

PROCEEDINGS OF THE CLUB

GENERAL MEETINGS

The Ninety-fifth Annual General Meeting was held on 23 November 1983. The office bearers appointed were Hon. President Leslie Hay, President Eric Johnston, Vice-Presidents Ruth Payne and Neil Cromar, Secretary Richard Shirreffs, Treasurer Sandy Reid, Editor Antony Chessell, Librarian Jean Callander, Huts Custodian Eddie Martin, Meets Secretary Graham Ewen and Indoor Meets Secretary Neil Cromar. The President gave to the Club, a gavel and board made of Rosewood. A plate on the board is inscribed:—'Presented by E.F. Johnston, 1983'.

The Ninety-sixth Annual General Meeting was held on 21 November 1984. The office-bearers appointed the previous year were re-appointed except that Anne Cordiner became Vice-President in succession to Ruth Payne.

The Ninety-seventh Annual General Meeting was held on 27 November 1985. Anne Cordiner was appointed President in succession to Eric Johnston and Eddie Martin was appointed Vice President in succession to Anne Cordiner. The other office bearers appointed the previous year were re-appointed.

ANNUAL DINNERS

The 1983, 1984 and 1985 Annual Dinners were all held at the Stakis Tree Tops Hotel, Aberdeen, the 1983 Annual Dinner, which had been arranged for the Royal Darroch Hotel, Cults, having been re-arranged at short notice because of the tragic explosion there. The guest speakers and their subjects were –

1983 Tom Weir—'Then and Now—A Look Back on Fifty Years of Climbing'

1984 Dr. Donald Bennett—'Mountains in Perspective'

1985 Lea MacNally—'Highland Year'

R.C. Shirreffs

At the 1983 Annual Dinner, the President, Mr. E.F. Johnston, proposed the toast "The Cairngorm Club", in the following terms—Editor:

It is my privilege and responsibility to rise to propose the toast of the Club now in its 97th year of existence. And I rise of course from our famed President's Chair – Maggie Gruer's 'fireside comforter'—presented to the Cairngorm Club for safe keeping – and on this night of 'looking back', and these are always occasions for nostalgia – I look back perhaps 50 years, when I remember being taken to Thistle Cottage to meet the great lady by my father – who was not a climber but was a great friend of the Inverey postman noted for doing his winter round on skis. However, I cannot recall if I sat on this chair then – I very much doubt it – but I do remember the formidable lady whose mother, of course, played hostess to the founder members of the Cairngorm Club. I also recall the Stygian gloom as we entered and the smoky atmosphere. I like to imagine that I ate one of her famous scones, said rather ambiguously to require a hungry appetite to appreciate them and immortalised by the entry in her famous visitors book 'Scones? in loving memory'.

Still reminiscing, I served as an office-bearer of the Club under seven wise Presidents, from whom I learned much, and I remember the first of these Presidents saying when proposing this Toast that he had been advised the first requisite of making a good speech

was to have a good secretary. Well, a friend who was a senior manager of a professional body claimed that his most difficult task was the writing of speeches for honorary officials. Eventually, he found the answer. Every time he heard a cliché he wrote it on a postcard and put it into a box. When preparing a speech he shook the box vigorously and took out the cards at random. These formed the basis of the speech. No one ever complained. His favourite cliché was 'there is nothing so constant as change' and perhaps that is not an inappropriate theme – if that is not too grandiose a word – for me tonight.

We have looked back tonight in the company of Tom Weir on fifty fascinating years of climbing – and what changes have taken place in attitudes to walking and climbing in that period. Looking back much further in the 19th Century there was much agitation in the North East about the 'profane practice of idle strolling through the countryside on the Sabbath' – and now the paths on the likes of Lochnagar get wider and wider as people enjoy a 'Deeside Dander'. Not too long ago, when I worked in Stornoway, I remember that my landlady made it a condition of our going to climb Clisham that I wheel my motorbike out of earshot when leaving in the morning and that I return to the house after dark.

And what would our predecessors have thought of the modern cult of jogging. There is an irritating truism 'What America thinks yesterday will happen here tomorrow'. Well, some time ago the American PR men coined the slogan 'Walking is for horses, quit horsing about, get yourself a Cadillac' and as a nation they appeared to take that advice. Now jogging has been the rage but I read from the Washington correspondent of one of our leading daily newspapers that jogging is out, walking is in – with appropriate paraphernalia – I quote 'Some walkers carry hand weights and the more sophisticated use foot weights' – perhaps a modern version of tricouni and clinkers! Walking it is claimed by this correspondent is the best exercise for the brain and heightens clarity of thought. Walking is a thinking persons activity – you can't think when jogging – faithful joggers will no doubt dispute this claim but never having got beyond scout's pace I can't comment.

So, equipment, fashions and pastimes change but some things don't, and I am very pleased to be able to say that one of the things that has remained as before in the past year is the ethos and health of the Cairngorm Club. Now the place where we report and analyse and ponder on the health of the Club in detail is, of course, our AGM where last week we again had an extremely good turnout of members.

However, our guests will perhaps forgive me if I dwell on our affairs briefly – and mention that we had a very full year indeed as our office-bearers reported – and what dedicated office-bearers they are, members know them all and how much we owe them – and we heard of the many excursions, the meets – both indoors and weekend, the Cheese and Wine party and the Barbecue, the care of the finances and all the multifold correspondence, the state of Muir Cottage and the rehousing at Christ's College of our magnificent library and, of course, the publication of the 99th issue of the Cairngorm Club Journal – and a first rate issue it is on which, I know, our Editor has had well-deserved congratulations. Nor did we forget the responsibilities of the Club – while we welcomed the result of the Lurchers gully enquiry in which we played our full part we were girding ourselves to get involved in the Knoydart affair – now in abeyance – while a sub-committee under Peter Howgate made a written submission to Kincardine and Deeside District Council in regard to the preparation of the Deeside Local Plan which encompasses most of the high Cairngorm tops – a submission of great value and a model of the constructive approach.

So a typical Cairngorm Club year – and in typical fashion some of our members were pursuing personal elitist goals on the mountains and have joined the august company of 'PM' mountaineers, i.e. Post Munro. Neil Cromar, by good planning over a long period in the midst of a busy life, climbed the necessary 276 mountains – at the last count – to be elevated to the peakage, Eddie Martin, who had introduced his son

Andrew to Munros only to be overtaken, has now emulated Andrew to become a 'Pop of the Tops' and of course Ken and Tibbie Fraser, our re-cycled teenagers, 'we twa' of the mountains, have in ten years of senior citizenry gone, metaphorically at least, hand-in-hand up all the Munros. Our congratulations to them all and to another lady in a hurry, Geraldine Guest, already a Munroist, who has now climbed all the tops listed by Munro and will now doubtless go on to complete The Trinity, Munros, Tops and Furth (the comparable peaks in Ireland, England and Wales).

And so Ladies and Gentlemen to this old but active, well rounded Club, I ask you to rise and join with me in the Toast - "The Cairngorm Club".

INDOOR MEETS

The following indoor meets have been held since the issue of the last *Journal* -

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| 1983 | Nov. | Members' Night |
| | Dec. | Michael Waller - The Work of the Ordnance Survey |
| 1984 | Jan. | Ian Dalley - The Alps, Mount Kenya and the Rockies |
| | Feb. | Mrs. A.H. Sommerville - Hills of Home and Beyond |
| | March | Dr. Mark Young - The Scottish Wildlife Trust |
| | Nov. | Members' Night |
| | Dec. | Prof. C.H. Gimingham - Mountain Plants at Home and Abroad |
| 1985 | Jan. | Rick Allen - British Ganesh Himalaya Expedition |
| | Feb. | John Breckenridge - The Cuillins |
| | March | Peter Bellarby - Alpine Meet 1984 |
| | Nov. | Members' Night |
| | Dec. | Sandy Anton - The Cairngorms before the Club |
| 1986 | Jan. | Rick Allen - The North East Ridge Everest Expedition 1985 |
| | Feb. | Judy Middleton - Chamonix to Zermatt by Ski |
| | March | Alastair Matthewson - First Ascents in the Indian Himalaya. |

SOCIAL EVENTS

Barbecues have been held at Templars Park, Maryculter, Aberdeen, on Wednesday, 27 June 1984 and Wednesday 26 June, 1985. Cheese and Wine Parties have been held at the Winter Gardens, Duthie Park, Aberdeen, on Friday 2 March 1984, Friday 8 March 1985 and Friday 7 March 1986.

R.C. Shirreffs



MEETS AND EXCURSIONS 1983-85

The attendance recorded at the excursions for the period covered by this *Journal* continues to show a drop, the average being 30 on this occasion compared with 32 the previous time. (The number attending is given in brackets after each excursion in the list at the end.) Very poor attendances are particularly noticeable for the longer day meets to Perthshire or beyond of which there were four, the average attendance on these being only 17. It may well be that there will have to be fewer such excursions in future. The best turn-out was to Beinn a Bhuird in 1985 when 45 people were present while the poorest was to the Ochil Hills when there were only 13.

As reported in the last *Journal* the deep snow experienced in 1983 at Ballachulish dissuaded most members from tackling the Glen Coe hills, and so it was decided to return there for Easter 1984, in the hope that the later Easter would bring better conditions. Unfortunately the weather was very wet, especially on Saturday and Sunday morning. On the Saturday one large party walked from the head of Loch Creran across to Ballachulish village by the low level route. They experienced some trouble with a herd of cattle near the end of that journey. Sunday started even wetter and some members set off to spend the day in Fort William or Oban, one visited the Blackwater dam and at least one party climbed some of the Mamores. On the Monday, which was a very good day a large party completed the Aonach Eagach ridge. The number of people at the meet was around 30 but not all of these stayed at the hotel.

The 1985 Easter Meet was held at the Loch Duich Hotel in Dornie. About 40 attended, most staying in the hotel, the others being farmed out elsewhere in the village. The weather was much better than on the previous year, the only poor day being the Saturday. All the Munros on either side of Glen Shiel were climbed by at least one party while other members went further afield — one party going to Beinn Sgriol while another went 'Corbett bagging' in the Applecross area. The hotel on this occasion proved to be extremely comfortable.

The overnight excursion of 1983 to Ben Lui started off in a very promising manner with really beautiful weather all the way from Aberdeen to Crianlarich where we had tea. Alas! It was not to be and by the time the bus reached Tyndrum it was raining. A small number of members climbed all four Munros in the Ben Lui group. It was still clear at midnight on the top of Beinn Dubhchraig and the lights of Tyndrum could be seen clearly in the distance. From Beinn Oss onwards the mist was thick and Ben Lui strangely difficult to find. One party ended up climbing Beinn Oss twice. The weather cleared late in the morning and the party returned to Aberdeen in bright sunshine.

The 1984 overnight excursion was from Rannoch Station to Fersit. About half the party caught the 7.30 p.m. train from Rannoch to Corroir while the others walked all the way. Chno Dearg and Stob Coire Sgriodain were climbed by several parties while others climbed hills to the west of Loch Treig. The weather which had not been promising at the start cleared up to give a really good morning.

In 1985 the overnight excursion started from Bridge of Orchy, which proved a much more comfortable bus journey than the previous year's trip to Rannoch. On this occasion the train was a bit late and the station master apparently none too pleased to see such a large crowd disturbing what he had expected to be a quiet evening. The whole party with one exception took the train to Corroir. The main target of the evening was the ridge starting with Beinn Eibhinn and running north-eastwards to Carn Dearg. This was climbed by several parties despite the thick mist which prevailed on this occasion. Others took the low level route through. The weather cleared eventually and the walk from Loch Pattock to Dalwhinnie was done in sunshine.

Bad weather conditions were experienced on several of the day meets. In 1983 the Cairngorm to Linn of Dee excursion proved to be a particularly cold wet day. Winter conditions were experienced anywhere above 3000 feet. Most members did the traverse either through the Lairig Ghru or other relatively low level routes, although at least one party did make the traverse of Ben Macdhui.

The 1984 excursion to Lochnagar started from Invercauld Bridge as the Glen Muick road was impassable. Deep snow was experienced and once clear of the Ballochbuie woods a strong wind as well. Nobody reached the top of Lochnagar that day.

The following excursion to Glen Clunie also experienced deep snow. The main road was closed at the south end of Braemar and so it was decided to leave the bus in the square at Braemar. Some members climbed Morrone while others did low level walks.

The excursion from Boultenstone to Lary was accompanied by very thick mist which came down very nearly as far as the starting point. Most members were content to follow the lowest route through to Morven Lodge and from there to Lary.

The winter excursion to Lochnagar in 1985 was accompanied by high winds which made conditions on the summit plateau very uncomfortable.

There were also some very good days. Among the more outstanding ones was the Ben Lawers excursion where most of the party climbed Beinn Glas and Ben Lawers from the Lawers Car Park. On the way up there was a conservation group making some repairs to the path. And on the top of Beinn Glas a census was being taken of the number of people on the hill that day.

The excursion to Glas Tulaichean had a fine sunny day with good firm snow conditions. Most members climbed Glas Tulaichean but two parties climbed the group of hills on the south side of Glen Lochsie from which a very fine view of Glas Tulaichean was obtained.

The excursion to Alltdourie was also a good day. About half the party set off for Ben Avon while the other half went to Beinn a Bhuird. The latter had great difficulty fording the River Quoich which was swollen by melting snow. The return journey was made via Cnap a Chleirich and the Sneek, a wise decision as the River Quoich was obviously even higher in the afternoon than it had been in the morning.

A good day was experienced on the Schiehallion excursion when the party traversed the hill from the Kinloch Rannoch side to White Bridge.

Another very good day accompanied the Ben Vorlich excursion when most of the rather small party ascended both Ben Vorlich and Stuc a Chroin. This was followed by another beautiful day for the Cairnwell to Glen Clova excursion. Most members climbed Glas Maol, Cairn of Claise and Tom Buidhe and some went on to climb Mayar and Driesh as well.

The 1985 Cairngorm to Linn of Dee excursion had banks of mist lying in the hollows especially over Loch Avon and the Lairig Ghru but the high ground was mostly clear. Most members went to Ben Macdhui. Although the weather was good the views were not very good on this occasion as it was very hazy. It was confirmed on the return journey that some damage had occurred to the hand rail on the upstream side of the Luibeg Bridge. It appears likely that this was caused by someone trying to take a horse over the bridge.

On two excursions problems cropped up as a result of developments being carried out by estates. On the Bulig Mounth about a mile of the path had been ploughed up to make way for a forestry development just to the north of the summit. This led to very rough going or a long detour, whichever one preferred. Clachnaben has been surrounded by an electrified deer fence. It turned out that it was not switched on yet but this may prove to be an awkward obstacle in future. On the Clachnaben excursion there was the usual difficulty of getting the bus parked at the entrance to Glen Dye Lodge. This problem may be solved shortly as the road is being realigned at this point in connection with the construction of a new bridge. It may be possible to park on the old road when this is finished.

G. Ewen

EXCURSIONS

1983

- 24 Apr. Glen Muick to Glen Clova (37)
- 14 May Cairnwell to Spital of Glenshee (17)
- 5 Jun. Cockbridge to Invercauld (24)
- 25/26 Jun. Ben Lui (23)
- 21 Aug. Ben Lawers (22)
- 10 Sep. Cairngorm to Linn of Dee (43)
- 2 Oct. Jock's Road (27)
- 22 Oct. Crathie to Spital of Glen Muick (42)
- 13 Nov. Ochil Hills (13)
- 4 Dec. Bulig Mounth (27)

1984

- 15 Jan. Lochnagar (34)
- 4 Feb. Glen Clunie (31)
- 26 Feb. Glen Clova (28)
- 18 Mar. Glas Tulaichean (28)
- 29 Apr. Alltdourie (28)
- 19 May Schiehallion (16)
- 3 Jun. Tower of Ess to Invermark (25)
- 23/24 Jun. Rannoch Station to Fersit (31)
- 25 Aug. Linn of Dee to Blair Atholl (38)
- 16 Sep. Cairngorm to Linn of Dee (29)
- 7 Oct. Auchallater to Glen Muick (27)
- 27 Oct. Cairnwell to Inverey (40)
- 18 Nov. Boultenstone to Lary (28)
- 9 Dec. Clachnaben (42)

1985

- 12 Jan. Inverey (38)
- 3 Feb. Glen Esk (27)
- 23 Feb. Lochnagar (36)
- 17 Mar. Cockbridge (21)
- 21 Apr. Cairngorm (41)
- 11 May Ben Vorlich (16)
- 2 Jun. Cairnwell to Glen Clova (28)
- 22/23 Jun. Corrour to Dalwhinnie (27)
- 25 Aug. Lochnagar (30)
- 8 Sep. Corrieyairack Pass (27)
- 28 Sep. Cairngorm to Linn of Dee (41)
- 20 Oct. Beinn a Bhuird (45)

EASTER MEETS

- 1984 Ballachulish
- 1985 Dornie
- 1986 Dornie



WEEKEND MEETS

A Landrover trundled its way along the shoreline to meet our boat as it approached the jetty. Luggage was loaded up and we were soon being welcomed at Glaschoille House. For three days the sun shone as we started along the primrose lined track beside the shore. We clambered up onto the ridges to savour unimpeded views of hills, lochs, sea and islands. Was this really the same route which had tested our navigational skills and fortitude so thoroughly on a previous trip to Knoydart? Then we had floundered thigh deep in a bog. Now the grass crunched drily underfoot. Of course that previous visit had its moments – grass of parnassus in a corrie, a fleeting glimpse of an expected ridge (both beautiful and comforting in such conditions) and the welcome back at the bothy at Barisdale. Those who had sensibly opted for a ‘fester’ day had done anything but . . .! After a low level walk (this included the rebuilding of a cairn which had been the victim of another bog) they had returned to light the stove and spring-clean the bothy including a bath! Never was a hot dip so unexpected or so much appreciated. This time there was an immersion heater and several bathrooms. Furthermore, since we hadn’t had to lug all our provisions seven miles, we had dinner in style each evening.

One advantage of weekend meets is the variety of venues within reach. We have gathered from Lairg to the Lake District, Skye to Ben Alder. We cannot guarantee good weather – indeed some organisers have been accused of doubling as rain gods – but we do try to cater for all tastes and pockets. Accommodation varies from hotels and lodges to hostels, bothies and campsites. Where possible we concentrate on a focal point for socialising and laying plans. Suggestions and information for future meets would be most welcome.

With no bus deadline to worry about, longer expeditions can be planned. Sgurr nan Ceathreamhnan and Creag a’Choire Aird from Cannich, for instance. Transport can usually be arranged to minimise walking on tracks and roads – often a problem with a one car group. The weekend meets provide an excellent introduction to new areas and often afford the opportunity to achieve ambitions not possible within our usual groups. May of this year – warm and dry – saw a large party, joined by friends from the Moray Mountaineering Club, scaling the Inaccessible Pinnacle.



BEAM ME UP, SCOTTIE!

The weekends have offered so much that it isn't easy to pick out highlights. Perhaps we might select the following: Tomdoun '83 where the promised outboard motor lay in bits the whole weekend so Sgur Mor was done the hard way after all: Crianlarich in July of the same year where the temperatures reached the 90's and, as we stripped off and plunged into a burn an American visitor remarked "I was told how formal the Scots are, but you-all don't seem that formal to me!": Torridon in September '84 when the rainfall was exceptional even for Applecross: Bridge of Orchy that same autumn where the mist contrived to reveal all the tops of Stob Ghabhar to some while others didn't see a thing, and finally Dundonnell, where in August '84 the sun shone on Seana Braigh and in August '85, despite the wettest summer for many years, the sun still shone all day on Conival and Ben More Assynt.

One of the many pleasures of hillwalking is talking about it later . . . and later . . . and later. The tales mix and merge, events become distorted, identities confused, but memories flood back and are recounted with a mixture of pleasure and relief as we build and defend our reputations (sometimes at the expense of others!)

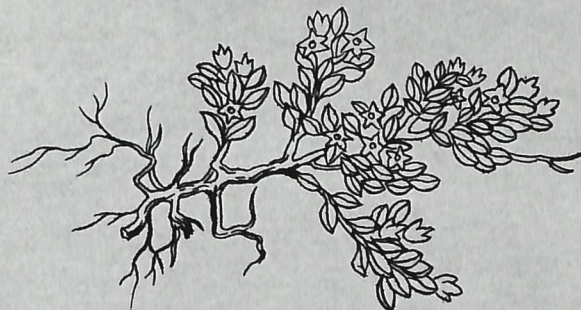
Do I detect a wince at the mention of someone climbing the wrong hill, or walking off the map? How many of us have given no heed to a small burn in the morning only to be delayed as nightfall approaches by that same burn now swollen to a torrent? Have you also experienced the shortlived satisfaction of bagging a new Munro in thick mist only to discover later that the real summit was a little further on? (It has even been suggested that such hills should form the basis of another set of tables – The Barlows. No, he doesn't still have some to do and we're learning to check our facts before we set out!)

WEEKEND MEETS

	1983	1984	1985
May	Tomdoun	Knoydart	Skye
July	Crianlarich	Cannich	Invershin
August	Dundonnell	Kintail	Dundonnell
September	Skye	Torridon	Glen Etive
October	Dura/Appin	Bridge of Orchy	Lake District

Frances Macrae-Gibson
Fiona Cameron

Footnote – Thankyou to Ian Stuart for the humorous drawing from an idea by Fiona Cameron – Editor.



BEN MACDHUI INDICATOR

A piece of Club history was remembered on 1st August 1985 when the President and three Past Presidents with five other members climbed Ben Macdhui from the Linn of Dee to commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the inauguration of the Ben Macdhui indicator.

The indicator, designed by James Parker and dedicated to the memory of a Past President, Alexander Copland, is still in pretty good shape, a tribute to the lasting quality of Doulton ware. Its building in 1925 was quite an enterprise and the dial indicating 77 view points has been a source of much pleasure and information over the years. A bottle is lodged in the central cavity with a record of the building and the names of the builders, not forgetting 'Bob' the pony who transported the material.

There was a party of no less than 136 at the ceremony in 1925 – including a troop of Boy Scouts – on a day with 'a smell of moisture in the air'. The 1985 group enjoyed an overcast but dry day which was chilly enough to make the summit toasts welcome. It is interesting to compare photographs taken on the two occasions. Apart from the differing sartorial styles, from long raincoats and plus-fours to contemporary Gortex, the snowfields of Cairntoul and Braeriach were much larger in 1925.

The 1985 party rounded off an excellent day with a meal in Braemar.

E.F. Johnston

