

## PROCEEDINGS OF THE CLUB

### GENERAL MEETINGS

The One-hundredth Annual General Meeting was held on 23 November 1988. Alan Watt was appointed Honorary President, Eddie Martin became President, and Antony Chessell filled the vacant position of Vice-President. The other office-bearers re-appointed were Vice-President Gillian Shirreffs, Secretary Richard Shirreffs, Treasurer Alex Matthewson, Editor Antony Chessell, Librarian Peter Ward, Huts Custodian Eddie Martin, Meets Secretary Graham Ewen and Indoor Meets Secretary Neil Cromar. The new President paid tribute to the work done by Anne Cordiner as retiring President, in particular her work related to the Club's Centenary.

The Annual General Meeting was held on 22 November 1989. Following the untimely death of Alan Watt within six months of his being appointed Honorary President, Robert Bain was appointed to that position. Otherwise the office-bearers appointed the previous year were re-appointed except for Gillian Shirreffs having to retire by rotation and Judith Middleton being appointed to the vacant position of Vice-President.

The 1990 Annual General Meeting was held on 21 November. All of the office-bearers appointed the previous year were re-appointed.

### ANNUAL DINNERS

The 1988 Annual Dinner was held at the Stakis Tree Tops Hotel, Aberdeen, and the guest speaker, George Downie, gave a talk illustrated with slides entitled "Arctic Travels".

The 1989 Annual Dinner, at the same venue, was addressed by John Cleare, whose topic was "On Ski to the Roof of China", but whose fascinating lecture also covered mountains nearer home.

The 1990 Dinner, again at the same venue, was addressed by Hamish Brown, who gave a stimulating talk entitled "The Scottish Hills".

Richard Shirreffs

### MEETS AND EXCURSIONS 1988-1991

The average attendance at the excursions for the period covered by this Journal was 32, exactly the same as the previous time. (The attendance is given in brackets after each excursion in the list at the end). The best turnout was 46 for the Cairngorm traverse in 1990 and the poorest was 17 to the Drumochter Pass in 1989. It is perhaps interesting to note that all three winter outings to Lochnagar attracted 45 people.

The first excursion in this report was the 1988 overnight one from Corroul to Glen Nevis. It was a beautiful evening as the train carried the party from Bridge of Orchy to an unscheduled stop near the south end of Loch Treig. Most of the party alighted here and set out up the valley of the Abhainn Rath in order to gain access to the Mamores. The river crossing at Luibeilt proved difficult in the darkness. All the Mamores between Sgurr Eilde Mor and Am Bodach were climbed by at least one party. Unfortunately the beautiful weather which we had experienced while on the train did not last. As night fell a thick mist settled in over the hills which remained shrouded until shortly before noon the following day.

The excursion from Linn of Dee to Blair Atholl was a fine day, the entire party following the right of way route throughout. On the Cairngorm traverse it was rather misty

on the higher tops and as usual on this outing many different routes were followed across the mountains. Between Auchallater and Loch Muick on a fine day, most of the party did the traverse via Cairn Taggart and Lochnagar. The Cairnwell to Glenshee excursion started off misty with most members climbing Glas Maol and Creag Leacach and continuing over the lower hills to the south as far as Craig of Rinavey. These lower hills were clear and good views could be obtained especially towards the south. The descent took us down to the rather oddly named farm of Tomb from where it is but a short walk to Spittal of Glenshee. The Glen Dye to Tarfside excursion was a very windy day, most members travelling over Clachnaben and Mount Battock. For many this proved a longer walk than it had appeared at first sight. The following walk from Boultenstone to Corse was also a very windy but clear sunny day and there were good views over the Howe of Cromar and Deeside to the south and Donside to the north.

The winter of 1989 was remarkable for its lack of snow. On Lochnagar, in January, the only snow to be seen was a very small patch at the top of the Black Spout. There was however a very strong wind as on all the other winter excursions which followed. Many members had to move around the summit of Mount Keen on all fours such was the wind strength, although on this occasion it was a remarkably warm wind for the time of year. There was some snow on the outings to Auchallater and Cairngorm and there was some limited skiing taking place on Cairngorm.

The 1989 Easter Meet was held at Spean Bridge. On the journey over it became apparent that the shortage of snow which the Cairngorms had experienced all winter had not been repeated on the west coast. The hills were covered with snow right down to about 600 feet above sea-level. The Laggan Dam was spectacular with not only all the overflow syphons working full blast but water was actually spilling over the dam itself. Apart from the Saturday it was a rather poor weekend weatherwise but nevertheless a great variety of hills were climbed underlining just how good Spean Bridge is as a climbing centre. These included Sron A Choire Ghaibh, Meall na Teanga, Creag Meaghaidh, Aonach Mor, some of the Mamores and hills in the Glenfinnan area. About 40 people attended the meet.

We had reasonable weather on the Ben Avon meet and most of those present reached the top. The following excursion to Ben Chonzie took the form of a traverse from Hosh, ascending via Glen Turret and returning to Invergeldie in Glen Lednock. This was a very hot sunny day and some members reported having seen a small herd of llamas during the traverse. The Cairnwell to Inverey was also a very fine day with most members climbing Carn a Gheoidh and some going on to the Beinn Iutharns.

The 1989 overnight excursion proved to be a very wet affair. Some members did make a number of ascents on either side of Strath Carron, but those who attempted the ascent of Lurg Mhor and Bidein a Choire Sheasgaich were forced to give up, most finding shelter in an empty house beside Bendronaig Lodge. Thereafter it was a case of getting to Craig by the easiest route via the Beallach Bhearnais. By this time the rivers were in full spate and it was with considerable relief that a bridge (not shown on the map) was found across the Allt a Chonais.

The excursion to the Monega Pass in August was also a rather wet day but fine weather on the Cairngorm traverse with the usual wide variety of routes being followed. A rather small crowd attended the Drumochter Pass outing which was also a good day weatherwise, with most members climbing the four Munros on the west side of the main road. One party attempted to descend from Geal Charn directly to Dalwhinnie and got into difficulties with very rough ground and were rather late in reaching the hotel. The traverse from Crathie to Loch Muick had a rather windy day, but most members climbed Lochnagar. The weather on the Fungle/Fir Mounth excursion showed some early promise, but before long it had started to rain. This got heavier as the day wore on turning to snow at the summit of the Fir Mounth. One member had a rather unfortunate experience while walking through the Fungle, being bitten by a rather large dog, on the end of a lead! In contrast the excursion to the Sidlaws was a fine day. The route, starting from Lumley Den, is first

dominated by the Tealing TV mast. At the highest point, Craigowl Hill, the view over Dundee and Strathmore was rather spoiled by a low lying haar but the hills to the north were very clear.

The winter of 1990 was almost a carbon copy of that of 1989 with very little snow and strong winds on most of the excursions. The best day was on our visit to Glen Clunie. At Inverey it was very wet as well as being windy and few hills were climbed.

The Easter Meet of 1990 was again held at Spean Bridge after efforts to find a venue further south had failed. It turned out to be a rather wet weekend at sea level with plenty of snow higher up. Nevertheless a large variety of Munros were climbed and also some smaller hills. Some members travelled as far as Ardnamurchan where the weather was considerably better. The meet was attended by 50 people, probably a record.

After Easter the outing to Beinn a' Bhuid started well enough with bright sunshine all morning. However, around noon clouds began to build up and shortly afterwards a spectacular thunder and lightning storm broke out. It seemed to be confined to the high ground of Beinn a' Bhuid and Ben Avon and lasted for a long time. The thunder could still be heard at 4 p.m. by which time we were well down the Slugain Glen. This was followed by an excursion to Braeriach which took the form of a traverse from Cairngorm car park to Coylum Bridge. It was a brilliantly clear day apart from a few mist patches on the summit plateau. One party experienced some difficulty descending the path in Coire Dhondail because of old snow lying on the steepest part. The excursion to Meall Ghlas and Meall a' Churaig was one of the best attended to Perthshire in recent years. This was also a traverse starting from Auchessan in Glen Dochart and finishing at Kenknock in Glen Lochay.

The overnight excursion of 1990 was a repeat of the 1986 one with members having the choice of climbing in the Fannichs or in the Beinn Dearg group. The night started off inauspiciously. It had been raining heavily all the way from Aberdeen and still was when we left the bus. However the rain went off about an hour later and the night remained dry thereafter although the sky continued to look forbidding. At dawn the sky suddenly cleared giving way to a beautiful morning. Those who got off the hill early had to endure a plague of midges at Loch Droma until the bus arrived around 9.30 a.m.

The excursion from Auchallater to Glen Muick was a very wet misty day. Nevertheless many members went over Cairn Taggart and Lochnagar while others went over Cairn Bannoch and Broad Cairn. The traverse from Linn of Dee to Glen Feshie had better weather at least for those who chose to go by the low ground route. The hills however remained shrouded in mist all day. Those who travelled the path discovered severe water erosion on the hillsides between Creag Bheag and Creag na Gaibhre and the path was cut in several places by deep gullies. The Cairngorm traverse was attended by the party of Polish climbers which the Club were playing host to at the time. It was a disappointing day weatherwise but it was clear at the top of Cairn Gorm. The largest party went from there to the Shelter Stone from where some climbed Ben Macdhui while others took the low route. The walk from Glen Prosen to Glen Clova was accompanied by mist so thick that one could see nothing of the hill above the valley floor. Between Invermark and Spital of Glen Muick the weather was much better with mist only on the higher tops and a wide variety of routes were followed. On this occasion we had a last minute change in our meal arrangements following the serious fire at the Alexandra Hotel the previous evening. The excursion to the Sidlaw Hills started off from Collace Quarry. The route went over Dunsinane Hill, of Macbeth fame, and from there along the crest of the Sidlaws as far as Newtyle. The route is unusual for us in that in the course of it we cross two roads, one of them the main road from Coupar Angus to Dundee. This was followed by a very good meal at the Kinloch Hotel in Meigle.

1991 started off more like winter with the customary January excursion to Lochnagar. Deep soft snow was experienced almost immediately above Allt-naguibhsaich and although it was a clear sunny day a persistent wind made parts of the ascent unpleasant because of spindrift. Loch Lee at the beginning of February was frozen over. Many members climbed

Mount Keen in rather unpleasant windy and misty conditions while others visited the Falls of Unich and Damff. By the time of the Cockbridge excursion most of the snow had gone. Most of the party climbed Brown Cow Hill while others took a more leisurely walk to Inchroy. The excursion to Glas Tulaichean was accompanied by very wet weather and some difficulty was experienced in crossing the larger burns. The last bus meet in the period covered by this report was to Ben Avon. It snowed heavily all day and although it was not lying at Alltdourie there was quite deep snow higher up. Nevertheless most of the party did reach the summit of Ben Avon.

The Easter Meet of 1991 was held at the Ballachulish Hotel on the week-end after Easter. Those who attended reported that the hotel was very good, a big improvement on how it had been on our previous visits there. Unfortunately the weather conditions throughout the week-end were very bad and little climbing was done. 30 people attended. The decision to switch the Easter Meet away from the Easter week-end was made after consultation with those members who normally attend the event. It was becoming increasingly difficult to find a suitable venue at Easter at anything like a reasonable price. There are still problems however. Efforts to find a venue either in Arrochar or in the area between Connel and Tyndrum failed either because the hotels were too expensive or because they are tied up with bus parties. It is now ten years since we had an Easter Meet south of Ballachulish. Should any members know of a suitable venue in this area I would be pleased to hear from them.

Graham Ewen

#### EXCURSIONS

	1988
18/19 Jun.	Corrour to Glen Nevis (31)
28 Aug.	Linn of Dee to Blair Atholl (19)
10 Sep.	Cairngorm traverse (39)
2 Oct.	Auchallater to Glen Muick (31)
23 Oct.	Cairnwell to Glen Shee (27)
12 Nov.	Glen Dye to Tarfside (21)
4 Dec.	Boultenstone to Corse (24)
	1989
8 Jan.	Lochnagar (45)
29 Jan.	Mount Keen (44)
19 Feb.	Auchallater (35)
11 Mar.	Cairn Gorm (28)
23 Apr.	Ben Avon (31)
13 May	Ben Chonzie (30)
4 Jun.	Cairnwell to Inverey (28)
24/25 Jun.	Strathcarron to Achnashellach (29)
27 Aug.	Monega Pass (41)
9 Sep.	Cairngorm traverse (36)
1 Oct.	Drumochter Pass (17)
22 Oct.	Crathie to Glen Muick (32)
12 Nov.	Fungle or Fir Mounth (43)
3 Dec.	Sidlaw Hills (21)
	1990
14 Jan.	Lochnagar (45)
3 Feb.	Glen Clunie (33)

25 Feb.	Inverey (44)
18 Mar.	Glen Clova (37)
22 Apr.	Beinn a' Bhuid (33)
12 May	Braeriach (30)
3 Jun.	Meall Ghlas (36)
23/24 Jun.	Fannichs/Beinn Dearg group (31)
26 Aug.	Auchallater to Glen Muick (22)
9 Sep.	Linn of Dee to Glen Feshie (22)
29 Sep.	Cairngorm traverse (39)
21 Oct.	Glen Prosen to Glen Clova (33)
10 Nov.	Invermark to Spital of Glen Muick (38)
2 Dec.	Sidlaw Hills (39)

	1991
12 Jan.	Lochnagar (45)
3 Feb.	Loch Lee (30)
24 Feb.	Cockbridge (25)
17 Mar.	Glas Tulaichean (27)
21 Apr.	Ben Avon (34)

#### EASTER MEETS

1989	Spean Bridge
1990	Spean Bridge
1991	Ballachulish

#### WEEKENDS, 1989-91

Since the last journal there have been seventeen weekend meets, with another six scheduled for the rest of this year. In 1990 we introduced a November meet. Knowing that the days could be short and gloomy we chose Gerry Howkins hostel at Achnasheen – a wide variety of walking within easy reach, and a cheerful log fire to return to. Eighteen members made the most of one dry and one very wild day.

Individual members will have their own list of highlights – the Whitbread wilderness from Loch a'Bhraoin, Tower Ridge from the CIC hut, Ben Hope above the clouds, and camping at Barrisdale to mention a few. Wry smiles might be provoked by the mention of 'inclement weather' at Crianlarich, stalking the stalkers in a remote glen, or the lack of company at Tomdoun!

In August a start must be made on next year's programme. An attempt will be made to bring all seven members of the 'weekends committee' together to draw up at least a preliminary programme in time for the autumn circular. Accommodation is increasingly at a premium, so initial checks on availability must be made.

All reasonable suggestions are listed and a selection evolves. Considerations include:  
new suggestions

old favourites – how recently were we there?

distances from Aberdeen – long journeys are best scheduled for long weekends

ease of winter access – possible snow/ice on the roads

restrictions during the stalking season

should we avoid the midge season (if possible?)

is a variety of accommodation available?

how far ahead can/must accommodation be booked?

have we a reasonable balance of venues/accommodation/activities?

(the proposed Easter meet and overnight excursion are also considered here)

which committee member is keen to organise it?

Surprisingly a programme usually gels quite quickly. The fine tuning may take longer, and some compromises may be inevitable.

Youth Hostel bookings (except special openings) are left to individuals. Where accommodation must be booked it is less simple. If we are to be sure of securing our chosen venue at least a provisional booking must be made before we have any real idea of the number likely to come. Equally likely nowadays is to find another group has beaten us to it and we have to think again. There may be alternative accommodation, or we may have to pick a different spot for this schedule and perhaps make a provisional booking for the next year!

Weekends meets (with numbers attending to date):

	1989	1990	1991
Feb/Mar	Glencoe (23)	Crianlarich (19)	Glen Nevis (12)
Apr/May	Glen Brittle (13)	Ossian (21)	Knoydart (14)
June	Dundonnell (21)	Tongue (13)	Ben Alder (10)
July	CIC hut (9)	Tomdoun (1)	Elphin (19)
August	Killin (5)	Glen Affric (7)	Torridon (12)
September	Torridon (22)	Glen Coe (22*)	Glen Brittle (26)
October	Loch Ard (2)	Onich (15)	Wasdale
November	–	Achnashellach (18)	Glen Garry

\* Including 7 Polish visitors.

#### ROCK AND ICE CLIMBING REPORT

Rock and ice climbing have always been important in the tradition of the Cairngorm Club. As far back as 1901, W. Garden top-roped Cairngorm Club Crack on Clachnaben, and club climbers were also active at Clashrodne, south of Cove before the Great War. Between the two wars, an active partnership between G. R. Symmers and W. A. Ewen resulted in several new routes on Lochnagar, both in summer and winter, including Parallel Gully A and Shadow Buttress A in summer, and Raeburn's Gully in winter.

After the Second World War, the climbing profile of the club dropped considerably, and has only recently seen a long overdue resurgence, spearheaded by Peter Bellarby. Initially, this was limited to unofficial weekly meets at the South Aberdeen venue of the sea cliffs at Souter Head, and the occasional venture on to mountain routes on bus meets, which frequently resulted in a missed bus at the end of the day.

It was on one such meet, to Beinn a' Bhuid, in October 1985, that my involvement with climbing in the club began. Having 'bagged' the Munro, four of us set about 'doing our climbing thing' on two separate routes up the dividing buttress. Due to lack of time, neither ascent was successful, although I managed to successfully lead my first pitch, traversing off our climb into a gully to start our race for the bus. The other pair made it, but Peter and I found ourselves stranded at Invercauld Bridge. As luck would have it, in the first car to pass were two club members who gave us a lift home.

By 1988, an official climbing sub-committee had been formed, initially comprising Peter Bellarby and Fraser Stronach, and several hundred pounds worth of climbing gear had been bought, including ropes, harnesses, helmets, ice axe and hammer set, crampons and a selection of hardware for leading purposes. This was first tested out on a well-attended weekend meet to Crianlarich in February 1988. With Glencoe a short drive up the road, many members took the opportunity to be taught elementary ice axe braking techniques before three different routes of grades I to II/III were tackled successfully. The newsletter of

March 1988 was the first to contain a section detailing 'Climbing Activities', and the weekly summer meets at the sea cliffs were officially noted.

By now, climbing meets were no longer reliant on club bus meets for transport. This primarily was replaced by participating members' cars, alleviating the problem of lack of time, especially in winter. After one or two instances of late returns of climbers on weekend meets as well, the climbing activities are generally, but not always, now kept independent from other club activities.

In September 1990, climbing was successfully linked to a weekend meet to Lagangarbh to coincide with the arrival of the visiting Polish climbers. On the Saturday, a busy day was spent on Rannoch Wall, Buachaille Etive Mor, with several routes being climbed by the three active parties, while on the wetter Sunday, a morning was spent on the indoor rockwall at Fort William Leisure Centre.

The shape of the sub-committee has changed since it was first formed. Fraser Stronach resigned, and I was co-opted in January 1990. After I was elected to the main committee and Peter stepped down (at the 1990 AGM), I replaced him as convener to the committee and Nigel Eastmond was also co-opted to the sub-committee.

Since then, we have tried to become more organised. A short winter season meant that only one winter ascent was completed, with myself and Nigel climbing Central Buttress on Lochnagar with the club's new rock and ice up-coming-star, Gary Bidwell, who even managed to lead the last two pitches on this, his first real ice climb. For a full account of the climb, see Gary's account elsewhere in this journal. From May onwards, the weekly meets at the sea cliffs have resumed, weather permitting, and these are proving to be both successful and enjoyable. Of the core of regulars, Gary Bidwell and Margaret Macrae Gibson have both begun to lead their own climbs. Several venues have been used this year to demonstrate the great variety of climbs on offer in this area, and this is also proving to be popular, although for simplicity, the rendezvous remains the same each week.

We plan to head off to the mountains this summer, and although we won't be pioneering new routes like generations before, we can be certain of experiencing the same feeling of exhilaration as we top out, having completed a perfect route on sun-warmed rock in a lonely corrie, or, as occasionally happens in Scotland, as we shiver our way up a soaking piece of rock, being buffeted by a howling gale. (In these rare cases, exhilaration might well be replaced by relief!)

Whatever the conditions, we hope to see you down at the sea cliffs next summer, for climbing, or even to see what it's all about. It is good fun: if you don't believe me, just ask Gary Bidwell!

Stuart Stronach

#### LIBRARIAN'S REPORT 1991

The library continues in good health, the number of books borrowed rising to 141 in 1990, compared with 116 in 1989 and 119 in 1988. Borrowing takes place mainly at indoor meets during the winter though books may be borrowed or returned at any time from the library in the basement of 24 Albyn Place. Keys giving access to the more popular books are held by the dental receptionist next door, 22 Albyn Place, and she also has a card map of the route to the library for the use of experienced navigators. A full set of keys is held by the librarian who is happy to help any member. The library location is not ideal and this has deterred some members from returning books or returning them to inappropriate places around St. John's. Duplicate full sets of keys are presently held by Eddie Martin and John Gibson who may be approached when the librarian is away.

We added 12 titles to the library in 1989 and a further 12 in 1990, these being noted in

the circulars, as well as journals of kindred clubs.

We are glad to receive unwanted journals for resale to members who wish to collect back numbers. Some are presently available.

From time to time the librarian has received enquiries from authors researching for articles of books, and I have been pleased to help them whether or not they are club members.

Peter Ward

