

## PROCEEDINGS OF THE CLUB

### GENERAL MEETINGS

The 2020 AGM was held – for the first time – by Zoom, with 43 members attending. The Treasurer reported that Club membership had fallen from 361 to 334, but that the Club’s bank balance on 30 September 2020 stood at £110,697 (2019: £100,586). The following were elected or re-elected as Office-Bearers: Ruth Payne (Hon. President), Garry Wardrope (President and Day Meets Secretary), Joyce Ritchie and Izy Kirkaldy (Vice-Presidents), Ken Thomson (Secretary), Donald Thomas (Treasurer), Kees Witte (Hut Custodian), Sue Chalmers (Weekend Meets Secretary), Stuart Message (Climbing Activities), Eilidh Scobbie (Social Activities Secretary), Colin Brown (Communications Secretary); and the following as “ordinary” Committee members: James Hirst, Mark Peel, Adrian Scott, Debbie Fielding, Ivan Hiscox, Jamie Vince, Susan Jensen, Mike Duguid and Stuart Dick.

On 10 November 2021, a “hybrid” Special General Meeting, with 37 members attending, was held to approve revisions to the Club’s Constitution, mainly to enable meetings to be held in physical, virtual or hybrid form, and to simplify the holding of General Meetings. The proposed revisions were all approved unanimously. At the AGM immediately following, the Treasurer reported that Club membership on 30 September 2021 had risen to 338, while the bank balance on 30 September 2021 stood at £108,015, a sum which at time of writing is leading to several possible Club projects in 2022 or thereafter being considered.

Most Office-Bearers were re-elected, with the following replacements: Robbie Middleton (Hon. President), Ivan Hiscox (Vice-President) and Helen Russell (Weekend Meets). Mark Peel, James Hirst, Adrian Scott, and Jamie Vince all stood down as “ordinary” Committee members, while Susan Jensen, Mike Duguid, Stuart Dick, Craig Thomson, Mike Culley and Kolbjørn Akselvoll were all elected as new “ordinary” members. Honorary memberships were conferred on Derek Pinches and Dave Kirk.

## MEETS

Due to the Covid-19 lockdowns in spring/summer 2020, and again in winter/spring 2021, with vehicle-sharing restrictions in place at other times, all Club meet programmes were severely disrupted, but the following subsections record what was nevertheless achieved. Throughout, the Club tried to adhere to Government and Mountaineering Scotland guidelines, e.g., keeping contact lists of meet participants for NHS “Track and Trace” purposes. Such a list was used once, in 2021.

## DAY MEETS

In 2020, Day Meets in January and February were held to Lochnagar and Ben Gulabin/Carn A’Gheoidh respectively, and then in the autumn months to the Stui (Lochnagar), Loch Esk (Glen Clova), Culardoch and the Baddoch. In 2021, the Hill of Fare was ascended in April, followed monthly by Lochnagar, Glen Ey (instead of the Mamores, minibus hire becoming unavailable at the last minute), Faindouran (overnight camping), a Feshie-Einich Traverse (camping), a N-S Cairngorm Traverse, Carn Bhac, Morven, and Clachnaben (Bennachie being out of bounds due to windthrow after Storm Arwen) in December. On average, there were about a dozen participants on each of these meets.

## WEEKEND MEETS

In 2020, the first three monthly meets were held in Muir for Burns Night, at Rothiemurchus for Winter Training, and at Corran, but all later ones had to be cancelled, mostly with bookings deferred. In 2021, meets were not possible until a camping/climbing meet was held at Achiltibuie in July, and thereafter meets were held at Sanachan in September, Glen Brittle in October, Corran in November, and the Raeburn Hut near Dalwhinnie in December, all proving very popular.

## CLIMBING

After some indoor activity in early 2020, all meets had to be cancelled until Meikle Partans in August that year, and some separated City/Shire meetings outdoors thereafter. Again in 2021, formal meets could only get underway from late summer onwards, but these included two subsidised self-rescue training sessions.

## MID-WEEK WALKS

The following table lists the Walks undertaken in 2020 and 2021, with blanks indicating months when planned Walks had to be cancelled due to Covid-19 restrictions:

	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>
January	Hazlehead – Countesswells	
February	Sands of Forvie	
March	Hill of Cat	Tom’s Cairn/Lower Donside
April		Aboyne Circular
May		Carn Liath
June		Geallaig
July	Elrick – Tyrebagger	Ben Rinnes
August	Stonehaven – Dunnottar	Clais Fhearnaig
September	Morven/Monagowan	Millstone Hill – Mither Tap
October	Glentinar	Invercauld Circuit
November	Balmoral Cairns	Ballater – Cambus o’ May
December	Brig o’ Dee – Cults	Dunecht – Barmekin Hill

A restricted programme of “Lunch and Dauners” was organized by Ruth Payne, including Haddo, Dunecht, and Forvie.

## SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

Eilidh Scobbie organized the 2020 “Dinner” by Zoom (61 “attending”), with wildlife photographer Peter Cairns giving an illustrated talk on “Scotland: A Rewilding Journey”. The 2021 Dinner was a “hybrid” affair, with about 50 attending at the new venue of the Royal Northern & University Club, and 10 or so joining by Zoom, both numbers being lower than expected due to Storm Arwen bringing down trees and power lines that evening. Steve Goodwin spoke on “Nepal: Everest to the Crystal Mountain (or ‘from the ridiculous to the sublime’)”.

It was not possible to hold the traditional Club Barbecue in 2020, but in June 2021, after an appetite-whetting outdoor stroll above Peterculter, the next best thing – a waitress-served meal – was held under canvas at Kippie Lodge in Milltimber.

For Club “Indoor Meets”, see elsewhere in this issue.

## **COMMUNICATIONS**

Throughout the review period, Colin Brown maintained the Club's website [www.cairngormclub.org.uk](http://www.cairngormclub.org.uk), and indeed extended it, e.g., links to a "Muir Availability" sheet, and to current Covid-19 guidance. The June 2020 Newsletter was cancelled, but 12 short "Bulletins" were emailed out fortnightly over that summer. The October 2020 Newsletter was reduced in length, and the February 2021 issue was solely in "electronic" format. In December 2020, the Club's email system was changed from Yahoo! to Google Groups. Due probably to much-reduced outdoor activities, the Members' Forum saw fewer posts, but by November 2021 had 177 members, 1300 topics and over 7200 posts. Facebook was well used by the climbers, and a Club Instagram account was opened.

## **MUIR COTTAGE**

Kees Witte continued as Custodian, and in November 2020 Jamie Vince took over bookings from Dave Kirk. With Covid-19 lockdown, Muir was closed in March 2020, re-opening in July of that year to members only, with a 72-hour gap between occupations. Complete closure had to be repeated in January 2021, with re-opening in July that year. Accordingly, the number of bed-nights was 700 in 2019-2020, and 500 in 2020-21, compared to around 2000 in "normal" years. Nevertheless, modified Work Weekends were held in both years, and in May 2021 the kitchen worktops were changed to stainless steel (a big hygienic improvement), and new curtains were supplied to four of the bunk rooms. The trees planted a few years ago are coming along nicely, and plans are afoot to renew the electrics. Storm Arwen on 26 November 2021 cut power to Muir, to the detriment of parties who had booked in for the following two weekends, but thankfully caused no further damage.

## **FINANCE AND PROJECTS**

After 21 years of service, Derek Pinches stood down as Hon. Treasurer and Membership Secretary in November 2020, handing over to Donald Thomas, a member of the Club since 1994, and a stalwart of several other outdoor organisations. Donald has had to cope with the shift away from cash, cheques and standing orders towards electronic bank transfers, and with the complications of Covid-19 meet cancellations.

In recent years, the Club has received substantial income – around £17,000 annually – from Muir bookings. This of course stopped with lockdown in March 2020, with only a limited period of re-opening in autumn that year. However, the Club benefitted from a £10,000 Scottish Government “small business” grant snapped up by Derek in June 2020, and in 2021 from a successful claim under its Business Interruption Insurance. More regular though diminished inflow restarted in summer 2021. Other areas of Club revenue and expenditures (including those on Muir repairs and improvements) have remained largely unchanged, except for significant flows associated with repairing the path on Clachnaben (see below), and production of the *Cairngorm Club Journal* no. 113 in 2000.

In Donald’s other area of responsibility, it is pleasing to record a small increase in membership during the Club’s financial year 2020-21, after several years of slow but steady decline, in common with other similar clubs. The reasons for the rise are unclear, but lockdown has clearly led to increased appreciation of outdoor activity.

In 2019, the Club received nearly £10,000 of funding from the National Lottery Community Fund to carry out repairs on the Clachnaben footpath. This path underwent considerable work between 1997 and 2004, when a new line was formalised above the Miller’s Bog wood and onto the shoulder of the hill. It has stood up quite well to the boot-pounding of 10,000 - 20,000 people per year but needed further remedial work, including removal of metal pins protruding into the walking surface, removal of a fallen tree and formation of drainage, and a new surface at several damaged sections. After technical and cost estimates by the Outdoor Access Trust for Scotland (OATS), the work was carried out in December 2019 – January 2020 by ACT Heritage Ltd. of Daviot. The Club contributed about £3000 from its own funds, with more modest contributions from North East Mountain Trust and Ramblers Scotland. At time of writing, a few more relatively minor repairs to the path seem desirable, and the Committee is looking into this. No other major projects were undertaken or supported during the period under review, but the Club did pay for a set of “droppers” to discourage bird strike on the fencing at Altanour and Piper’s Wood, and the usual range of Club donations, subscriptions and training grants to members were made.