

## HOME THOUGHTS FROM A PRESIDENT

I was driving to Edinburgh last year, and listening to the radio, when I heard a voice say: "Judy, Richard and I still enjoy it even though we have been many times soaked to our knickers." I didn't at first recognise the voice, but the content was familiar. We were sitting on the Fiacail Ridge on the Cairngorm traverse, being interviewed for Radio Scotland by a friend of the said Judy (Middleton). This was one of the many things that a Club President of the 1990s seems to land, and I can assure you that the variety of the last two years has certainly been the spice of my life, rarely the bane of it.

So what does being President involve? I have found that one of the most important aspects is that of picking up the ideas and feelings of members, taking them to the committee and in many cases translating these into action on behalf of the Club. These have included our first ceillidh dance, subsidising some of our younger members on mountain safety courses and the footpath improvement scheme in Coire Etchachan. Early on in my Presidency the request to hold a wedding on a Club Meet was approved with great pleasure by all in the committee. Graham, of Bus Meets, was delighted to have one of the biggest turnouts for years on an August outing, and with no one late back, was heard to suggest that perhaps weddings should happen more often. A continuing role has been that of sales lady, a mantle which I brought with me, so future presidents need not consider this as part of the job. Members have become used to me selling sweatshirts, tee shirts, polo shirts, badges and Christmas cards at Club events. I wonder what will have been added to this by the time I demit office?

Part and parcel of the job is meeting people, either officials or professionals in areas pertinent to the many and varied interests which have become characteristic of the Club. A recent instance was meeting the Principal of Aberdeen University when the Club Library was officially handed over to the care of the University. It is always interesting to discuss the Club with older members, many of whom can recall so much about past events which form part of the Club history. It is just as important to meet new or prospective members, and to demonstrate that any reputation of us being middle-aged, middle-class and real tough nuts is a bit of a myth. I enjoy getting to know Club members better, whether it is while resting on hill summits, dancing reels, tramping along tracks or renewing acquaintances at the Dinner.

Having the Secretary as the President's husband has proved invaluable. We can discuss business at meal times, which saves time-consuming visits and phone calls. Fortunately, we agree on most things, though not all. Our phone does seem to be red hot at times, so there have been some complaints from our daughters and their friends.

In my first year, I felt more like a catapult ball in flight than President of the oldest hill walking club in Scotland. I use this analogy with feeling and have been assured that it is justified. That first year started with the formation of the Cairngorms Working Party Sub-committee. This was closely followed by our first meeting with Magnus Magnusson and the Working Party, when we were invited to speak on the issues raised by their deliberations on access and management. It was a shock to find myself the only female among 30 or more men. Richard and Eddie Martin were the other Club representatives at this, the first of many meetings with, and to discuss the Club's views on, the Working Party. By the end of my first year I was beginning to feel more like an environmentalist than a hill walker, as we had other conservation issues to consider. The committee worked hard. The meetings seemed to be long, as we also debated our committee structure and other aspects of the constitution. My second year has been less demanding, and meetings shorter. Who knows what 1994 will bring? The last two years have been rewarding and I look forward to the third.

Gill Shirreffs