

PROCEEDINGS OF THE CLUB

BUSINESS MEETINGS

Since the previous issue of the Journal, no fewer than five General Meetings of the Club have been held – the Annual General Meetings of 2015, 2016 and 2017, and two Special General Meetings to deal with the Club’s move to charity status, following its change from Community Amateur Sports Club tax status in 2016.

The *AGM held on 12 November 2015* was attended by 26 members. Apart from Meet and other reports summarised below, the main item reported was the fencing undertaken at Altanour using funds from the Willie Robb bequest. The Treasurer reported that Club membership stood at 401 (4 down from the previous year), and that the bank account stood at £107,923, after an annual deficit of £3,343. The standard Club subscription rate was kept at £13, plus £14.25 for the Mountaineering Council of Scotland.

The following were elected or re-elected as Office-Bearers: Ruth Payne (Hon. President), James Friend (President), Colin Brown and Sue Chalmers (Vice-Presidents), Ken Thomson (Secretary), Derek Pinches (Treasurer), Kees Witte (Hut Custodian), Garry Wardrope (Day Meets Secretary), Jim Bryce (Weekend Meets Secretary), Benn Hitchen (Social Activities Secretary) and Colin Brown (Communications Secretary), with no nomination for the post of Climbing Secretary. The following were elected to “ordinary” membership of the Committee (O = Ordinary, A = Associate membership): Marj Ewan (O), Ruth Payne (O), Marion White (A), Rod Campbell (O), Jean Robinson (O), Ivan Hiscox (O), David Brown (O), Stan Urbaniak (O) and Mark Wynne (A).

Under AOCB, most discussion focused on the need for a second Club hut, and/or replacement of the Club’s indicators on Ben Macdhui and Lochnagar. In both cases, no immediate action was generally felt to be necessary.

On *9 November 2016*, 34 members attended a *Special General Meeting* to approve changes to the Club’s Constitution intended to bring it into line with Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) requirements; these involved reformulation of the Club’s “objects and purposes”, the designation of charity trustees, and modification of winding-up procedures. The two motions were overwhelmingly approved.

At the immediately following *2016 AGM*, the Treasurer reported that Club membership stood at 397, and that the bank account stood at £95,406, after an annual deficit of £12,517. The standard Club subscription rate was kept at £13, plus £16.25 for the MCofS. Office-Bearers were all re-elected, with the addition of James Hirst (O) as Climbing Activities Secretary, and, amongst “ordinary” Committee members, Mike Tonge (A) replaced Stan Urbaniak and Mark Wynne. AOCB covered the What3Words global address system: (Benn Hitchen), the possible MBA renovation of

Ruigh Ealasaid in Glen Geldie, and the recent production of a booklet based on the 2014 Club talk by Eric Johnston.

On 28 June 2017, a further SGM was found necessary to satisfy OSCR as to the disposal of Club assets in the event of winding-up; the opportunity was taken to clarify certain other aspects of the Constitution.

Finally, on 15 November 2017, a relatively uneventful AGM confirmed most existing Office-Bearers in post, with the notable exception of Marjory Ewan replacing James Friend as President after the latter's three-year stint, and the standing-down of Benn Hitchen as Social Activities Secretary. Joyce Ritchie (O) and Izy Kirkaldy (A) replaced Marj Ewan, Ruth Payne and Marion White as "ordinary" Committee members. Club membership had again declined slightly, to 387 (having peaked at 504 some 15 years previously). The bank account had risen to £106,045. No significant AOCB topics were raised or discussed.

MEETS

DAY MEETS

In 2014-15, a total of 157 participants attended these meets, to which the Club contributed a total of £956. In 2015-16, 138 participated, with a net Club contribution of £1007, including three coach hirings. In 2016-17, 129 participated, with a net Club contribution of £361.

	2015	2016	2017
Jan.	Lochnagar*	Lochnagar*	Lochnagar*
Feb.	Meall Glas, Glen Lochay	Tomintoul to Cockbridge	Glen Callater
Mar.	Snowholing	Snowholing	Snowholing
Apr.	Ben Avon/Bhuird	Linn o'Dee Circular	An Socach
May	Monadhliaths	Glen Feshie	Glen Lochay
Jun.	Fannichs (o/night)	Ben Alder (o/night)	Braeriach (o/night)
Jul.	-	-	Strathconon
Aug.	Glen Tilt (o/night)	Creag Gharbh, Glen Tay	Stuchd an Lochain
Sep.	Cairngorm Traverse*	Cairngorm Traverse*	Cairngorm Traverse*
Oct.	Loch Lee to Glen Muick	Ben Rinnes	Mount Keen
Nov.	Buck of Cabrach	Glen Slugain	Glen Isla
Dec.	Bennachie Traverse	Ben Earb, Glen Shee	Brown Cow Hill

Coach trips marked with *; most others by minibus

Two notable innovations were added to the list of “Day” Club activities during the period. A series of Snow-holing Meets was arranged in Februaries 2015, 2016 and 2017: see below. And during winters 2016 and 2017, a series of several Night Hikes was instituted by Benn Hitchen, with participants ascending Bennachie, Millstone Hill, Brimmond Hill, Scolty, and Clachnaben on moonlit evenings.

Notes from the Snow-Holes

The Troglodytic Tendency within the Club has long been satisfied with the various Cairngorm howffs, but in 2015, at the suggestion of Derek Beverley, a new set of activities was initiated, with a snow-holing meet. In that first year, the Secretary scoured Deeside for somewhere suitable within the planned 24-hour window, and eventually dragged a group of 9 hopefuls up the lower and sodden slopes of Beinn Bhrotain, in the total absence of any visible snow over a few inches in depth. However, doubts subsided at the sight of a substantial bank of snow at grid reference 978 910. There, after digging into rather wet snow in the gathering darkness, all survived the night though few had tales of comfortable rest (one was a Spanish mountaineer on her first trip to the Cairngorms!). The morning was nasty. However, the Day Meets Secretary (Garry Wardrope) was determined to live up to his title, and, with a couple of others, attempted an ascent of Ben Bhrotain; they were thwarted from going beyond Carn Cloich-mhuilinn by colder and windier conditions higher up.

In 2016, a smaller group of 4 drove round to Glenmore and walked up in miserable conditions to the Ptarmigan Restaurant, which provided shelter and a welcome warm drink, en route to the objective of Ciste Mhearad near the summit of Cairngorm. Almost giving up at the restaurant, we still decided to “have a look”, and were delighted to find several large and empty snowholes already excavated by Glenmore trainees in the recent past. We settled into the best of these, with ample room (see colour photograph No 10) and had time to stagger up to the cairn in blizzard conditions before settling down for the night. In the morning, the entrances were found to be blocked with new snow cascading down from above, but these were quickly cleared, and we then had a fine excursion down to the Saddle at the head of Strathnethy and up to Beinn Bynack before traversing Glen Nethy back to the cars.

In March 2017, with little snow around, camping was substituted for holing, and a group of 8 headed up a very wet and slushy Glen Derry (see colour photographs Nos 8 and 9) to Loch Etchachan, where tents were pitched on a snowfield in a chilly breeze. The morning brought worse conditions, but ambition hath no bounds, so in a strong wind and total cloud we headed up Creagan a' Choire Etchachan and then Derry Cairngorm, the going made no easier by snow shovels acting as sails on our backs, and boulders underfoot amidst the ice and snow. We eventually emerged above Derry Lodge damp but delighted and got back to the Linn in driving rain. Clearly these snow-holing meets have their attractions, and one of these winters we may encounter the right combination of snow and weather!

WEEKEND MEETS

Net Club contributions to these meets in 2014-15, 2015-16 and 2016-17 amounted to £886, £434 and £185 respectively, with ever-healthier numbers reaching an average of nearly 14 in 2016-17.

	2015	2016	2017
January	Muir Cottage	Muir Cottage	Muir Cottage
February	Newtonmore	Newtonmore	Newtonmore
March	Invergarry	Achnasheen	Crianlarich
April	Inverie, Knoydart	Loch Ossian	Glen Etive
May	Lochranza, Arran	Portnalong, Skye	BMC Hut, Glenbrittle
June	Cairndow, Arrochar	Durness	Craignure, Mull
July	BMC Hut, Glenbrittle	Dundonnell	Helyg Ogwen, Wales
August	Ling Hut, Torridon	Corran	CIC Hut, Ben Nevis
September	Rum Bunkhouse	Causeyfoot, Keswick	Morvich, Kintail
October	Roy Bridge	Elphin	Corran
November	Glen Etive	Blackrock, Glencoe	Cannich
December	Crianlarich	Riasg, Roybridge	Crianlarich

As can be seen above, meet locations varied widely, with Rum, Keswick and Ogwen Valley, Wales, as new (or at least long-unvisited) destinations, alongside old favourites such as Glenbrittle, Newtonmore and Roybridge.

Notes from Weekend Tramps

Over the three years under review, the weather varied, of course. Whilst this is only to be expected in Skye and Rum, we might perhaps have expected better things of the August 2017 meet at the CIC hut, where many of us practised the art of “festering” whilst waiting for the weather to improve. Fortunately, there were also some memorably good weather weekends such as the meet at Invergarry in March 2015, and at Newtonmore in 2017. In May 2017, the Club filled every bed in the Glen Brittle Memorial Hut, where members enjoyed a sunny, if breezy, long weekend. The 6-day trip to North Wales in July 2017 was a great success (see colour photograph No 12). The weather was good, and many hills were climbed, and rock climbs completed – including the classics Faith, Hope and Charity. (cont.)

Huts and hostels also varied, from the “traditional” comforts of Inbhirfhaolain in Glen Etive (see colour photograph No13), where water must be collected from the burn and the composting toilet is up the steps outside at the back, to the superb insulation of the Craignure hostel on Mull – so superb that we sweated all evening and night with the windows closed to keep the midges out. Huts with a tradition such as Blackrock and Glenbrittle are always popular, but we also appreciated the comparative luxury of the Corran Bunkhouse and the cosiness of Newtonmore.

The venues are varied and the same might be said of those who attend: a mixture of stalwarts who rarely miss a meet, members who fancy the location and newcomers who have perhaps been on a few Day Meets and then decide to give the Weekends a try. A significant number of those attending travel from as far afield as Achiltibuie, Edinburgh, Dingwall, Glasgow and even Peterborough. All are welcome and contribute to what is always a sociable weekend.

Many of these meets were undoubtedly enhanced by a communal meal on the Saturday evening. Frustrated by the limited facilities of some hostels, Sue Chalmers invested in a large (and now very well-travelled) slow cooker which keeps the meal simmering whilst the cooks enjoy the hills. Upon their return, they frequently find that a team of willing, and probably hungry, helpers have set the table and prepared the veg. Indeed, after a long day plodding through the snow on Ben Cruachan, Marj Ewan and Sue Chalmers returned considerably later than planned to find that the meal had not only been prepared but also served and consumed in their absence. Happily, portions had been left for the latecomers.

Burns Night Weekends at Muir in late January continued as a regular feature, with a variety of organisers.

Whilst getting away and travelling across the country on a Friday evening can be rather stressful, it is always worthwhile when you realise you are approaching the hills, and that a warm hut and good company await and just possibly a cloud-free summit!

OVERSEAS MEETS

In early September 2015, Peter Bellarby organized a meet based at Vigo di Fassa in the Dolomites. From an excellent hotel there, several participants accomplished via ferrata, while others made good use of the widespread network of buses, lifts and paths. Almost exactly a year later, a similar meet was held in Cortina, again with via ferrata a target for several participants, while others explored First World War remains in the surrounding area.

CLIMBING

This field of Club activity varied, as usual, with the weather, but the Weekend Meets to the Lake District in 2016 and to Wales in 2017 were highlights. During the Winters, most activities took place on Tuesday evenings at the Beach venue of Transition Extreme. In 2017, an organised Tuesday programme led to a better spread of climbing venues, north and south of Aberdeen, and on inland crags, and to a variety of climbing types – trad, sports and bouldering. Use of Facebook is also assisting in organising formal and informal meets. Introducing newcomers to climbing remains an issue: Club members cannot be expected – logistically or legally – to offer their services as trainers to novices on a regular basis. However, the Club offers 50% financial support for commercially run events, some on Club meets.

MID-WEEK WALKS (MWWs)

At the end of 2016, Arthur Dickie ended his five-year supervision of these popular monthly walks, with Marion White taking over. Each August, members are invited to attend a planning meeting, where the programme of 12 walks for the forthcoming calendar year is determined, and leaders appointed for each event. The programmes below show some novelties (e.g. the Foudland Hill and Ben Newe) but also several old favourites.

	2015	2016	2017
January	Kingswells	Migvie	Donmouth
February	Sands of Forvie	Loch Kinord	Kincardine o'Neil
March	Carn William	Tarfside	Creag nam Ban
April	Gairnshiel-Shenval	St. Cyrus	Ben Tirran
May	Sgor Mor	Glen Ey	Clais Fearnaigh
June	Deskry Water	Geallaig	Correen Hills
July	Piper's Wood	Falls of Damph	Carn an Tuirc
August	Coyles of Muick	Morrone	Ben Newe
September	West Ballochbuie	Clachnaben	Gordon Way
October	Foudland Hill	Lower Morven	Cullen
November	Castle Fraser	Hill of Fare	Brimmond
December	Scolty	Balmoral Cairns	Invercauld-Balmoral

Notes from Mid-Week Walks

Two MWW novelties were introduced, both in September 2017.

Firstly, Kees Witte arranged mid-week accommodation in Ullapool, from where Stac Polly was (almost) ascended, and a walk took place up beside the Ullapool River to Loch Achall on the following day. Although the weather was at times inclement, and underfoot conditions wet - indeed, this excursion found the main group, "Presidentially led"! floundering in knee-deep bog in search of a non-existent path back to Ullapool, the eleven participating recommend that this extended meet should become a regular feature of the annual MWW programme.

Secondly, a hired coach enabled an A-to-B traverse of the Gordon Way, which was found to be in rather poor condition in many places until the final stretch below the Mither Tap: according to signs, Aberdeenshire Council and/or Forestry Commission Scotland no longer maintain the Way, and the lack of drainage has reduced some parts to definite bog. It is hoped that the Bailies of Bennachie will be able to undertake some remedial work on the western stretches of this route.

DAUNDERS

Ruth Payne once again organized these events for (mostly) less active members, with a short walk followed by lunch at a suitable nearby location. Venues during the period under review included Dunecht, Brimmond, Glentanar, Drum, Newburgh, Haddo, Stonehaven and Forvie.

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

ANNUAL DINNERS

The three Dinners were held in the Treetops and (twice) Doubletree hotels, and featured speakers as follows:

14 November 2015:	Kellan MacInnes, on his book <i>Caleb's List</i>
18 November 2016:	Peter Wright, author of <i>Ribbon of Wilderness</i>
24 November 2017:	Benn Hitchen (see colour photographs 17 and 18) and Anne Pinches, on Duke of Edinburgh Scheme experiences

INDOOR MEETS

The usual series of illustrated talks were provided each Winter, at the Sportsman's Club on Queen's Road, with Members' nights each January. Other speakers and their topics were as follows (* indicates presentations by one or more Club members):

2015

October: Benn Hitchen*: *A Trip to the High Atlas Mountains*
 December: Sandy McIntosh*: *125 years of Club Members' Slides*

2016:

February: Alistair Beeley: *Mount Elbrus*
 March: Paula Williams: *Bens and Glens: Mapping Scotland's Landscape*
 October: David Jones: *Munro-Bagging in Red Socks*
 December: Stephen Willis: *Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels*

2017

February: Innes Ewen: *The Uplands of Mar*
 March: Ross Hewitt: *Baffin Island Exploration*
 October: Nicky Penford: *Deer Management*
 December: Izy Kirkaldy*: *Knoydart to Newburgh* (see colour photograph No 11)

SUMMER EVENTS

In June 2015, as in previous years, a barbecue was held at Templars Park. In subsequent Junes, this was replaced by a “walk and meal” format, in 2016 up Scolty (though in such bad weather that only two people made the ascent!) and in 2017 up the Barmekin, with about 10 participants, and more at the meal in Dunecht.

COMMUNICATIONS

The Club's website- www.cairngormclub.org.uk and Yahoo email system were maintained throughout the review period, and three *Newsletters* were produced each year. The Members' Forum, with 152 members in Autumn 2017 after some purging in 2015, increased from 850 to 1093 topics, and from about 4,900 to 6,340 individual posts.

In Summer 2017, the hosts for both the website and the Forum were changed, the former to accommodate digitisation of this Journal, and the latter due to the purchase of our original host company by another supplier. Also, in Summer 2017, the photo-hosting site Photobucket began charging heavily for using links to the Forum photos, with the result that far fewer are now being posted in Meet reports.

MUIR COTTAGE

With Dave Kirk in charge of bookings, Muir occupation continued at roughly previous rates, of about 2,000 bed-nights annually. In January 2016, the overnight charge for non-Members was raised from £10 to £12, but that for Members kept at £5. Gross annual revenues varied between about £15,000 and £19,000, with net revenue

normally around £12,000. The new (2014) shed at the rear of the Cottage has proved very useful, with three bikes installed by 2015, along with much work gear previously kept in the woodshed.

The 2014 planting of a few Scots pine seedlings near the front dyke did not prove successful, and in winter 2015/16 another small area was planted with a mixture of deciduous and coniferous seedlings, the former successfully, the latter not. In early 2015, a survey of the wood next to Muir noticed fungus *Phaeolus schweinitzii*, and sadly 3 Scots pines behind the bike shed were felled/turned into firewood and found severely damaged by brown rot.

Annual Work Weekends (see colour photographs Nos 14 and 15), nowadays timed to follow a local Mid-Week Walk in April or May, continued to prove popular, and, other than the usual cleaning and painting, have included the erection of a stile over the fence around the water supply. An incipient leak in the east wall appears to have been quelled by some timely repairs, and kitchen improvements have included two high stools and some recycling bins. In May 2016, Past-President Adrian Scott and Dave Roberts, of Dervish Carving, carved and erected a fine outdoor bench in the front lawn (the wood came from the good parts of the felled trees), and an outside table manufactured by HMP residents was added. The coin meters for the heaters in the bedrooms were changed for 2-hour electronic ones. Also, a new entrance gate was manufactured. The solar thermal panel which was installed in 2014 is performing well.

PROJECTS

The main projects assisted by the Club during the review period were the fencing of two areas of land on either side of the track at the ruined Altanour Lodge in upper Glen Ey; and a £25,000 contribution to the National Trust for Scotland (NTS), to replace the footbridge over the Quoich at the Punchbowl (see colour photograph No 16). These two payments largely accounted for the generous bequest to the Club by Willie Robb, who died on Speyside in October 2012 (see *Cairngorm Club Journal*, 110, 2013, pp.123-124). The southern area at Altanour still has a few dozen elderly larch trees, but the northerly one has only a few; it is hoped that natural generation will enable growth of this and other species to appear over the next few decades, to avoid complete “desertification”. A small commemorative plaque, and stiles, have been installed.

The Quoich footbridge was disturbed – presumably by a tree – during the Deeside floods in early 2016 – when the river was diverted to the east of the road bridge, rendering the latter useless. Though not obviously damaged, the footbridge was inspected and declared unsafe by NTS, and a new bridge was installed by contractors in winter 2016 to 17. In April 2017, a small group of members oversaw the attachment of a commemorative plaque (see colour photograph No 16).