

Sixty Years On

At the Club dinner in November 2009, certificates were awarded to five members who had each completed the amazing total of at least sixty years of membership with the Club. Those honoured were:

Patrick Sellar	(1946)
Tony Cameron	(1948)
Anne Cordiner	(1949)
Gordon McAndrew	(1949)
Sandy Reid	(1949)



At the Dinner with the President, Anne Pinches. From l. to r. Anne Cordiner, Sandy Reid, Patrick Sellar, Gordon McAndrew, Tony Cameron.

Others, who had also reached the magic total but were unable to attend the dinner, also received certificates:

Sandy Anton	(1939)
Bill Hendry	(1939)
Betty Chilton	(1944)
Ian Brooker	(1945)
Gordon Mathieson	(1945)

Frances Hill	(1946)
Margaret Munro	(1947)
Frank Crossling	(1948)
Eileen Leese	(1949)

Several of the recipients responded to the suggestion that they might share some of their memories of days in the hills through the *Journal*, as these might inspire the rest of us towards matching their achievements.

Patrick Sellar sent three extracts from his climbing diaries, the first from 1947, then one from 1950, and the last from 1987.

The Easter Meet at Crianlarich

Thursday 3rd April 1947

The train was up to time at Crianlarich and I walked over to the hotel. I was shown to my room by a very vague woman. There was a double bed and a single bed in the room, and Bobby later tossed for it. I got the single bed, thank goodness. I went for a short walk before dinner, down the road which I expected Bobby to come along in Mr. Reid's car. It was not long before they came along and I got a lift with them back to the hotel. There were nearly 30 members of the Cairngorm Club there. At dinner Bobby, Mr. and Mrs. Reid, and Miss Somebody-or-other sat together. The main climbing party, however, consisted of Bobby, Mr. Reid, Duncan Somebody, Robert Somebody, Nancy Somebody, John Crawford and myself. This seven always climbed together. Robert, Duncan and John were all around the age of 22, John being a particularly high-spirited youth. The food at the hotel was good but not altogether abundant. Mr. Reid kept showering us with sherry and burgundy! After dinner the younger of us went off for quite a long walk towards the Falls of Tulloch. We had tea when we returned.

Friday 4th April 1947

A fine cloudy day with mist only scuffing the tops. Our party of seven set off to do Ben More and Stob Binnein. We had breakfast at 8.30 a.m. specially for the Cairngorm Club. We walked along to the Ben More burn and then prepared for our steep ascent. There were about 15 whooper swans on Loch Dochart and about a dozen goldeneye. It was very steep and we halted many times. Very fine views were obtained before reaching the top. The top was in mist but it was wonderfully calm. We ate our lunch and descended rapidly to the col between Ben More and Stob Binnein. The slope up to Stob Binnein was not so steep but was very hard

and I was much pressed without an ice axe. After a little way Birnie Reid sent Robert and me back because of our lack of ice axes. Mr Reid himself and Duncan accompanied us back while the others pushed on. We had to rope up and we had deplorable business in unravelling the rope at first. Birnie Reid himself did not know how to tie the correct knots! I'm afraid the Cairngorm Club is rather care-free and not so efficient as the SMC! We descended to the col in thick mist and a shower of hail. We next descended straight from the col to the Ben More burn. There were some grand snow slopes for glissading but without an ice axe we had to remain roped up and were guided gingerly down. I hardly missed anything by not topping Stob Binnein.

Sunday 6th April 1947

Last night, or rather this morning, we were disturbed by a short storm involving thunder and lightning and much heavy rain. By morning, however, conditions had improved sufficiently to allow us to venture out on a climbing expedition. The chief trouble was the high wind driving intermittent showers of hail. We seven were taken in Mr Reid's car to a point in Glen Falloch opposite An Caisteal. We then ascended this admirable mountain over Stob Glas and came back over Twistin Hill. There were a few interesting and tricky parts which I was able to enjoy fully because I had been lent an ice axe on this occasion. The wind was so strong on top that we had to lie flat on our faces on many occasions. It was a short day but more enjoyable than Friday. We were back by 3.30 pm. Some really wonderful views of the sunlight on Ben More and Stob Binnein were to be had. It was too wild an evening for a walk so we spent the time in a drawing room, some of us playing bridge.

Patrick comments: I was aged 17, having joined the Cairngorm Club in 1946. The Nancy Somebody would have been Nancy Arthur I feel sure. Bobby was my brother R.M. Seller, who died in 1996. Ref. the burgundy, that was my very first ever glass of wine - we never drank wine in Huntly!

The Bus that Nearly Didn't Wait

12th February 1950

Picked up at Queen's Cross 6.30 a.m. Bus pretty full. The plan for the day had been posted as either Lochnagar or Beinn a' Bhuid. I don't like Lochnagar - it's too well known and too popular, so I opted for Beinn a' Bhuid. Only one other member wished to accompany me, everyone else disembarked at the bridge and proceeded up Ballochbuie. Nevertheless, we had the bus driven up to the Invercauld bridge for just us two. We then set out on the long 'plug up the Slugain'. It was a perfect winter's day

with clear blue sky and the deep soft snow sparkling in sharp contrast. The going was heavy, very heavy. With a great expenditure of effort we at last reached the south top of Beinn a' Bhuird by way of Carn Fiachlach. We were richly rewarded by the magnificence of the panorama, particularly looking towards Cairn Toul. We were already behind schedule, but my companion, Nicholls, did not care in the least about being late on our return (a 'keep 'em waiting, good for 'em' sort of attitude!) However, thank God, we decided not to proceed to the North top. We lost a good deal more time on our way back. I saw that we were going to be hopelessly late. I RAN on ahead and arrived at the main road to find the bus drawing up with a full complement. I opened the door and was greeted with a chilly silence. Then Mr. Smith said "Where's Nicholls, Pat?" I replied that he would be a good ten minutes yet, to which Mr. Smith replied "Well, we're not waiting. We're going back to Aboyne for our tea. You can take the public bus home". I said "Right!" and was closing the door when Nancy Arthur shouted "What about your wet clothes, Pat? You must change!" This saved the day, for there was a reconsideration and they decided to wait.

The Centenary Meet

20th June 1987

Climbing Log

16.45 left Dalmunzie

17.00 20 Twite

19.40 we reach Loch nan Eun

22.00 top of Beinn Iutharn Mhor - 3 Dotterel, Golden Plover, Ptarmigan.

23.20 Camped in col to North of Iutharn Mhor.

Listened to Snipe drumming. Had a good dram.

21st June 1987

07.45 Rose after quite a good night.

08.20 We set off after breakfast. Glimpses of sun. Grouse calling.

09.15 Top of Carn Bhac

09.30 2 pairs Dunlin. We find nests with eggs. Dunlin and Golden Plover both singing. A heavenly morning on Carn Bhac.

09.30 - 12.30 We keep high via Geal Charn, Carn Liath and Carn na Moine.

12.00 Steep descent to Muir cottage.

For the overnight walk four of us set out - myself, Dr. Iain Smart (ex-President SMC), his wife Margaret and son Aaron (aged 14). We were favoured with near calm conditions, not cold and only spoilt by a few light

showers, one of them, annoyingly, just after we had entrusted ourselves to our new-fangled space blankets! In fact, the thin sheets of tin-foil worked surprisingly well. You just wrap yourself into it, of course already in your sleeping-bag and on top of a 'campamat'. Iain doled out a healthy ration of Scotch and it was a fine experience lying there listening to the snipe drumming.

We slept, fitfully, right through to 07.00. Iain lit his famous 'tundra burner' and we soon had tea and a marmalade sandwich. We topped Carn Bhac 09.15 and that was the finest part of our walk. A very isolated Munro, greatly enhanced by lovely Dunlin singing and Golden Plover yodelling. Before us lay spectacular views of the Lairig, Ben Macdui (just clear of cloud), and the back side of Beinn a' Ghlo. We could see right down Glen Tilt exactly along its full length. The Tarf and Geldie were also nicely seen. Mount Battock to the east looked its old bold self.

We were appalled by our first glimpse of the Cairngorm Club Champagne Buffet - a huge marquee and lots of cars. Never mind, it was good to get down amongst the pine trees and smell their scent and hear the siskins sizzling. The sun came out and it became really hot. Found a can of beer and downed its contents in a trice. The lunch was a great success. Aaron demolished three large venison burgers in short order. There were even kippers being grilled on the huge barbecue. Lovely fresh salmon and salad laid out on huge plates. Lots of wine.

Didn't know a lot of folk there, but meeting Wynne-Edwards made up for that. He is rather stooped nowadays but still has that piercing twinkle in his eyes. He fought back from a cancer trouble some years ago. We had a good chat. He said Adam's father was still alive. Disappointingly, Adam Watson junr. himself was not there. Wynne chatted about the old days of Culterty and how he was instrumental in getting the University to buy it from Edgar Smith. Wynne had been to the top of Macdui this morning, like many others present. Here I was, talking to a fine old chap of 82, the oldest to have reached the top! Many slept at the Shelter Stone.

We climbed three Munros and walked 17 ½ miles before arriving at the Club buffet. But of course that was nothing compared to Prof. Wynne-Edwards climbing Macdui that same night aged 82.

Frances Hill writes:

On receiving my certificate, I thought of my family and their hillwalking and skiing and what they wore, and remembered what I wore towards the

end of the war and a few years after. I had my mother's golf-jacket which was waist-length, and land-girls' corduroy breeches. These were good. On my head I wore a wool balaclava knitted for the navy and my father's plus-four socks (I have big feet), and boys' tackety boots with studs completed the outfit. I suppose I had some sort of waterproofs, but can't remember what. Kitted out with the above, I enjoyed wonderful days with the Club summer and winter. The New Year Meet at the Invercauld Arms Hotel was very special - a coal fire in your bedroom for an extra 2/6d was total bliss after coming off the hill in the dusk, cold, wet but happy. In 1947 Margaret Munro and I went by train to Switzerland and the first thing I did was to buy boots.

Frank Crossling writes:

What a nice idea to present the 'old fogies' with a certificate, and to deliver same in person!

I said I had not done much climbing since leaving Aberdeen but I quite forgot that I spent a year in Kenya. I am a surgeon and Glasgow University were helping set up a Medical School in Nairobi. It was a great year, I managed to climb Mount Kenya and of course Kilimanjaro - right on our doorstep. The latter is mainly a slow trudge, combating altitude sickness. You adapt over five days. I had it slightly - forgot all about it but years later I had the same symptoms exactly at 14,000 ft. walking in the French Alps. Flying Doctor trips also added another dimension to the mountains and volcanoes.

Although associated with the club for a large number of years I was actively involved for only five years while I was resident in Aberdeen (my home town) and was a medical student at Aberdeen University, but the memories are vivid. My two main companions on these outings were also medics - Jimmy MacGregor, now a retired GP living in Braemar, and Gordon Mathieson, now Prof. of Pathology in Newfoundland, Canada. We would collect at Queen's Cross at 6.30 of a Sunday morning and pile into the bus. Lots of chatter meeting colleagues, and then our first view of a pink sun striking the Cairngorm tops just below Braemar. We all crowded to that side of the bus for the view. Then what a day of sun and snow - I forget if we climbed or just walked but so invigorating. Then on to the hotel in Braemar for a drink and a meal. Back on the bus - more chatter till sleep crept over some of us.

Thereafter my profession as a surgeon took me all over the world and to many different mountains, but I never lost the fascination and memory of those Sunday outings with the Club.

Anne Cordiner writes:

A Club Member for 60 years

Obviously a kaleidoscope of memories, which began with survival of WWII, my college training, the beginning of a teaching career which saw 40 years of many activities, and the incredible growth of outdoor clubs and activities. So many aspects to remember and recall, pleasure and excitement, sometimes sadness, success and failure - a different language altogether, friendship and comrades. Now in the passing of Burns' night his well-expressed thoughts

*Oh! Age has weary days,
And nights of sleepless pain!
Those golden times o' youthful prime
Why comest them not again!*

stir a whole random collection of thoughts covering the deeds and thoughts of many years.

First, Club outings, often with an early morning bus. First bus of the year to Glen Muick and Lochnagar, snow, so that more than once the bus went off the road, and we'd end up heaving and pushing, so that it usually got back on eventually! Some members took to skiing; presenting a problem - 30 people, 30 rucksacks, 30 pairs of skis, two dogs, all to fit into one bus.

Shelter: Derry Lodge (*Journal* (1954), no. 89, p. 33-36); the Shelterstone (campfires unpopular!); Muir Cottage with room for 14, just! (*Journal* (1950) no. 87).

The 'dress' of the immediate post-war period, which consisted of ex-army waterproof trousers and jackets (not waterproof, but superb for glissading, unless you lost control), ex-army (or land-army) breeches, rucksacks, ice-axes, fingerless gloves, balaclavas, long socks, and old raincoats cut short.

Adverts of the day: for Blacks of Greenock Ltd., Timpson Boots for Climbers, Robert Lawrie Ltd, Hemp Rope, Manila Rope, and finally Viking Nylon Rope, and Commando Soles after clinkers and tricounis.

The 'characters', either club members, or those the club had contact with, such as Bob Scott, held in awe and respect with his tremendous knowledge of the area. Our one-time President, who always carried his kettle and must have brewed more cups of tea than anyone else in the club. There were many others, male and female, who put their stamp on some aspect of the club activities. We had excellent chefs at barbeques, some fine Dinners, bridge-builders, painters, hut cleaners.

But over the years, so much out and about on meets in many parts of the country, in other countries on foreign meets, which were usually a

summer activity. The small things that added so much to meets, sparkling sunshine, herds of deer. The special birds, such as golden eagle or dotterel. Then the delicate and charming small flowers such as gentian and soldanella, and the large and striking more-robust thistles and knapweeds. Company and laughter, adventures shared, fair weather and foul, some great meals after meets, and often a good snooze on the bus home.

Some still rock-climb, some prefer to walk or ski, some stay at home in Scotland, and many have been further afield on other continents, but there is something for everyone. For those of us who have been a long time with the Club, there are few regrets, and many happy memories, but now the hills seem steeper and higher, the tracks longer, and strangely walking down seems almost as much effort as walking up.