

In Memoriam

The Club has been saddened by the passing of several members over the last 2 years.

Robbie Middleton

by Richard Shirreffs

Robbie's maritime-centred career, starting as a merchant seaman but rising to become a Master Mariner and Captain of large trans-ocean cargo ships, may seem an unlikely background for one who rose to become Hon. President of The Cairngorm Club, but such was Robbie's versatility that he achieved that. Born and brought up in Aberdeen, he went on to navigation school. He met his wife-to-be Judy as the flatmate of a friend of one of his fellow navigation school pupils. They married in 1972, while Robbie was still spending most of his time at sea. Judy was already an active member of the Club, and Robbie joined in 1974. Even after giving up touring the world as a ship's captain, Robbie kept up his maritime links, including a leading role in oil-pollution clean-ups, serving on the Peterhead Harbour Board, and becoming President and later Hon. Treasurer of the Nautical Institute.

Robbie and Judy part-owned with friends a caravan at the Braemar Golf Course, and became very much adopted into the Braemar community, especially after Robbie retired from his work at sea. Robbie came to serve on the East Area Board of Scottish Natural Heritage (appointed for his maritime background and his knowledge of the hills and environmental matters) and was a founder member of both the Upper Deeside Access Trust and the East Grampian Coastal Partnership. He was a keen singer, with the Stonehaven Choral Society. As a lay preacher well known in and around Braemar, he was sometimes asked to deputise in church services at Braemar and Crathie, including taking the service for Prince Charles and Camilla the day after their marriage. He was a tireless Rotarian charity stalwart, with efforts ranging from Scotland to Uganda.



It was in 1986 that Robbie first joined the Club committee, and then in 1993 he began a marathon 12-year stint as Huts Custodian. In 2003 through to 2005 he played a key role in the project to upgrade Muir, to make it disabled-friendly, with a disabled toilet, wider doors, an enlarged kitchen and a new water supply; for this he was elected an Honorary Member, and later Honorary President. Robbie loved the hills but was limited in what he could do by back problems. After a period of more serious illness, in which he never lost the sparkle that was a feature of his conversations, he died in September 2025, survived by his wife Judy, two daughters and two grand-daughters.

Steven Pollock

by Kevin Adam

Steven had a fall while climbing with a friend at Steall Gorge Crags in April 2025. Emergency help was quickly on the scene, mountain rescue with their doctor, but he could not be saved. Steven was 37 years old.

Steven lived a great life in Fort William with his devoted wife Sarah and his lovely children Millie, ten, and Hamish, five years old.

Born in Wick in 1987 where the family had lived for generations, he moved to the Aberdeen area when his father took an oil industry job, attending Portlethen Academy. Although diagnosed with dyslexia, Steven went on to do well at school, then studied Electrical Engineering at Robert Gordon University, eventually reaching Chartered Engineer level and gaining rewarding work first in the oil industry, then the Fort William smelter, and more recently designing wind farms for the renewables sector.



While in Aberdeen, Steven joined the Cairngorm Club around 2018, having dabbled a little in climbing and hillwalking before. Joining the club introduced him to a wealth of people also very keen on climbing, and Steven was a regular at the weekly outings to the sea cliffs, Pass of Ballater, and the nearby mountains of the Dubh Loch, Lochnagar and the Cairngorms, rapidly gaining skills and moving up through the grades. Although very busy with work and family, Steven was very

focused, and Sarah was always happy to give him the time for his

passion. Steven took every opportunity to climb. He was dedicated to being in the best climbing condition, was very fit, and rose early every morning to visit the gym before work.

Steven and I were great friends and we had many great climbing outings, initially in the Aberdeen area, then further afield in Scotland and the islands, and also overseas.

Steven joined the Scottish Mountaineering Club for the opportunity to climb with experienced people and join in with the events on offer. He took part in the SMC organised 2025 International Mountain meeting at the CIC Hut in March 2025 and was delighted to climb with some top internationals. Winter climbing was his favourite pastime, and he was progressing through the Scottish climbs.

Steven was so much more than just a climber though. He was a great father and husband. He was very bright and was passionate about many things. Funny, loyal, capable, enthusiastic, dependable, driven, simply a great guy. He left us far too soon.

John (Jack) Connell

by his family

Jack and Peggy Connell, who were active members of the Cairngorm Club for over 30 years, both died peacefully during 2025 and both at the age of 98.

Mike Duguid tells us that, as they became less able to tackle the more challenging outings, they were instrumental in setting up the 'Mid week walks' that are still popular today and are sometimes referred to as "Connells". They both participated in the Centenary celebrations of the Club in 1987.



Jack undertook a solo walk across Scotland, from Mallaig to Montrose, in 1996 (with support from Peggy), an account of which was published in the Journal in 1999.

John Hay

by Richard Shirreffs

John Yeaman Leslie Hay, the son of two Club members Leslie Hay and Mrs Mina Hay, was born in Aberdeen in 1938 and died on 18 August 2025. He must have found a love of the hills in his teens, joined the Club in 1954 aged 16, and joined the committee in 1958. The Club History records "In the mid 1950s John Hay emerged as a climber of no little repute. He climbed extensively and led half a dozen Severe to Hard Severe new routes on Creagan a'Choire Etchachan, both in summer and in winter. Severe climbs on Coire Sputan Dearg, Coire Brochain and Sgoran Dubh also added to his achievements." The 1957 issue of the Club Journal names John as leading seven first ascents, including one with Tom Patey. When 18, he joined the SMC as its youngest member, and is mentioned in their 1958 Journal as achieving the first winter ascent of Ebony Gully in December 1957. All of this when he was not yet 20.

John trained as a lawyer and joined his father's firm Cooper & Hay. He became Club Secretary in 1962, serving for 5 years until Eric Johnston took over. He was less actively involved in the Club in his latter years, but he continued to love the outdoors and over the years managed to acquire a number of small cottages in remote locations. He remained a member of the SMC and was latterly regarded as their "Father of the Club" and "Master of the Malts". He is survived by his wife Elizabeth, also a Club member, and by three children, three grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

The Club has also received notification of the passing of the following former members:

- Fred Belcher
- George Howie
- Joyce Hancock
- John Inglis
- Robin Kay
- Douglas Orr
- Helen Ross

We will miss each one and wish to share our condolences with their families.