

## NOTES

93 YEARS AGO – JULY 1893  
CCJ, VOL. I, No. 1, p. 1 (Reduced)

THE  
Cairngorm Club Journal.

Vol. I.

JULY, 1893.

No. 1.

SOME STRAY THOUGHTS ON MOUNTAIN-  
CLIMBING.

By THE RIGHT HON. JAMES BRYCE, D.C.L., M.P., *President*.

THERE is no despotism like that of the zealous and energetic editor who, by his own devotion to his project, acquires the right to hold to their word those who, in a moment of unguarded sympathy, have promised to enlist under his banner. The editor of the Cairngorm Journal bids me write, and so, though I have little to say, and no time to say it, I throw together at his bidding some scattered remarks on a pursuit which has always been a passion with me.

Those in whose breasts no such passion burns often ask—In what does the pleasure of mountain-climbing consist? "It is fatiguing", they say; "it exposes you to cold, and wet, and hunger, and a variety of risks to health, including those which arise from bad food, from chills up to apoplexy. If pursued in steep or rocky places it involves the risk of breaking your neck, or at least your leg. The pleasure of striving with an antagonist, which makes the charm of so many games, is wanting; while as for beauty, artists agree that the views from the lower slopes of a hill are better than those from the top."

Those who love the mountains, and have from childhood been wont to range over them, find their delight so natural and obvious that they hardly know how to discriminate the elements that go to make it up. However, I will try.

One of these elements is simple enough, for we perceive it in other forms. It is that same enjoyment of physical

L. A.

## EXCURSIONS AND NOTES.

was held in the Café, Aberdeen, on 28th February—  
OUR FOURTH ANNUAL MEETING Mr. Alexander Copland, ex-Chairman, presiding. The Treasurer's statement showed a balance at the credit of the Club of £37 2s. 2d. Office-bearers for 1893-94 were elected as follows:—*President*, The Right Hon. James Bryce, D.C.L., M.P.; *Vice-Presidents*, Alexander Cruickshank, LL.D., and Rev. Robert Lippe; *Chairman*, Rev. Professor George Cameron, D.D.; *Secretary*, Alex. Inskop McConnochie; *Treasurer*, T. R. Gillies; *Committee*—Robert Anderson, Alexander Copland, Robert Harvey, W. J. Jamieson, Charles M'Hardy, Alexander Macphail, John M'Gregor, William Porter, John Roy, LL.D., Charles Ruxton, Rev. A. M. Scott, and Rev. Robert Semple.

The following excursions were fixed for the current season:—Spring—Hill of Fare and Barmekin; Summer—(1) Beinn a' Ghlo and (2) the Benchinnans; Autumn—Bennachie.

The Committee's Report suggested the publication of a Club Journal, a matter which was referred back with powers. The Committee thereafter resolved on a Journal, and the Secretary was appointed Editor. It will be issued, meantime, twice a year—on 1st July and 1st January.

Mr. Charles Ruxton, the retiring Chairman, who wrote apologising for his absence, was thanked for his services during the past two years.

The following gentlemen have been admitted members since the annual meeting:—James C. Barnett, Robert Aitken, G. M. F. Foggo, W. Milne Gibson, William Anderson, Harry A. Holmes, Ranald R. Macdonald, Thomas Milne, M.D., W. A. MacKenzie.

93 YEARS AGO – JULY 1893

CCJ, VOL. I, No. 1 – In the EXCURSIONS AND NOTES. (Reduced).



*In the last number of the Journal, the Editor's pen was unintentionally severe, removing almost half the article submitted by Peter Bellarby. Perhaps some readers thought that, for the first time, a serialised story was being printed in the Journal. This was not the case and this time the article is printed in full—Editor.*

## NUMBER ONE HUNDRED

Peering through the window in the early morning it seemed as if it were snowing. Yet this was May 1st 1982 at Roy Bridge and Roy Bridge is 90m above sea level. It couldn't be snow but a further look showed that it really was snowing. After much discussion it was agreed to attempt some of the eastern Mamores. Perhaps I would be able to ascend the three at the east end.

Back in January it had seemed an easy task. Casually I said I would celebrate number one hundred at the Roy Bridge meet. Some people climb mountains for enjoyment and some people climb 276 of them, or is it 279? Somehow I had been inveigled into joining the latter group and was now in sight of a landmark on the way. Indolence and bad weather combined to make it three short on arrival at Roy Bridge. Never mind, it shouldn't be too difficult to do three in one day and meet my commitment.

So we travelled to Kinlochleven and at 10.20 began to ascend. There was much uncertainty even from the start as to whether we were on the correct route. After much peering through mist, attempting to estimate the extent of the forestry and consulting of maps, the mist lifted enough to show we were on the path intended. We dropped down slightly and met the broad track from Mamore Lodge. A little backwards movement along the track, and off we went up the path to Coire an Lochain. The mist had descended again and the snow became deeper so each burn reached was carefully checked against the map. The mist lifted momentarily to show us Loch Eilde Mor far below, just where expected – a reassuring sight indeed.

The snow began to fall more persistently and it became ever deeper under foot. The wind rose and at Coire an Lochain my companions decided to call it a day and returned to Kinlochleven. I was glad. It's not that I dislike their company but I could not ask them to endure the conditions as they were now developing.

Sgurr Eilde Mor was the first objective and so began the ascent of the steep boulder strewn slopes leading to its summit. The wind grew in ferocity as each upward step was made. A map case was hanging on a cord round my neck. It had seemed a good idea since I had to be very careful with navigation. The wind buffeted and tore at the case – it must be put in a pocket or I would be strangled by the cord. I had never realised this danger before so now the map goes in a pocket with the compass tied to the zip of another pocket.

Higher up another problem, of iced rocks covered with soft snow, made progress slow but eventually the summit was reached. In reward the mist lifted for a time and I could make out the next objective, Binnein Beag. So it was down the north west slopes in more mist and ever deepening snow, waist deep in places. I climbed up to join the path which wanders between Binnein Mor and Beag. It must be a well defined path for it showed up clearly and provided a useful route forward in spite of the large amount of snow.

Just below the bealach between Binnein Mor and Beag there is a small loch which was the signal to strike up Binnein Beag. It was a steep ascent on snow and I thought I would have it a little easier on the descent by following my own footprints. A forlorn hope as after a few metres they were obliterated by falling snow and the gusting wind.

As I reached the bealach again the mist lifted and I saw before me the north east ridge of Binnein Mor, which I proposed to ascend. It looked impregnable, a tremendously steep alpine ridge with a mixture of rock and snow. I looked to the right – could I climb up the head of the Coire instead? The map indicated that the average gradient of the ridge



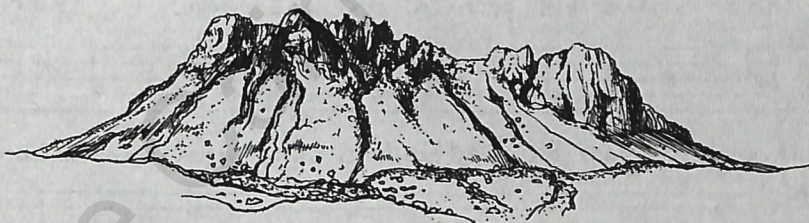
was not as steep as it seemed and so the ridge was ascended. A flanking movement to the north was made initially to avoid some rather steep rocks, and then the crest of the ridge followed. Doubt turned to joy as I realised I was going to succeed and so number one hundred was reached.

To match my mood of celebration the mist cleared to show a vast vista of snow covered peaks. I stood for a few moments admiring the glorious view and reflecting that the somewhat arduous ascent had been enjoyable. So perhaps it is impossible to enjoy one's mountaineering and reach the top of 276 of them after all.

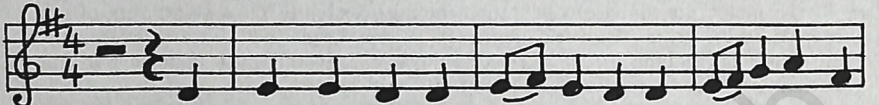
A quick romp along a very snowy ridge brought me to the south top, and then down to Sgurr Eilde Beag. At ten past eight I reached Kinlochleven, tired but happy. Back at Roy Bridge someone kindly made some soup and another provided champagne to celebrate.

Some would say it is foolish to go into the mountains alone under such conditions. Most of the time I prefer to be with friends but occasionally it is good to be alone and to depend only on one's self. It wasn't very difficult. I did have some experience. I did carry survival gear and I did enjoy it.

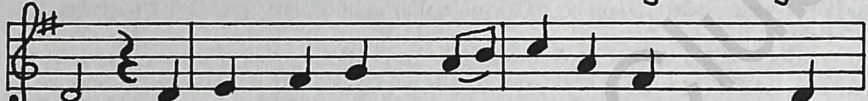
Peter Bellarby



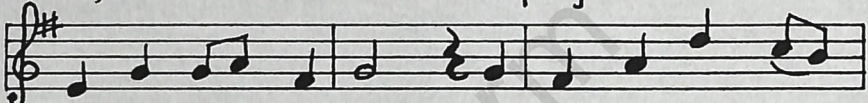
NORTH STORM  
Words and music by Lewis McAllan




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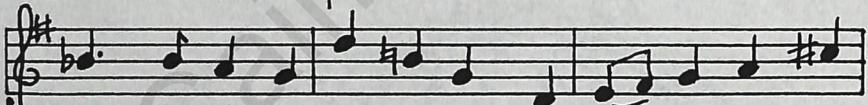
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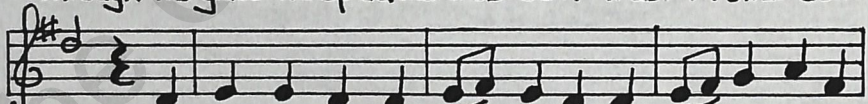
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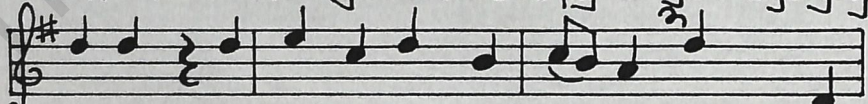
load o' sna wis pech-in on his leen, Fan



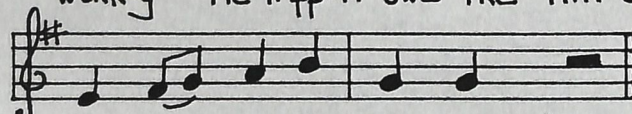
through his glass he spied his lass cam wast-in ower Com-



-een. He cried oot high and Jean's re-ply Fair gart his gait gang



wonk-y He tripp-it over the Hill o' Fare (oh!) And



skaitt the lot on Ban-chory!



## FIRST TIME IN FRONT

Interest in hills came rather late. A Royal Wedding and a beautiful summer's day in 1981 led to the summit of Beinn a' Bhuirid and the discovery of 'Munros'. Addiction was immediate and a boggy tramp to Beinn Bhrac was undertaken. Numerous outings that summer saw involvement grow to where 'doing the Munros' couldn't be ignored. Then came winter ascents; a 'wander' up Black Spout not really knowing what was involved, weekends in the Mamores, Glencoe, Glen Affric and the Cairngorms gave the usual mixture of crag and breathtaking beauty. I was totally hooked.

At this stage it was all walking rather than climbing, but eventually thoughts of scrambling and Skye began to surface. Vague recollections of exposure shown some years ago on a T.V. programme about the Cuillin ridge were not encouraging. However, Stuart's keenness and enthusiasm were infectious. We set off for the gabbro. What was a very tentative start on Sgurr nan Gobhar, eventually became a romp along a large part of the main ridge, taking full advantage of a week of glorious weather.

Later, an enquiry about doing some rock climbing on the Altens sea cliffs culminated in Martin, Peter and I climbing Green Recess Chimney on White Slab in Coir' a' Ghrunnada and on to the summit of Sgumain, Alasdair (via the 'bad step') and Thearlaich. The others continued on up King's Chimney to Mhic Choinnich; I was ready for the pub but made for the lochan in Coire Laggan instead. More sea-cliff climbing followed, with the first 'Journey into Space' (falling off! not the Grade 6 on the Orion face of the Ben.) and a developing interest in winter climbing. Membership of the Cairngorm Club gave the opportunity to attend a weekend 'Winter Skills' course at Glenmore Lodge (a course which can be thoroughly recommended) and a 'bus meet' ascent of Central Buttress on Lochnagar with Peter. Here I discovered the other form of Cairngorm granite – frozen turf!

All this climbing had been as second (or last) man on the rope which, although giving some sense of achievement, did create the feeling of being something of a 'tourist', leaving the hard work and decision-making to someone else.

Then one day, during some day-dream climbing, the phone rang. "Do you want to do a bit of winter climbing?" enquired Hal. "Yes!" "How about Ben Nevis?" "Eh . . . O.K.!" A new climbing partnership had been formed. That first weekend, our plans for climbs on Ben Nevis didn't quite materialise – Tower Ridge looked too big and Cresta Climb was too noisy! However a Grade 2 on Sron na Lairig (Glencoe) gave an interesting day and on the second a 'wander up on to the arete' from Coire Leis had its moments.

The following Sunday morning saw a six o'clock start for Cairngorm – an attempt to beat the skiers who didn't materialise in their usual numbers. We had selected 'The Vent' in Coire an Lochain, but it's strange how planned climbs end up being ignored. By mid-morning we were at the foot of 'Red Gully' in Coire an t'Sneachda (it was easier to get at), soon to be joined by seven others. One rope decided to have a go at 'Goat Track Gully', which was next door, but eventually gave up and 'set off for the pub'; another rope of three were more determined and made a successful ascent. This left two ropes intending to climb Red Gully. The other rope seemed more capable than us so we offered them first 'go' and we were not greatly encouraged by calls of 'That was a hard bit' and 'This is good grade 3 stuff'.

Finally it was our turn to set off – Hal, leading as usual, overcame the 'hard-bit' and reached the belay stance at the top of the first pitch. 'Climb when ready' came the call. 'Climbing' came the reply and I was off – up, not down! The ice was superb, crampons and ice picks biting with confidence-giving 'clicks'. The 'hard-bit', just below the belay, was reached and after a few moments of huffing and puffing, together with a slightly taut rope, was surmounted. I stood up beside Hal but before I had time to 'tie-on' he enquired if I would like to lead the next 'bit'. The next few seconds passed in a confusion of thought; having previously turned down the offer to lead a pitch in Skye



and ever since wondering if I could have; feeling like a tourist at the end of a climb having seconded; the improbability of me ever leading anything; the inviting nature of the next ten feet of ice and a good-looking belay about fifteen feet up; I did have to give it a go sometime – didn't I? It's only fifteen feet, then I can give up and become a tourist again. Click – click – click. The picks and crampons bit the ice and I was on the way up – in front! – without ever having made a conscious decision. The fifteen feet to the belay disappeared in a flash – so did the belay! Where was it? That good-looking piece of rock just wasn't there, only a black bulge sticking through the ice. What happens now? What am I doing here?

There seemed only to be two options. Falling off is not particularly attractive, so think positively and climb up. So up I went. Another thirty feet of ice and snow clicked by. My God, this is tiring. Tension, and a style and technique which are not good at the best of times, had created aching limbs. What about a runner? Do I waste energy putting in protection or do I go for that other good-looking belay about fifty feet further up? Will it be like the last one? That steep ice step just above it will be impossible. It has to be a good belay. Thoughts of falling are relegated to the background. The rock is finally reached – it's a beauty – a real 'Thank God' one. A sling is draped round it and quickly I'm tied on. A shuffle of feet to create a bit of a platform and that's it. 'On-belay'. It's over.

The feelings were a strange mixture – physically absolutely shattered; mentally switching between elation and concern for our total dependence on the belay; it had been my choice – was it a good one? – was I properly tied on?; the sense of achievement and satisfaction; the thoughts of the two hundred feet still to go. But then back to the immediate problem – 'Taking in' – 'That's me' – 'Climb when ready' – 'Climbing' – and soon Hal was belayed alongside me.

He took the lead again on the next ice step which ran out to a nice gentle snow slope with huge bucket steps (letting the other rope go first had been a good idea!) A couple more rope lengths and we were on the plateau – it was all over. We shook hands, congratulated each other, stuffed the gear into the sacks and set off for the car.

The feeling was, and still is, of having done a 'real' climb. When will I lead another pitch? I don't know. There is a certain security in tourism. When I do, it will be a 'go-for-it' decision at the time but I'm sure it will not bring the satisfaction of the first time in front.

Fraser Stronach

#### ON ATTENDING A CLUB MEET

There are no great difficulties about this. You merely contract in advance and then all you have to do is to keep your promise.

In my early days I was lucky to get a run into Aberdeen from a Post Office engineer on an early shift. When that arrangement fell through I got out my cycle and went to Queen's Cross where I left the cycle at a nearby garage. Then came the day when an emergency arose. I think it must have been when double Summer Time coincided with a 6.30 am start, for I was suddenly faced one morning with complete darkness and no working lights. Not wishing to lose time arguing with the Police, I set out to run the four and a half miles to Queen's Cross. My hob nailed boots made a clatter which broke the peace of Aberdeen's West End, but I caught the bus.

We had a good day on Lochnagar by the Danzig Shiel Bridge (The Glen Muick Road was blocked with snow) and returned mission completed to the rendezvous. We had time on our hands and I think it was Hugh Welsh (no one else would have dared) who suggested that we might as well walk the four and a half miles to the Invercauld at Braemar instead of hanging around waiting on the rest of the party. All in all it was a fairly active day for me.



Then I discovered that the Swallow Bus came up from Old Aberdeen and picked up one or two, at Kittybrewster; so this method was used for some time but I have no idea how I got there. I can only presume that I ran or walked or did a mixture of both methods.

I had no other problems for many years but ran into trouble at the end of my term as President. There was one meet left and since I had attended all the others I was especially anxious not to miss this one. The difficulty was that I had undertaken to represent the Club at the Seventieth Anniversary Dinner of the Yorkshire Rambler's Club to be held at Harrogate the previous day.

A plan of action was drawn up. I would leave Harrogate as early as possible and catch the early train for Aberdeen at Edinburgh Waverley. My son would meet me at Stonehaven with the car and we would cut across country to the Ballater Morven area, where I would meet up with and join the main party at tea. A simple plan indeed, but the way it actually turned out had its complications.

I cannot remember whether I travelled to York overnight or left Aberdeen first thing in the morning, but I know I had a lot of time in York and managed to see a bit of the city before getting a bus for Harrogate. I remember being a bit surprised at its condition and thinking that it showed up in a very poor light when compared with Aberdeen's Suburban Service.

In due course I joined the main stream of guests as we entered what seemed to be a very large foyer. Slap in the middle of the arena sat a man at a small writing table. The main stream split, one branch swinging to the right, the other round on the left, but each keeping a very respectful distance from the solitary writer in the middle. A whisper, sponsored by the knowing ones, indicated with due awe and reverence that, "that was Jack preparing his speech". The dinner proceeded as most dinners do, and in due course Jack gave his speech which was suitably acclaimed. Following some others I was called. I had had no information that I was expected to speak. I do not like speaking and need time for consideration. I started to prepare my first Presidential Speech immediately after the previous year's dinner!

I did what I could but I have to say that it was not very good and that I was annoyed at myself. However there was some consolation in the later reflection that perhaps the other diners had reached the stage when they did not care very much what was said.

The diners were breaking up into groups so I started to enquire as to the possibility of getting a lift back to York. In due course I was introduced to Jim who would gladly take me to Darlington. Since this was forty miles nearer Edinburgh I was happy to accept his offer.

Jim was seated at a table in a side room. There were two bottles of whisky and he and some of his friends were chatting. In due course the last of his friends drifted away and the second bottle was almost empty. It soon was, and he suggested that perhaps we should get going. I controlled my growing anxiety and agreed. Not long after starting snow began to fall quite heavily, reducing visibility and lying on the road. At Scotch Corner a 'Road Blocked' sign had been expected, but Jim still pushed his big Jaguar on at a steady 60 mph and doing rather well, I hopefully thought. Shortly after the road swung right but Jim just carried straight on down what turned out to be a farm road. He eventually dropped a very relieved me at Darlington Station.

Darlington Station after midnight was a revelation. The place was shining with lights. There was a great blazing fire in an extended restaurant and groups of people were moving in and out. The whole scene seemed to be a happy, joyful one but this perhaps was influenced by the thought that stage one of my journey was over and I was glad to be on my way home.

Then came the contrast of Edinburgh Waverley where we were welcomed by the occasional dim light. It was freezingly cold as another passenger and myself sought out the waiting room. We found it to be a small room with benches around its perimeter and a travesty of a fire at one end. The room was almost fully occupied by some of the un-



fortunate inhabitants of Edinburgh, so we had no recourse but to spend the next few hours walking around the central square of the station. It was that or freeze.

In due course the Aberdeen train came and we were on our way. There was snow everywhere and as it seemed to be very deep, I began to wonder about the position at Stonehaven. The line takes a bit of a curve coming into that station and since there was no car awaiting in the station square I decided to stay on till Aberdeen; where my son was in fact waiting.

He had been unable to get to Stonehaven direct, and had come round via Aberdeen, got a puncture, broke my jack when changing the wheel, broke another borrowed from a farmer (that cost me £15) but got back to Aberdeen. I took over as driver since the entrance to my own drive was steepish, a turn and with a side slope, so in the circumstances had to be taken faster than usual. I took it too fast, skidded and pranged the car against a gate post which was demolished. There goes the master plan I thought, as I went home for a bath and breakfast.

I then noticed that the Deeside buses were running, and found I could get one which would take me to Ballater by mid-afternoon, so I duly attended my last official meet. The day was not yet over however. The cold was intense and on the way home, the frozen fuel pump in the Swallow Bus blew up a mile or so out of Ballater. Jim Duguid phoned for a replacement to be sent out by the last bus to Ballater. Some hours later, after another freezing wait we were on our way again.

More recently I made a private arrangement with the Meets Secretary that I would join the Club Party for tea at Coshieville after the Schiehallion excursion. I gaily set off for this appointment but fifty yards up the road, the exhaust pipe on my car fell off!

I started this note by suggesting that it was easy to attend a Club Meet but seem to have ended it by proving conclusively that it is not always easy.

Robert Bain

#### A SCRAMBLERS' TRAVERSE OF THE CUILLIN OF SKYE

In the 'Notes' section of the 1983 *Journal*, I wrote about an abortive attempt on the Cuillin ridge with Robin Grant. The Editor added a footnote referring to an account by Robin, of a subsequent successful traverse which he had hoped to include in this number. Robin and I have recently revised and enlarged the story of our adventures and it is this version which follows.

In spite of our earlier defeat, we were undeterred and came back to try again. This time we decided firstly not to employ a guide but to circumvent any rock climbing sections we felt we could not confidently tackle. Secondly, we would traverse from Sgurr nan Gillean to Gars-bheinn, partly so as to avoid the wearisome climb up the screes to Gars-bheinn, and also because this would enable us to get most of the difficult sections over while we were fairly fresh on the first day. We were also determined not to be hurried as we wanted to savour the delights of the scenery. I understand that the record time for the traverse now stands at just over four hours! We were quite prepared to take 40 hours, and intended to make a leisurely two day expedition with a bivouac half way.

Accordingly, we pitched camp in Glen Brittle and, the following day, we climbed through mist to leave bivouac equipment and food and drink for the second day at the spectacularly situated ledge we had used the previous year near Bealach Coire na Banachdich. This time we took a small tent with us, which we established would fit onto our not over large ledge, by a trial pitching. Our gear was safely cached away in a shallow cave, and then we stayed awhile admiring the subtle effects of mist and cloud on the peaks of the ridge. We had left behind our cameras as a concession to the considerable weight of our packs, but, as so often happens, regretted this, because, although cloud was hanging heavy over Glen Brittle, the Coruisk side was practically clear, and the views were superb.



The following day dawned damp and misty, so we delayed our departure for another 24 hours. This time the ridge was clear of cloud, and, after driving to Sligachan, our adventure started at about 7 a.m. as we trudged, warm and midge-ridden, across the moor to Coire Riabhach and up the Tourist Route to Sgurr nan Gillean. About three hours later we were at the summit. The weather did not look completely settled and cloud covered parts of the ridge, but we set out along Gillean's west ridge and were soon at grips with the famous Gendarme, that vertical pinnacle which effectively bars the way to further progress. After embracing its rough form and vainly trying to lasso a protective sling round the top, I climbed (firmly belayed by my companion) down the slab to the left and found a fairly straight-forward way to the neck beyond, thus avoiding the more sensationally exposed swing round to the right. We soon reached the foot of the chimney which leads down to the screes, where we took our first short cut by traversing below the cliffs of the Am Basteir complex, thus avoiding the horrors (to the mere scrambler) of the Bhasteir Tooth. We lunched near Bruach na Frithe and then continued towards An Caisteal. There's a short pitch of climbing to negotiate before reaching this peak which I assured Robin looked perfectly easy. What was all the fuss about? It did prove rather off-balance when I embarked upon it, and I was grateful for the comfort of the rope. It was on reaching the top that we had the only fall of our expedition – Robin tripped and fell flat on his face, but fortunately onto one of the few grassy summits of the Cuillin!

After An Caisteal, the non-rock-climber might be well advised to avoid the Bidein Druim nan Ramh peaks by traversing, as we did, the scree slopes on the Glen Brittle side to reach the Bealach na Glaiè Moire. We did, in fact, return last year to climb Sgurr an Fheadain and the Druim nan Ramh group, but in a leisurely, unhurried way. And so in the late afternoon we came to the four peaks of Sgurr a'Mhadaidh, a part of the ridge almost impossible to bypass. Although I had climbed the highest peak before, I had not traversed all four, and I was duly impressed by the sudden and sheer drop down from the second top we reached. I plucked up enough courage to abseil down into the depths, followed by Robin who proved that it was really quite easy by climbing down, protected by the main rope which he threaded through a sling at the top. We met two climbers here who were trying to find a way down to Glen Brittle thinking that they had already reached the Bealach na Glaiè Moire. We soon enlightened them as to their true whereabouts, and then found our way down the next top by a descent on the Coruisk side.

Time had slipped by, and it was now 7.30 in the evening as we left Sgurr a'Mhadaidh to negotiate the narrow ridge of Sgurr a' Ghreadaidh, and we began to wonder if we would reach our bivouac before dark. As we came down the rocks of Sgurr Thormaoid, we linked up with our previous attempt, but to say that this time the weather conditions were better would be an understatement. The mountains were bathed in the rosy glow of sunset and out to the west the Hebrides floated on a wonderful sea of varied and subtle shades of aquamarine. Such a sight took the weariness from our limbs as we came over Sgurr na Banachdich and, at long last, to our home for the night just as darkness fell.

We pitched our tent and prepared supper, and, in spite of the considerable vertical drop down to Coruisk just outside our front door, we had a fairly comfortable night.

We greeted the following misty but not unpromising morning by jodelling across the abyss below our camp so as to savour the fine echo. Breakfast, striking camp, and packing our gear took quite some time, so it was mid morning when we finally set out on the second stage of our Odyssey. Noon found us descending from Sgurr Mhic Dearg round the base of the Inaccessible Pinnacle and on towards Sgurr Mhic Choinneach, Mackenzie's Peak. It seems particularly fitting that some Skye peaks are named after the early climbing pioneers who first explored the ridge – others are Thormaoid (Norman of Norman Collie), Alasdair (Sherriff Alexander Nicolson), and Thearlaich (Charles of Charles Pilkington). We met hereabouts a young solo climber of whom I feel sure these great men of the past would heartily approve. Starting from Camasunary, he had reached the ridge by traversing the Dubhs, and then gone back to Gars-bheinn to start a full traverse of the entire ridge – we hope he made it! Collie's ledge led us to Bealach Mhic



Choinnich where we lunched, making rather heavy weather of the great pile of peanut butter sandwiches we had prepared, our main need being liquid for our insatiable thirst. We climbed Sgurr Thearlaich by a zig-zag route which Gerry Ackroyd had shown us the previous year.

Then on to Sgurr Alasdair, Skye's highest mountain, where Gars-bheinn, our destination, came into view – surely we were going to make it this time! By descending below the peak's south west ridge and locating the crucial chimney avoiding the tricky 'Mauvais Pas', it is possible to traverse to beyond the Thearlaich Dubh Gap. By the time we had done this, the weather had become superb, and in warm sunshine we slowly climbed Sgurr Dubh na da Bheinn and onto Sgurr nan Eag, the last 'Munro' on our route. It was now 7 p.m. and the view to the west was marvellous as we strolled along the pleasant ridge towards Gars-bheinn, where we just had enough orange juice left for a toast to our success.

The return to Glen Brittle turned into rather an epic. Dusk was falling as we descended the seemingly endless scree and it was getting quite dark by the time we reached the path to Glen Brittle. Out came the torches, but mine flickered then faded, leaving us with only Robin's as a source of illumination with which to find our way through the boggy wilderness. At times, we lost the path completely and almost had to face another bivouac. We floundered on however, eventually reaching camp at 1.30 a.m. We were roused later that morning by the warden of the camp site who came to enquire how we had fared. He gave us the camp log book and asked us to record our traverse in it. We collected the car we had left at Sligachan, then sweated our way up to the ridge again to recover our bivouac gear. It was again warm and sunny and we just had time on returning to camp for a short dip in the sea before driving again to Sligachan for an enjoyable celebratory dinner, during which we drank to the success of our expedition, coupling this with the memory of Professor Norman Collie, that grand old man of Cuillin mountaineering.

Donald Hawksworth

*Footnote – The route taken by Donald Hawksworth and Robin Grant can be followed in detail on the SMC map of the Black Cuillin which is primarily intended for use in conjunction with the SMC Guide to Skye – Editor.*

#### SOUTH GEORGIA, 1985

The last issue of the *Journal* contained an article entitled 'Landforms in the Falkland Islands and South Georgia' by Dr. David Sugden, Senior Lecturer in Geography, University of Aberdeen. Club members will be interested to know that Dr. Sugden was back in South Georgia with 3 colleagues in January and February 1985, with the aid of a grant from the Natural Environmental Research Council, in order to study glacier fluctuations and climatic change. The party flew direct to the Falkland Islands from Ascension Island by Hercules transport plane and were based for one week on H.M.S. Endurance and for the remainder of the time, near Grytviken on South Georgia. Dr. Sugden and his colleagues were in daily contact with the British garrison and received great assistance from them with the carrying of equipment. During their stay, the party from Aberdeen saw the raising of the former Argentinian submarine, the Santa Fe, from the harbour at Grytviken. The submarine was towed down the fjord and scuttled in deep water. Figure 1 shows Sugartop mountain and the Hamberg Lakes Valley in February 1985 and in the middle distance it can be seen how the glacier falls over the top of the cliffs and lands at the bottom. Sugartop is in the Allardyce range, the highest peak of which is Mount Paget, 2960 m (9709 ft). Figure 2 shows the Harker Glacier with its medial moraines.





Figure 1 Sugartop Mountain, South Georgia  
(Photograph by David Sugden)



Figure 2 Harker Glacier, South Georgia  
(Photograph by David Sugden)