent

ALL THE DONALDS.

All the Donalds is something to admit to, rather than an achievement to be claimed. So why write about it?

There are reasons. The Donalds do not lack interest. Has not the Club had excursions recently to the Ochil Hills, where nine of them are situated, and did not the S.M.C. hold its first meet at the Crook Inn? Also, with an average intake of about 1½ Munros per year, it will be about the year 2070 before I can write about all the Donalds. It is too long to wait, so I will write about all the Donalds.

As might be deduced from the above remarks, I am domiciled south of the Border, and each year to get to the Easter Meet or at other times, I have to pass through the Southern Uplands. The first Donald I climbed was Windlestraw Law as long ago as May, 1948 and for some years they were taken in desultory fashion or not at all, until by the end of 1974, 21 had been done. Then I started to take a more intensive interest in these hills I passed through so often, and with a maximum of 30 in 1978, they were all done by 1980, the final one being Cardon in the Culter Hills on 15th April in that year.

They have provided many memorable walks, mostly on circular routes from a base point. For example, the fifteen Etrick Hills, which might not look too accessible from the map, fell in three fairly easy rounds from the Moffat valley, two from Caplegill and one from Selcoth. Not all of them fit in with this arrangement, the isolated Tinto for instance and that most inaccessible one of them all, Mullwharcher.

One's own transport is as necessary as with Munros. Only two of them can be regarded as being within reasonable walking distance of a railway station, Blackcraig from Kirkconnel and Blairdenon from Dunblane. Another necessity for a large number of the hills is clear weather. Many of them have no distinguishing feature at all on the top and only by gazing around and perceiving no higher point can one be sure of having made it.

They provide solitary unfrequented routes. With two exceptions, I can count on the fingers the total number of fellow walkers met, that is, on 131 of the hills. The two exceptions are Auchope Cairn and Windy Gyle, the route between which is contiguous with the Pennine Way and in July 1 I met dozens of people here. All of them in a bigger hurry than I was, doing a leisurely round from Sourhope, for this is the last long stretch of the Pennine Way.

One thing that is less than a blessing is the spread of forestry. Forest tracks can be useful if one knows where they are going, I have found such helpful on going up Millfore and Blackhope Scar. Incidentally, I was disappointed to find the cairn of old fence posts on Blackhope Scar which Dr. Donald mentions, gone. I should have liked

to have seen a cairn of old fence posts. But in general, forestry is a nuisance, and one finds one's nice line of projected descent complicated by trenches and young trees. Two of the hills I remember here are Shalloch on Minnoch North Top and Cairnsmore of Fleet. So if you want the Donalds, go and do them before forestry becomes still more of an impediment.

H. Proctor

CONSERVATION OF THE MOUNTAIN ENVIRONMENT

PETER HOWGATE

Nowadays a wide section of the population takes an interest in the many and diverse aspects of 'conservation' – the protection of historic and interesting buildings, the preservation of endangered species of plants and animals and the conservation in as near pristine a state as possible of areas of outstanding beauty or natural interest. I am sure many Club members are active as individuals in the conservation movement and perhaps it is surprising that the Club as a body has not taken a more active interest in protecting and preserving the environment of those areas where its members have a particular interest.

A strong element of the rewards of climbing and hill walking is that these pastimes are carried on in wild and often remote areas where man's activities have had little impact and his artefacts are largely absent. These attributes contribute greatly to both the excitement and aesthetic pleasure of the sports. We are fortunate in that living in Scotland we still have ready access to many areas which fulfil these requirements. Even so the wildness and remoteness of many of them are being slowly eroded in many ways – bulldozed estate roads, new motor roads, forestry plantations, hydro-electric schemes, facilities for leisure activities are examples. In a survey conducted in 1961 for the National Trust for Scotland*, W.H. Murray identified 21 areas of natural beauty in the Highlands. He considered many more could have been included were it not for the disfigurement caused by man's activities. Even within this selected list he warned that only 6 areas were totally unspoiled, the rest having suffered some degree of impairment of their beauty. Almost 20 years on from that report I know from my own experience that there have been further man-made intrusions into many of the areas Murray listed. He included the Cairngorms in his list but noted that the development of the ski-ing facilities, which at that time had not long been started, had had an effect on the landscape.

The objects of the Cairngorm Club as stated in its constitution do not refer specifically to environmental matters, other than 'to consider the right of access to Scottish mountains', but I am certain that members generally would wish to have mountain areas remain unspoiled, wild and remote. The committee during the past year has had to consider and take action on behalf of the Club over 2 cases where it appeared that the environment of areas of interest to members would be adversely affected by proposed developments. These 2 areas though could hardly be more different in character and in the use members make of them.

One area is the stretch of coastline running north from the Bullers o' Buchan towards Peterhead and centred on the Blackhills quarry at Longhaven. Both the sea cliffs and the walls of the disused quarry have been used for rock climbing, certainly since 1951 and very likely since before that. Though it is clearly not a mountain area

and a road runs not far back from the cliffs, anyone who has been there or climbed there will agree it has a surprising air of wildness and remoteness akin to that of a mountain. This feeling is even more enhanced when a mist blows in from the sea. A few years ago the quarry was purchased by a company which applied, unsuccessfully, to the planning authority for permission to rework it. In spite of the refusals, the company reopened the quarry and later negotiated a temporary agreement with the planning authority, Banff and Buchan District Council, under Section 50 of the planning acts to continue extraction of stone. The company has negotiated contracts, mostly for projects in Holland, for large quantities of hardcore and although final plans have not yet been issued it is expected that several hundreds of tonnes of rock will be quarried annually for perhaps 30 years. Extraction on this scale will lead to the formation of a huge quarry and, associated with it, large spoil tips. The quarry and its workings will have a serious adverse effect on the environment of the area and hinder access to the cliff tops. Though the sea cliffs themselves will not be obviously affected by the quarrying, blasting could well affect the structure and integrity of the rock to the detriment of climbing on them.

It is an essential requirement for the successful operation of a quarry on this scale that the stone be transported in bulk to its destination. The company has therefore laid an order before Parliament praying permission to construct a harbour at the inlet of Longhaven. (This procedure has to be adopted because the construction of harbours lies outwith the control of local planning authorities.) Because the harbour is an essential part of the whole project and in view of the affects the developments would have on the environment of the area the committee on behalf of the Club has lodged a petition objecting to the order.

The other area of concern is the northern corries of Cairngorm – or at least those not already affected by ski-ing developments. The Cairngorm Chairlift Company who operating the existing ski-ing facilities have applied to the planning authority for permission to extend them into Coire Lochan, Coire an t-Sneachda and Lurcher's gully. The proposals include the construction of an access road into the lower parts of Coire Lochan with a large car park and the provision of ski-tows and chair lifts in the corries. With the existing situations in Coire Cas and Coire na Ciste as examples of the impact ski-ing facilities have on the mountain environment most climbers and hill walkers could not view these proposals other than with considerable dismay. However, it would not be possible for the Cairngorm Club to speak with a single voice on these proposals. Those members with an interest in ski-ing would perhaps welcome extended opportunities to practice their sport; those who seek unspoiled mountain scenery would consider the proposals abhorrent. Both views are represented on the committee but after debate the majority decision was to oppose the development and a formal objection in the name of the Club has been lodged with the planning authority, Highland Regional Council.

It is almost certain that both these proposed developments will go to public enquiries and the Club as an objector may be asked to appear or be represented at them. This will be a new experience for the Club but if members feel strongly about the preservation of the mountain, or in one case, near-mountain environment, then the Club as a corporate body should formulate an attitude to such developments as I've described and if necessary be prepared to oppose them. The Cairngorm Club is not alone in objecting to these particular proposals – other climbing and hill walking clubs in the Aberdeen area and elsewhere in Scotland, have also done so. It is recognised that when it comes to public enquiries the amateur objector is frequently

at a disadvantage in comparison with the developer who usually has considerable resources of finance and professional advice available to him. It is therefore to the benefit of the objectors if those of a like mind can join together to present a joint case. Promoted very much by the need to take action over the proposals regarding Longhaven and Cairngorm but with future cases also in mind, the climbing and hill walking clubs in the Aberdeen area have formed a body called The North-East Mountain Trust. The Trust was inaugurated in June of this year with the Cairngorm Club as a founder member. Its main function is best summarised by an extract from its constitution.

"The objects of the Trust shall be to protect the environment of hills and coastal cliffs of Scotland and in particular North-East Scotland, for the benefit now and in the future of climbers, walkers and others taking recreation there from developments likely to damage that environment. . . ."

I hope that the Trust will be successful in its aims and would like to see the Cairngorm Club give it full support. I believe that it is a duty of the Club to try to ensure that the Scottish mountains and in particular the Cairngorms, are at least as attractive to climbers and walkers in the future, as they are now.

**W.H. Murray. Highland Landscape. National Trust for Scotland, Aberdeen, 1962.*

Footnote -

At the time of going to print Longhaven Quarries Limited have been placed in the hands of the receiver. This does not necessarily mean an end to quarrying at Longhaven, as the receiver might decide to keep the company operating as a going concern in order to attract a purchaser. Even if the company were to be wound up any purchaser of the assets might revive the quarrying operations. - Editor.

