

REMINISCENCES FROM THE PRESIDENT

I joined the Cairngorm Club in 1965 at the same time as Margaret Gauld, and Ken and Tibby Fraser. It was an awe inspiring occasion to attend a Club meet with senior members Messrs. Bothwell, Gerstenberg and Hay aboard. The gentlemen always changed at the rear of the bus after the day on the hill, emerging properly dressed with collar and tie. The bus then proceeded to the excellent Craighendaroch Hotel in Ballater for high tea. Those were the days!

Back then there were only Bus and Easter Meets. Later an annual Skye week occurred, probably the precursor of present Weekend meets. These were memorable not only for days spent on the Cuillins, but for Lizetta's apple pie beds, Shelagh's enormous carry-outs from Sligachan and Bill's 'Scrabble' in French. Nowadays we have regular weekend meets with varied venues, and have a week in Majorca planned for October 1996.

The Club decided to improve and enlarge Muir of Inverey, having given up the lease on Derry lodge. Peter Howgate, as Huts Custodian oversaw members assisting with many tasks to have Muir ready for it's re-opening ceremony in 1972. The present booking letter mentions 4 folding beds in the little sitting room, but during renovations slept many more! Happy family weeks swimming in the river and introducing the children to the hills came later. The work weekend/week instigated by Eddie Martin finds members displaying hidden talents from which Muir benefits.

A mariner came to the 1971 Skye week and changed my way of life. Up to this time all my weekends were spent in the hills walking or ski-ing, and I was well on the way to climbing all the Munros. However I was whisked off to sea for a few years, coming ashore only for leave and to have two children. I discovered it is possible to mix marriage, children and the hills. Club bus meets were a blessing and the children learned to ski. Past President Gillian Shirreffs started the mid-week walks to enable mums of school children to enjoy time in the hills. Now this has grown into a regular monthly Club meet superbly organised by Bill Alexander and sister Jean.

In 1987 when the centenary of the Club was celebrated, the overnight meet was to Ben Macdhuì, the Shelter Stone and Dairymaid's Field, returning to a buffet and barbecue for 300 at Muir. Terry and Mary recall Robbie overseeing the husking of thousands of strawberries. Gillian Shirreffs and I decided that although we would not climb Ben Macdhuì on the 150th anniversary, our children might, so they came with us (aged 9 and 11) to camp by Loch Etchachan and take part in the celebrations.

Nine years after our Centenary, results can be seen in Glen Ey, where Piper's Wood was enclosed by fencing to allow the silver birch wood to regenerate. Some trees are now two metres high and adders are plentiful.

Graham Ewen seems to have been organising Club bus meets in his quiet, efficient way for ever. Despite analysing figures from past years, he can find no valid reason for the fluctuating number of people attending. Lochnagar and the Cairngorm traverse are always popular meets, and members suggestions for others are always welcome.

I attended my first Easter meet this year, as for once I was not away ski-ing. The weather was not too good but the company was, and I would recommend the meet to all members. There is no need to stay in the hotel since there is usually budget accommodation nearby. See the updated Huts and Hostels list in this journal.

The Club is flourishing with all its various activities, and continues to be heavily involved in environmental matters. Most recently this has included draining the Coire Etchachan footpath and consultations with the National Trust for Scotland regarding the future of Mar Lodge estate.

Looking back over my years in the Cairngorm Club, they have been happy and memorable ones. I can only hope that others who join can derive as much pleasure from it as I have done, and that they will put their efforts in to the well being of our Club.

Judy Middleton