

The Cairngorm Club Journal



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The Cairngorm Club Journal

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Drawings by James Will

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This is the first number of Volume 18 of the Journal, and is also the first to be brought out by a new editor.

Volume 17, no. 93 was the last one to be edited by Dr R. L. Mitchell. Dr Mitchell joined the Club in 1935, was on the committee from 1938 to 1945, Librarian from 1945 to 1969, Editor from 1954 to 1969, and Vice-President from 1950 to 1952. He has been a most distinguished Editor of the Journal. His many wide travels enabled him to bring a world perspective to matters pertaining to mountains, and his high standards and good literary taste helped to maintain the Journal at a fine degree of excellence. He has a lasting and deep devotion to the Club, and it was most fitting that, at a recent Annual General Meeting, he was made an Honorary Member.

The present Editor, having accepted the arduous responsibilities in a moment of weakness, feels totally inexperienced to follow such a man, and has already tasted some of the frustrations of the Editorial chair, the greatest one being that of extracting material from contributors. For months nothing is submitted – then, suddenly, the flood gates open, and a veritable inundation occurs!

For the sake of the future well-being of the Journal, I should like to appeal to members to keep me supplied with a steady stream (rather than a sudden flood) of material, so that the next number might appear two years from now. As before, articles should in general be from 1,500 to 3,000 words in length. Black and white photographs need not, in the first instance, be larger than contact prints, provided the negatives are available. Shorter articles, poems, etc., would also be welcome.



Greenland 1970

Two Accounts of a Recent Expedition by the Ladies Scottish Climbing Club

I ANNE CORDINER

As one grows older, there is some consolation in the fact that one becomes 'better off', one becomes more independent – or does one? It seems to me that if one is a reasonably mature citizen, one is also inclined to get bogged down under increasingly heavy commitments and responsibilities

So, it was with a light heart and spirit that on 24 July 1970 I took my seat along with five friends in a Boeing 727 at Glasgow airport. Half way to America and little more than five hours later, amid a cloud of dust and a hail of stones, we dropped in the glow of the midnight sun to a gentle touch down on the rudimentary landing strip at Mestersvig, and stepped out into the fresh nip of the Arctic air – we were in East Greenland at last.

Greenland is a country much written of in prose and verse, yet how little the average person knows of it. One of our expedition was asked if she was going hitch-hiking when there! The biggest island in the world, it is administered by Denmark, inhabited by Greenlanders (descendants of Erik the Red), Eskimos, and a few adventurous Danes. It has over 4,000 miles of mountains, and most of it, apart from the coastal fringes, lies under perpetual snow or ice. Then for a few brief summer weeks it becomes a veritable United Nations, a paradise for the adventurer who wants to get off the beaten track, who wants, like his forebears, to taste complete interdependence.

The Ladies Scottish East Greenland Expedition 1970 numbered twelve. Besides other British expeditions, there were also French, Germans, Italians, and Danes, and we all met at Mestersvig, the only point to fly to on the rather inhospitable east coast. After that, we could scatter – into hundreds of miles of barren, inhospitable tundra, along fjords liberally filled with ice, among hundreds of the most fantastic glaciers and mountains it has ever been my privilege to behold. The land had primeval beauty, and was truly awe-inspiring, on a scale which in the end we accepted, but never really became accustomed to. It was also raw and savage – geography in the making. At night, resting aching muscles in often uncomfortable camp sites, one lay listening to the creak and groan of the living ice below, the thump and clatter of boulders, as, toppled from their perch, they would come

bounding down glacier, cliff, or moraine, the grind and crunch of ice in the fjords or the splash as 'something' broke loose and fell in.

Cares dropped away as one welcomed the sun, all day and well into the night! In such a savage land, one marvelled at the finite beauty of nature. The delicate flowers growing amidst jumbled boulders, the almost tame white hares (what did they find to eat?) contemplating these strange top-heavy two-footed creatures, the tireless energy of our feathered friends as they picked delicately for insects – there must I suppose have been something other than mosquitos to live on!

Every day seemed fully occupied. As we split into groups, achieved our various ends and regrouped, the situation had its own special brand of humour. Some of us travelled during the day, some overnight and the resulting confusion as to whether one was due breakfast or supper was quite hilarious! We could still be confused when some, emerging sleepy eyed and befuddled, having just got up, met others who had just dropped by for lunch.

The food itself was quite a masterpiece – I could only admire the thoroughness of our commissariat, who saw to it that we had scarcely a tin in our many and varied boxes! The fresh invigorating air and the excitement of never quite knowing what one would find meant that one could go on for 15 and 20 hours at a stretch – equally one could sleep for the same length of time, if allowed to!

We had a 12 foot Avon Redshank with a small outboard engine. It was a necessity, not a luxury. In it the expedition were ferried past uncrossable river mouths, some indeed travelling over 60 miles back from Alpefjord to Mestersvig in her. At other times, she enabled us to have a rest from walking, and a grandstand from which to sit in crowded comfort and view the breath-taking scenery as we chugged along.

In this way, five of us travelled to the end of Alpefjord, through the narrows created by the junction of the Gully and Sefstrom glaciers. It was quite an exciting journey. The moraine, pushed out ahead of the ice, rose as an island in the middle of the passage, large boulders reared up, waiting to catch the propellor of the careless boatman. With ice cliffs several hundreds of feet high often casting a few tons of ice into the green waters of the fjord, we kept a respectable distance from them, choosing the landward passage. Here was comparatively plain sailing, providing one remembered the rocky walls on this side often disgorged large boulders, perhaps as the sun touched some higher part of the cliff. These would ricochet down the gullies with resounding crashes and bangs, usually ending on the scree slopes below. Opposite the incoming streams, one could feel the boat being pushed around by the force of



In Alpefjord, approaching the narrows, where the Gully and Sefstrom glacier meet the water



Base Camp: Schaffhauserdal

[photos by Esmé Speakman

the inrushing water, belying the volume which 'appeared' to enter the main fjord. Just to make certain that we did not 'gawk' overmuch at the intriguing scenery, there were patches of ice to be dodged – indeed once or twice one had to fend off miniature icebergs, or even cut and lift the engine and paddle with the oars, not as easy a task as it may sound with five people and all their gear for camping, climbing, and food for five or more days! Again and again we were fascinated by the bird-like shapes which the translucent green ice seemed to weather into.

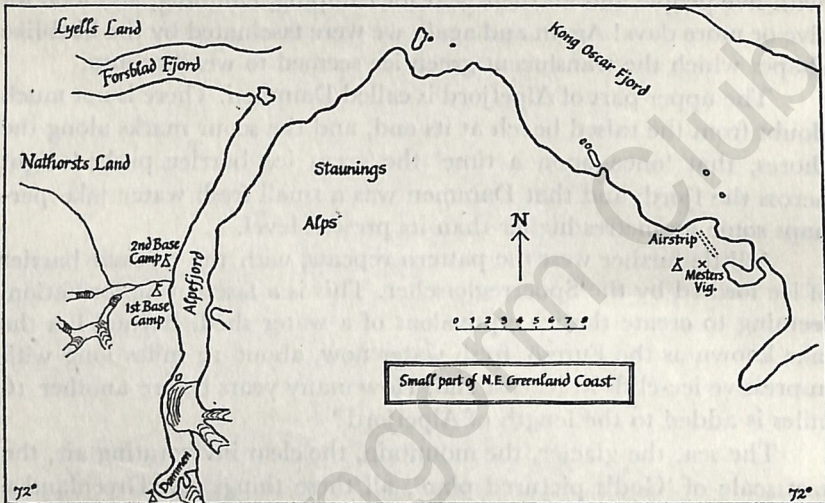
The upper part of Alpefjord is called Dammen. There is not much doubt from the raised beach at its end, and the scour marks along the shores, that 'once upon a time' the great ice barrier pushed right across the fjord, and that Dammen was a small fresh water lake perhaps some 20 metres higher than its present level.

A little further west the pattern repeats, with the colossal barrier of ice formed by the Spøerregletscher. This is a fascinating formation, seeming to create the ice equivalent of a water shed. Beyond lies the lake known as the Furesö, fresh water now, about 12 miles long with impressive ice-cliffs at its east end. How many years before another 16 miles is added to the length of Alpefjord?

The sea, the glacier, the mountain, the clear invigorating air, the vast scale of 'God's pictured plan', all these things give Greenland a unique attraction. In July and August, the mostly dry sunny climate with its 24 hours daylight give it a special appeal. Certainly Professor Blackie's words bear in upon one – 'In the big world, how small a thing is man!' One was very aware of how dependent on each other men are in these surroundings. Each member of the expedition had their own particular responsibilities. In addition, one had to know what everyone could do, and in emergency would do. Once embarked in an open boat, one was dependent on one's own skills to keep it going. Thus all expeditions with boats took a keen interest in each other's comings and goings. A camaraderie – rare except in times of major disasters – existed between all nations. One paid no attention to the minor quirks of colleagues, and hoped they paid none to yours! You slept, camped, walked, climbed, boated with anyone – the criterion being where you wanted to go, what you wanted to do, where you were needed, rather than who you would do it with.

In this day and age, it is refreshing to take part in a true adventure. By good planning, you hope to scale down the risks to acceptable proportions, by using your intelligence you can add to your comforts, by using your powers of observation you can add to the interest of the long forays inland over moraine and glacier. Camera and memory forever

record the views, the play of sun, cloud and shadow over mountain and sea. The hours of backpacking, the mosquitos, the often chilly hours spent in bivvy on a glacier, these fade and are forgotten; remembered is the new dignity of man, the new patience as taught by the elements, a renewal of faith, and the pull and lure of the Arctic.



II GRETA SUMMER

'Greenland? What is there to do there exactly?' was the reaction of a friend when I said where I was going last summer. Somehow it did not seem a very relevant question. The problem had always been how to get there, not what to do when I did. It was nearly nine years ago, one winter's night outside Aberdeen High School that, for me, the idea of an expedition to Greenland was born. For a long time it was no more than a dream, but when in July 1970, after months of planning and preparation, I boarded a plane at Glasgow airport bound for Iceland and thence to north-east Greenland, I finally believed that this particular dream was about to come true.

Greenland was so named by Erik the Red in 984, and the saga tells that 'he thought people would all the more desire to go there if the land had an attractive name'. But it was to the south-west corner that Erik's name referred, and certainly, as we flew north along the East coast to the landing strip at Mestersvig (Latitude 72° N), there was nothing green about the land we saw. In the distance, to the West, the ice-cap glistened white, and huge glaciers stretched out like tentacles towards

the coast. Beneath us broad barren valleys had been gouged out, and they glowed reddish brown in the evening sunlight. Easier, perhaps, to understand how the Englishman John Davis, in 1586, came to name this continent the Land of Desolation.

Yet in the few days we spent in the vicinity of Mestersvig there were countless finds to give the lie even to this name. An early source of delight was the variety of alpine flowers. Within minutes of starting to take stock of our surroundings we had found clumps of mountain avens, Arctic poppies, a dwarf relation of the rose-bay willow-herb, several varieties of saxifrage, purple, yellow and white – and this was only the beginning. Another day, on the rocky coast to the north of Mestersvig, I was startled to find myself being inspected by a pair of bright eyes set in a sharp pointed face. It was a silver-grey Arctic fox, head poking over a rock rib no more than a few yards away. Seconds later a ptarmigan appeared from among the grey rocks, very similar to the Scottish variety except for noticeably hairier legs – no doubt a useful extra protection against the winter snow! In the bay, a gaggle of barnacle geese were sedately making their way through the water. No, the land may not be particularly green, but neither is it wholly desolate.

The days around Mestersvig were but an interlude. The main scene of our activities was to be in Nathorstland on the west side of Alpefjord. To get there involved a boat journey north along Kong Oscar's Sound. After a welcome brew-up at the tiny hunter's hut at Cap Petersen, we turned west into an arm of the Sound called Segelsällskapet, and then bearing South, into Alpefjord itself. The whole of this part of the fjord system was first explored and mapped by the Swedish explorer A. G. Nathorst in 1899.

Our base camp was established on a pleasant site (except for the ubiquitous mosquitos) by the Schaffhauserdal delta. As well as providing a grandstand view of the Staunings Alps across the fjord, it was a great place for birds. A pair of skuas dive-bombed all intruders on their patch to the south of the camp, while down on the shoreline, turnstones, ringed plovers, sandpipers, long-tailed duck and barnacle geese were to be seen. Of land birds, snow buntings were common, and in the valley above base camp we sometimes saw a Greenland wheatear, rather larger and rosier than the European variety. Higher up, a second camp was placed in the angle between the Sudvestgletscher and the moraine of the Sandgletscher. From this camp it was possible to explore both glaciers, and also to climb the long ridge leading to the summit of Ardvseck, so named by Donald Bennett.

The Sandgletscher, once we had worked out how to get on to it by

veering to one side of its spectacular snout, provided an easy walk on dry ice. The prospect ahead was tempting indeed, and we had great hopes of finding a route up a peak at the head of it. From a distance it looked as though there was a rock ridge which might 'go', or alternatively, there might be a route up a steepish snow slope on to the plateau, which would enable us to approach the peak from the other side. Ideas on what was feasible were steadily modified the nearer we got to the snow slope, which proved to be split by vast vertical crevasses half concealed in soft snow. The rock ridge also looked more intimidating from near to, and the rock all seemed horribly loose. A shaft of sunlight falling on the side glacier to the north lured us further in search of a possible snow route in behind the rock buttresses, but once again it was not to be. And on the other bank of the side glacier a semi-circle of rock rose sheer – and shattered – for some three or four thousand feet. The message was inescapable: if we wanted to climb a peak at the head of the Sandgletscher, we did not start from here! Still, it was a great day for photography, if not for climbing.

At this point perhaps it should be explained that when one talks about 'a day' in Greenland, one does not necessarily mean a day in the ordinary sense. The term might mean a night, or a day and a night, or a day and a night and a day. People writing up their diaries were quite often to be heard asking 'How many days is it since yesterday?' A day might be defined as the interval between wriggling out of one's sleeping bag and snuggling back into it – but that could imply some very short days indeed. Probably the best working definition is to say that a day is a period of time in which something noteworthy happens.

One such day started after supper, when we chugged away in the boat to visit the upper reaches of Alpefjord. It was usual for the wind, which during the day would whip up white horses on the water of the fjord, to drop in the evening, so conditions were best for boating then. An hour or so brought us to the narrow strait between towering rock on one side, and the ice cliffs where the Gully and Sefstrom glaciers abut the water on the other. From time to time hunks of ice calve off the glaciers, and some of the larger ones proceed like stately ships along the fjord. Steering through the litter of smaller lumps of ice we had to cut the engine and take to paddling, fending off the sharp-edged pieces from our inflatable rubber boat. After the narrows the fjord broadens again into what was probably once a lake at Dammen.

Only a few hours after beaching the boat on the sand at Dammen, we learned that one of the French expedition had met with a mishap. Thus it was that my first glimpse of the mysteriously beautiful inner

lake, the Furesö, came after stumbling across the tumbled ice and moraine of the lower Spøerregletscher carrying an awkward load of assorted sections of a collapsible canoe. The glacier here spills across the fjord, damming it completely, but the canoe was needed on the inner lake. As luck would have it, within twenty-four hours I was to relive that glimpse of the Furesö in the early morning, but it lost none of its magic. After helping to bring the injured man across to the outer fjord, thus ending a long day even for Greenland, we had one of the few spells of bad weather. Hemmed in by dark peaks, in stormy weather this waste of sand and stone at Dammen did indeed look the part of a Land of Desolation. Yet even here, the white Arctic hare was managing to find enough to live on.

Back at Schaffhauserdal we had a second foray up the Sudvestgletscher before evacuating the higher camp, and transferring base camp by boat to the other bank of the delta. Around the new camp we found many handfuls of the soft inner wool of the musk ox, and hoofprints too, but no sign of the beast himself. The summer is short in these latitudes, and already the flowers were fading. The blaeberrries ripened and their leaves turned red. As winter approaches the tundra turns woolly, and to capture the diffuse glimmer of sunlight seen through the fluffy grey cloak of the dwarf willow became a challenge to the photographers.

There was time for one more climb before the boat trip out to Mestersvig. After a lazy start, with a snooze in the sun in a sheltered corner with a patch of blaeberrries to hand, we scrambled up the moraine and on to a glacier which led, like a broad highway, to the peaks beyond. After a while we left the glacier, and cramponned up a steepish couloir to gain a rock rib, which in turn gave us access to the ridge. Sights were set on two protruding rock fingers which, from below, looked like the highest point. The snow on the ridge was deep and soft, and the ridge went on and on. By this time we were used to distances being deceptive in the very clear air, but were scarcely any better at estimating them. Eventually we reached the rock fingers, to find that the ridge went on, impressively corniced on one side, and soon curving steeply away on the other. But at last, just after midnight, the ground no longer rose in front of us. There, with the sun low in the red-streaked sky to the north, the frozen peaks of the Staunings Alps etched sharply in the shadows to the South, and far below, the still waters of the fjord an eerie ice-green, it seemed that time stood still. I thought of the friend who had asked, 'Greenland? what is there to do there?' That night there was no need *to do*, it was enough simply *to be*.

Hill walking in distant lands

BETTY ESSELMONT

When my husband retired, we decided to see something of the world before settling down to a more placid existence. Being still active enough to do some walking (though I expect I must be among the oldest Cairngorm Club members) we tried to see hills and country places as well as the conventional city sights normally visited by tourists.

In Australia, one of our first visits was to the Snowy Mountains. To most people the Snowy Mountains conjure up visions of a vast irrigation project, and that is what the majority are taken to see. It certainly is an enormous undertaking, providing water for irrigation and power for industry.

The greater part of the mainland of Australia lies in the dry belt which encircles the Southern Hemisphere and Australia is the world's driest continent. The average rainfall is 16.5 inches compared with 26 inches for all land surfaces of the world. The greater part of the mainland of Australia has an average rainfall of less than 10 inches and the total flow of *all* Australian rivers is only about half that of the Mississippi. So it is vital that full use should be made of Australia's meagre water resources and an important step towards this is the series of colossal dams which since 1949 have been made, and are still being made in the Snowy Mountains. The plains of the Murray and Murrumbidgee valleys lie on the fringe of the dry heart of the continent and separating them from the south-eastern coastal strip of Australia are the Snowy Mountains, which are the highest land mass in Australia and are snow covered for five or six months of the year.

We spent two nights at Cooma which is about 60 miles from Canberra, and on the intervening day we decided that instead of visiting dams and powerhouses we would climb as high as possible somewhere, and get a good view of the Snowy Range. Cooma used to be a small town and the quiet centre of rich grazing lands. Now as the headquarters of the Scheme it has grown, from 2,000 to 10,000 inhabitants.

It lies 2,662 feet above sea level, so it was quite cold there, and even colder at Thredbo to which we drove on our free day. We went up, first through agricultural country and then among foothills covered with gum trees. The road is called the Alpine Way and is very beautiful from the point of view both of scenery and of construction. It is still a little raw about the edges but somehow that does not seem to matter so much in this country where everything is new and spacious.

At Thredbo Alpine village which, it is said, brings a breath of Switzerland to the Australian bush, we left the car and went up on the Crackenback chairlift to above the snow level. Here we started walking up and up over the vast expanse of snow. We had not meant to go much further but just to reach a good viewpoint. It was such a lovely day, however, that we were tempted to go on and on. A few skiers were about, but we soon left them far behind. The snow was in good condition for walking though occasionally we went through the surface and sometimes we met a slippery patch. We climbed one ridge after another and eventually arrived at the top of Ramshead which is 7,189 feet high. We had a beautiful view of Mount Kosciusko, the highest point in Australia and about 100 feet higher than where we were. We might have been tempted to go on to it if we had been sure of the condition of the snow, and had had more time. As it was, we had been climbing steadily for two hours and had done almost all the things one should not do on a hill! We had told no one where we were going, we had not taken any food, and we had neither an ice axe or even a walking stick between us! Our only merit was that we had a compass with us and we were properly clothed. But it was many years since either of us had done any snow climbing and I certainly never expected to do it again. The view was quite breathtaking with sparkling white snow all round and not a soul in sight. The only sign of life I saw was a solitary spider sitting all alone on the waste of snow – and tracks of something like a rabbit. Our descent was uneventful, if occasionally slippery, but by digging one's heels in, it was quite easy, and we felt very pleased with our efforts.

From Canberra we flew to Brisbane to visit cousins, and while we were there, they took us to spend a week walking in the Lamington National Park. Australians we found do not as a rule walk anywhere, certainly not in towns, but they do walk in their national parks. Queensland has been very far seeing in preserving for all time great stretches of the Australian bush, and Brisbane is very fortunate in having several of these within easy reach.

Captain Cook made a voyage of discovery up this coast in 1770 and reported that inland it was high and hilly, and he was much impressed with one hill which he called Mount Warning, a majestic peak of rocky grandeur. It is 3,480 feet but there are many other hills which are even higher to the south, west, and north of Mount Warning. In April 1930, the National Parks Association of Queensland was formed and a National Park conscience was aroused in the mind of the man in the street. In 1936 the Government recognised the public demand, and decided to spend public money in providing graded walking tracks in

the parks. By 1945, more than £31,000 had been spent on over 100 miles of graded tracks in the Lamington National Park alone. The ultimate ideal is a Scenic Rim – a 90 mile crescent-shaped rim of mountains within a radius of 60 miles from Brisbane. This is still a vision of the future. But 48,000 acres are set aside at Lamington in the magnificent McPherson Range country. Of this, only about a quarter has been properly explored and the rest is still original bush. All animal, bird and plant life is strictly preserved in the area. The mammals are mostly nocturnal, such as possums, but occasionally a wallaby can be seen. Lizards are often seen and one of our party saw a black snake – which got out of his way with great rapidity. There are over sixty species of birds, including parrots, and bower birds, which make themselves a bower in the undergrowth and always have something blue in it, such as blue berries or flowers, or even the blue top of a pen. We also heard a whip bird which makes a noise like the crack of a whip, a bell bird like a tinkling bell, and a cat bird which mews exactly like a cat – a most eerie mournful sound.

In the park there are two main types of forest – Rain Forest and Eucalypt Forest. In the Rain Forest there is a dense canopy of interlacing branches through which only an occasional shaft of sunlight penetrates to give a splash of bright colour. There is a softly diffused light at noon, giving way to an early twilight gloom, and, at night, to absolute total blackness. Wind as well as sunlight is reduced, and the air is cool and moist. On a cold day, it may be warmer within the Rain Forest than in an exposed area. Grass rarely grows, and beneath the dense mass of undergrowth the forest floor is covered by a layer of fallen leaves and twigs. There are dozens of different species of trees, and I was very interested to see that there were varieties of kinds known to us, such as brown alder, antarctic beech, tulip oak, and brown pine: but the leaves were nothing like our oak or beech. In fact the leaves were all very similar, and the difference is in the wood. There are numbers of climbing plants which twine themselves round the trees, such as the lawyer vine which can attach itself with barbed prickles. They usually start at the top of a tree, from seed dropped by birds and throw down a lattice work of cordlike roots. When these roots cross, they fuse together. They increase in size and finally strangle and kill the parent tree. Because of the lack of light, no large branches are formed below the main canopy, but the trees often develop large buttresses at the base of the trunk.

Walking all day in the rain forests one could feel oppressed and shut in. But they are interspersed with patches of Eucalypt Forest,

which is largely made up of gum trees, tall straight trees which may reach 150 feet. They have the curious characteristic of keeping their leaves, but shedding their bark every year. As the undergrowth in the Eucalypt Forest is much less dense, much more light penetrates.

The National Parks have an excellent series of well made tracks, and this has opened them to walkers. The undergrowth is so thick that progress without a track is very slow indeed, and lets one see the conditions with which the early pioneers had to contend. If they cut a path through the jungle it was quite liable to be overgrown again before they returned. Also if one ventures off the path, one is liable to fall victim to a tick. These unpleasant insects fall off trees or branches, and bury themselves in one's flesh and suck. The correct treatment is to put a drop of methylated spirit on them and then remove them with a tweezer.

But worse than ticks are leeches which, fortunately, only come out in wet weather, and we had beautiful dry sunny weather during our visit. Leeches look like caterpillars an inch or so long, and they gallop up the victim's leg at great speed until they find a suitable spot to suck, when they swell to three times their normal size. However they can be dislodged by sprinkling salt on them.

Two points struck me specially about hill climbing in Australia. One is that there are not the beautiful ridge walks we have in Scotland or the Lake District, because the tree level is much higher and nearly all the high ground is covered with trees, so that very little view is obtained except at certain view points. Another is the shortness of the daylight. In June it is dark by 6 o'clock, and even in their summer I believe it is quite dark by 8, so that the days are comparatively short.

There are two places one can stay when walking in the Lamington Park. We were taken to Binna Burra Lodge on the edge of Mount Roberts. It was started in 1934 by a man called Arthur Groom who has written a most interesting book about the district. There is a memorial to him at the Park Entrance which says simply 'To the memory of Arthur Groom 1904-1953, a man who loved and understood the bush, and found his happiness in sharing it with others'. The lodge is now run by his three sons who manage to give it a very happy family atmosphere. It consists of log cabins each of which has a lovely view. The view from ours extended from the top of Mount Roberts, across the plain 2,000 feet below us to Mount Flinders and the Pacific Ocean 30 miles away, beyond Surfers Paradise. The lodge also has a large dining room, at one end of which there is a circle of comfortable chairs round an enormous log fire. We were very glad of that fire in the evenings for the nights at 2,000 feet up were very chilly in June. The

descriptive brochure states, after listing all the possible activities, that if you are over sixty you can still amble along beautifully graded paths. They are going to alter this to sixty-five after our activities there!

We spent six days at Binna Burra, partly with our cousins and partly by ourselves, though the latter is hardly correct, for by the end of our visit we felt everyone there was a friend. It is said that in the McPherson Range National Parks 'the myriad mysteries of a sub-tropical jungle have been exploited to create friendly liaison between man and man, and man and the wilderness', and this is very true. We set off after an early breakfast taking a packed lunch with us. We were soon initiated into Australian picnics. The chief feature of these is that a fire has to be lit, a billy boiled, and tea made in the billy - tea with a delightful smoky aroma. To settle the tea leaves you either swing the billy round your head or, if you are timid, tap it with a stick. With wood lying around everywhere, there is no difficulty in getting a fire going. Nearly everywhere in suitable picnic spots (and these are limited in number, in that land of thick undergrowth), a fireplace of stones has been constructed, and one is expected to leave a suitable pile of sticks alongside it for the next comer. It is also essential to see that your fire is properly extinguished before you leave, because of the danger of forest fires. We walked for miles in the forest every day, and visited waterfalls, gorges, caves, giant trees, and high mountain lookouts with superb views over the surrounding country. We were lucky enough on our last day to be able to take part in one of the Binna Burra organised expeditions which take place about once a month. We were a party of ten, three of whom had been over the route before, two of them many times. The first part of the expedition was simple, consisting of 6 miles along one of the beautifully constructed paths through the Rain Forest. The last part of the path ran along the top of a mountain ridge known as Ship's Stern which ends abruptly in a steep precipice. This is one of the mountain lookouts to which I have referred, and from it most people retrace their steps and go back the way they have come. Not so our party. One by one we plunged over the precipice. It looked a sheer descent, and there was quite a tricky bit of rock to begin with. However, by dint of advice from the more experienced, we all got down that successfully. Then came an easier bit to give us a respite, but this was followed by about 30 feet of precipice, and for this we were attached by a safety rope, and one by one we crawled and edged our way down while one of the experts held the rope at the top and the other shouted good advice to us from half way down.

There followed an easier section, such as we have often traversed

on Scottish mountains. Rock climbing I never had done, and never expected to do at my advanced age, but you never know what you can do till you try! Certainly I have never seen anything like the next part. The descent now came to a 30-foot sheer rock face and the method of descending that was to lean over an overhanging ledge, clutch the top of an adjacent gum tree, drape yourself round it, and slide down to the earth beneath! Actually once you were safely attached to the gum tree, it was quite easy, but the nasty part was reaching out into space to find it.

The rest of the descent to a saddle was easy, as was the gradual ascent to the next hill, known as Turtle Rock. Near the top of it, we stopped for a very belated and welcome lunch. The next exploit was to get us down the sheer face of Turtle Rock which was done by abseiling. Only two of the party had ever done this before, but after the initial plunge backward over the cliff, I found it quite fascinating. All the party reached the bottom in safety, except for two members who refused to try and had to be taken home by a long and circuitous route. The Groom family were very pleased with our exploits, for they said we were the oldest couple they had ever taken over the route.

From Australia we went to the South Island of New Zealand where we were very impressed by the beautiful Fjord country on the west coast. We found it very difficult to do much walking here however. All the planted forests were labelled 'keep out', and there were no old drove roads or rights-of-way with attractive paths through the hills.

We spent a few days at the Hermitage at the foot of Mount Cook, but here there had been a recent fall of heavy snow and walking among the tangled undergrowth was very difficult. Our one real walk was at Queenstown, once the centre of the gold mining area, and now a holiday resort. It is about 1,000 feet up and the snowline was at 2,400 feet. There are many familiar names around. We lunched at a restaurant above the snowline on Ben Lomond and, during our wanderings, we passed Ben Nevis! A short afternoon climb took us up Queenstown hill on a good path – at least it would have been a good path if the weight of snow had not broken branches of broom across the track. Even more difficult to negotiate was a species of prickly shrub which also lay across the path. By dint of scrambling over this we finally emerged over the tree line and the scrubby undergrowth to see a wonderful panorama of snowclad peaks surrounding the beautiful lake Wakatapu, on the shores of which Queenstown is built.

We had one other day's hill walking on the North Island on Mount Tongariro on the fringe of the thermal area, and near Mount

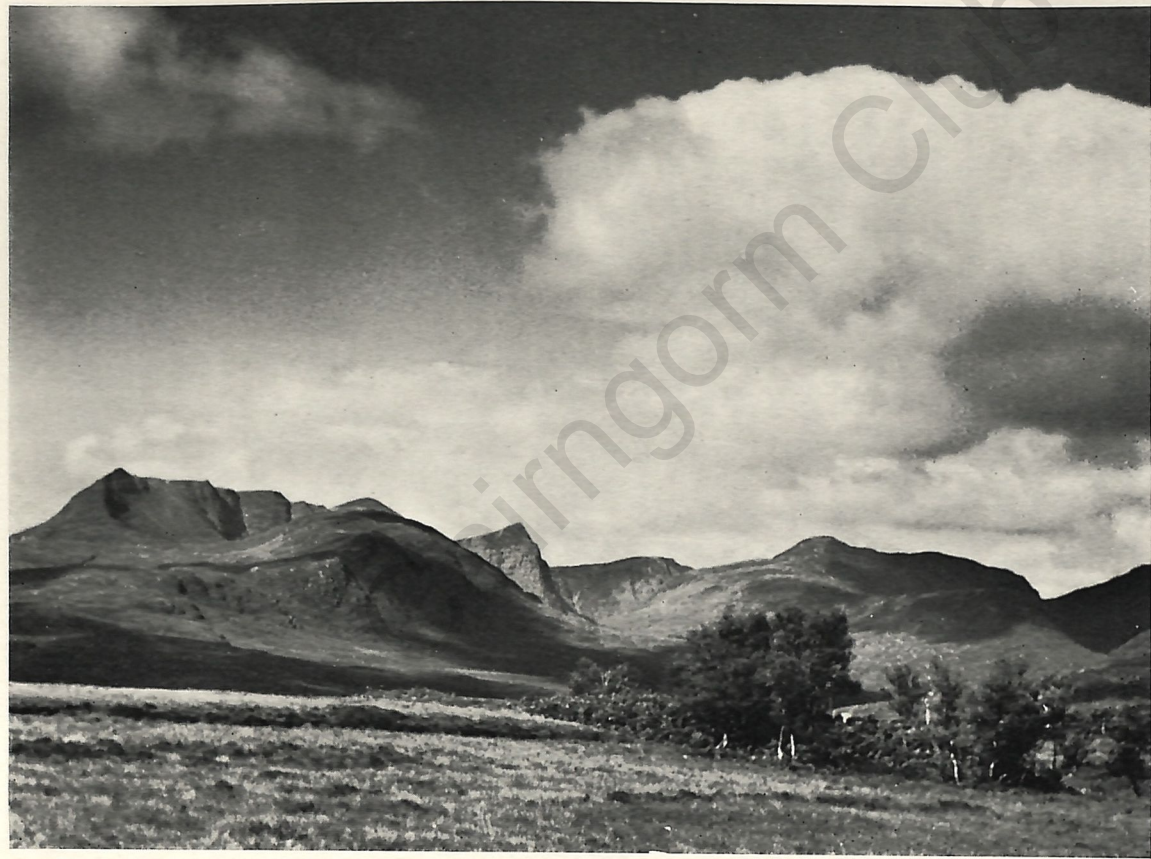
Ngauruae, an active volcano which belched forth smoke continuously. We had a most enjoyable two hour climb up a narrow mountain path through thick scrub to an area high on the hillside at about 4,500 feet. Here steam was rising in clouds from numerous hot springs and pools. It was awe-inspiring to see the water bubbling and gurgling, but not half as terrifying as the boiling mud pools we saw later at Rotorua.

From New Zealand we flew to Fiji and then to America, and here we visited the most beautiful place I have ever seen. This was Moraine Lake in the heart of the Rockies. We spent some days there and would gladly have stayed much longer in this calm and beautiful spot. It is a few miles from Lake Louise, one of the main tourist centres, but as there are only a few cabins at the Motel at Moraine Lake, so there are very few people about. There are one or two well constructed hill paths, one leading up the valley of the Ten Peaks below the lofty snow clad summits. Another track climbs for a thousand feet through the forest to the Valley of the Larches, green and pleasant, at the foot of the snowy crags and fissured glaciers.

I would have enjoyed walking in this mountain paradise very much more if I had not expected to meet a bear round every corner! We were told that they had never been known to attack anyone on the trails, but if you happen to get between them and their cubs, they can be dangerous. We saw several black bears on the road. They tend to frequent roads in the hope of being fed, though there are notices everywhere warning tourists not to feed them as it is bad for them not to eat their natural food, and also they can turn nasty if they do not get all they want! There had been two grizzly bears around the rubbish dump at Lake Louise all the season, and I would certainly have hated to meet one of them face to face!

We saw the Rockies in the best possible conditions in early September, with the snow-topped crags outlined against a cloudless blue sky and reflected in the emerald waters of the lakes, and the mountain streams cascading in foaming waterfalls. To me they were the most memorable scenes of the whole tour.





Coigach peaks

[photo by *Donald Hawksworth*]

Madrigals and Mountains

RICHARD C. SHIRREFFS

For a group of hill-minded students who wish to recuperate from a bout of examinations, there can surely be no better course of treatment than a week in the hills. So last Easter a group of eight of us set off for six days' climbing centred in the Ullapool Youth Hostel.

The first morning saw us raring to go, but we were none too confident of the weather, the cloud being fairly low. As we left Ullapool, the hill we had chosen as a mild starter to the week, Ben More Coigach, was still capped with cloud, but by the time we set off from the car it was showing signs of clearing. To give the cloud longer to lift we tackled first the adjoining top, Beinn Tarsuinn, which offered some interesting views up towards Stac Polly but was otherwise largely a trudge towards an ever-receding top. By now the cloud was definitely rising, leaving us in no doubt that we should go on. On the east ridge of Ben More Coigach we unstrapped our ice-axes, but the snow turned out to be mostly of an ideal firmness on which walking was almost as effortless and safe as on a staircase.

We were disappointed to find no trig point (one O.S. sheet marks one, but the other gives only a height), and perhaps we omitted the most interesting part of the hill by not going along the arête to Garbh Choireachan, but the cloud was threatening to come down again. However we made up for this omission by glissading down a long snow slope. The boldest amongst us, after comparing the coefficients of friction on snow of his trouser seat and polythene, produced his brilliant orange polythene bivouac bag and was in a few seconds far below us, but for the rest of us it was the slower wetter process of lying on our backs on our cagoules!

The next day the weather was still not what we desired for some of our loftier objectives, so it was decided (as it could not have been more misleadingly expressed by one of us) to 'nip up' Stac Polly. Most of my readers will know, I am sure, that although it barely reaches 2,000 feet Stac Polly is not the sort of hill for any but the fittest to 'nip up'. The ascent with its several rests was not particularly eventful, but at the east top we had to sit through quite a snowstorm when we could not even take out our madrigal book to pass the time. When eventually the snow went off, we had a marvellous view to the north as the ground, now slightly white with fresh snow, gradually came into sight through the cloud still swirling around us. The walk along the ridge of Stac

Polly, now with a lot of thin fresh snow as well as deep pockets of old, called for considerable care and often agility, which made it all the more satisfying to scramble up the final low buttress to the summit.

As we expected to be back at the car in plenty of time, we had not carried lunch with us, but the hill was more of a climb than we had foreseen and we lost a lot of time sitting out the snowstorm, so we ended up lunching at about 3 o'clock on a sandy beach on the shores of Loch Lurgain. Some 20 yards offshore was a small island which aroused the exploratory instincts of one of our group and led to the discovery of a new use for bivouac bags – as waders. We saw later from an old 6-inch map that this island had once been accessible by stepping-stones, a much less exciting way to cross water. Perhaps the island was a favourite spot for climbers to relax after tackling Stac Polly.

On our third day we at last woke to find the sun out and the clouds away from Beinn Dearg, one of our objectives now revealed for the first time and looking very enticing in its snow-cover. Despite the favourable weather three of our eight did not yet feel fit enough for the proposed round of four Munros, so we were only five who made an early start from the head of the Glen na Sguaib forestry road.

We very soon came on to extremely hard snow, the result of the night's severe frost, and quite low down we were having to cut steps, though often hard kicking was enough. Our route took us, at a rate varying considerably with the texture of the snow, on to and along the ridge bounding Glen na Sguaib on the south-west. The many small corries cutting into the ridge were topped by spectacular snow cornices, and it was a relief to be able to walk the length of the ridge following a stone dyke which we assumed to be built on terra firma.

We reached the top soon after 1 o'clock. The few clouds there had been earlier had now dispersed, and we had a marvellous view in all directions – away to the east we could make out the sea horizon of the Moray Firth (some 75 miles away) and to the south-west, white hills seemed to stretch infinitely into the distance. Although the map indicated a trig point we could see only a curious hemispherical lump of snow about 5 feet high with a deep crescent-shaped trough cut out by the wind around one side. Whatever was underneath, this lump made a useful place to lay a camera for a delayed action shot of all of us.

From Beinn Dearg down the slope to the col at the head of Glen na Sguaib was quite hard going on steep snow, sometimes icy, sometimes soft to quite a depth, and we were glad we had not chosen this way up. As the way back from the next top, Cona Mheall, took us past the col again we were able to leave our rucksacks there and stroll un-

laden to the top. Back at the col we thought Meall nan Ceapraichean looked no distance away, but it turned out to be one of those long plods up a gentle but relentless gradient. However, it was an interesting walk with rocky edges on our left and smooth snow slopes to the right. In the changing light the hills to the north made an even more impressive view than earlier, most of them clearly identifiable by their distinctive shapes, and all looking much more isolated than when one is in amongst them.

The descent off Meall nan Ceapraichean was rather tricky, as the snow would change abruptly from a deep layer of soft snow, to ice right to the surface. A run down the snow was certainly out of the question. Fortunately we usually managed to avoid the hardest ice and only once or twice had to cut steps. When we reached the foot of this slope, we were in some doubt about whether still to tackle the fourth top, Eididh nan Clach Geala. It involved, so the map said, only some 500 feet of climbing, but time was wearing on as we had taken longer than expected over the last descent. In the end because it was such a fine evening, we settled to take in the top.

Although the conditions underfoot were really good (consistently firm snow which you could walk up like stairs) the climb seemed as if it would never end – probably by now we were all a little tired – and we began to doubt the map. But what a marvellous view rewarded our perseverance. The sun was just setting over distant An Teallach and tingeing with pink the snow-capped hills to the north. And away to the north-west we could see some of the Outer Isles projecting above the sea horizon. I need hardly say that the silence was broken not a few times by the clacking of camera shutters.

Our descent to the car was quite brisk as the light was now fading. We followed the ridge down until the snow was broken by patches of heather which made the going awkward, and then dropped to the path in the valley, which brought us back to the car just as the last light faded.

The next day, although the weather was again good, we preferred a less strenuous day and chose to go up the coast to Achmelvich, stopping off, of course, at the bakery in Lochinver. At Achmelvich we spent some time exercising that little known but most useful public right which exists in the Scottish foreshore – the *ius spatiandi*. I conceive that there is a conspiracy amongst the powers that be to conceal from the public this their right to spaiate (?) on the area between high and low water marks of ordinary spring tides, perhaps in the hope that the right will eventually be lost by desuetude. However I trust that members of

the Cairngorm Club will heed the objects of the Club and the fact that the foreshore may be a useful means of access to certain Scottish mountains, and that they will now energetically use the foreshore for recreation and whatever else the ill-defined term *ius spatiandi* may include.

We were hoping for a third good day when we might tackle An Teallach, but next morning there was no disputing that any form of ascent was ruled out, and after a long period of indecision we decided to walk up the Gruinard valley. As we left the cars we wondered if the weather might not after all break up, and we got some 5 miles up the valley quite dry, chatting with much mirth about schooldays. However when we reached the point where the river flows out of Loch na Sheallag the rain began. Had the bridge promised by the map been still there, we would probably have taken a different route back, but its lack was perhaps fortunate for the rain very soon settled down to a persistent wetting drizzle and any other way back to the cars would have been slower (and wetter!) than the way we had come. Back at the hostel we found we were not the only ones to have experienced the rain, and as a place of popularity the drying-room was second only to the stove. The hot water pipes were quickly given a colourful lagging of steaming socks.

Next morning the weather had improved and indeed was sufficiently good to entice two of the girls in our party to go down to the quay at about 7 o'clock to see if they might buy some fish fresh off a boat. As I was usually first to be up and get coffee brewing, I was therefore somewhat surprised, at the time when I was beginning to wonder if the girls would ever get up, to see them outside carrying something. Apparently their offer to purchase had been countered with a 'Take these, they're slightly damaged and we can't sell them'. Whatever the fishermen may have thought they were certainly better than any from a shop.

The weather, though fair, was not settled enough for going high, and we agreed to visit Loch Sionascaig behind Stac Polly, said by one of our party to be one of the finest lochs in Scotland. With its many arms it certainly must have one of the highest ratios of perimeter to surface area. Our first stop was at the crest of the ridge linking Cul Beag and Stac Polly, not for a rest but for a short spell of madrigal-singing (this was the first day when we had both remembered to bring a madrigal book and had the weather to open it). We did wonder if we might disturb any wild life, but we were conceited enough to think we had better voices than the native grouse. After this we followed a route,

sometimes track, sometimes rivulet, through the Black Grove to the south-east end of the loch. After crossing some hummocky ground we came down to a stream which looked uncrossable because it had a deep sandy channel and was too wide to jump. But we came upon a tree which though broken or fallen had continued to grow horizontally half in the water and reached almost right across. Happily we all managed to negotiate this far from ideal bridge without falling in.

For lunch we found a little shelter from the biting wind by the ruins of a shepherd's cottage, of which there had once been several here. This shelter did not, however, avail against the hailstones which interrupted our eating. Hailstones have an uncanny ability to bounce and penetrate everywhere, and for once even a bivouac bag was found useless.

After this we were never without showers, but in between the sky was quite clear and Loch Sionascaig was as blue as the Mediterranean ever is. This area is an exceptionally beautiful one, with Stac Polly and Suilven dominating much of the scenery. It would be wonderful to do a complete circuit of the loch from near Inverpolly, but we were tied to return to the cars and had to cross the loch by the only bridge in the area at a point where Loch Sionascaig proper is linked to one of its eastern subsidiaries by a narrow channel. The crossing was rather hazardous as the bridge consisted of a plank 15 feet long with the cross-section of a railway sleeper and was set above deep water at right angles to the strong gusty wind. There was one limp wire for a hand-rail, but we managed to achieve a feeling of security by pulling the wire taut (it was well anchored at each end).

As it was still quite early when we reached the cars and as it was the last day for four of us we decided to celebrate with afternoon tea at Achiltibuie. Here, though we seemed to be the only visitors that day, we were made very welcome and willingly served with fine home baking and as much tea or coffee as we wanted, in a most comfortable lounge.

That night there was a fairly heavy fall of snow, but fortunately (perhaps unfortunately!) not enough to keep us from moving on. As we did not wish to go straight back to Aberdeen by the way we had come, the four of us who were leaving chose to go by Poolewe-Gairloch-Kinlochewe-Achnasheen. The road in some of the higher parts near Ullapool demanded considerable care because of the snow, but further west on ground more exposed to sea breezes the snow disappeared. The weather was neither good enough nor bad enough to inspire much photography and apart from road works and Good Friday traffic there was little to hold us up, so we arrived at Achnasheen in time for lunch

at the Station Hotel. As hostelling need not be a culinarily deficient way of spending a holiday (if travelling by car I like to take at least a pressure cooker and a French coffee percolator) we would have been quite happy with a light snack, but in the end we opted for a proper lunch in the hotel dining-room, where we fed very well.

To conclude our holiday (apart from an uneventful drive home) we entertained ourselves over coffee in the hotel lounge by listening to the delightful, if unconventional, tuning of the hotel piano.



March into Everest

MYLES MORRISON

When Sir John Hunt led his expedition to Everest in 1953 he followed the route which had been discovered by Eric Shipton in 1951. Mr Shipton, who is now in his sixties, and as active as ever, led a party over the same ground in November 1969 – a kind of sentimental journey through the most beautiful country in the world, to the heart of the Everest region. I was fortunate in being one of the lucky two dozen to share this memorable experience, particularly as I had left India in 1946 and never expected to see the Himalayas again.

Planning started well in advance, and as soon as news of it got around, such a long waiting list built up that another party of similar size was organised under the leadership of W. H. Murray, who had been on the 1951 reconnaissance with Shipton. The augmented numbers were an advantage on the chartered flight to India, but in Nepal the two parties travelled quite independently and some considerable distance apart, to conserve the limited camping sites available. So Shipton's party got away from Katmandu pretty smartly, leaving the others to do a bit of sight-seeing for a couple of days around the capital.

In Nepal the main rivers run from north to south, and as our course was mainly from east to west we had to journey across the grain of the country for many days. This involved a long trek, moving camp every day over another watershed, and no serious climbing was contemplated even as a diversion. The main valleys are very deep, the rivers through the foot-hills being only a few thousand feet above sea level; and as we advanced, the intervening ridges became progressively higher, so that most of us acclimatised naturally. This was an inestimable advantage when we eventually reached the strenuous going in the loose moraines of the Everest region, where the air is much thinner than we are accustomed to at home.

We were equipped with an assortment of two-man tents which seemed rather light and flimsy by Scottish standards, but proved to be quite alright in use. All had sewn in groundsheets; and we had light foam rubber mattresses under our down-filled sleeping bags, which were invaluable on the hard and stony camp sites which we frequently encountered.

In November in Nepal we had about eleven hours of daylight, usually bright and sunny, to thirteen hours of night so we were never short of sleep, particularly at the higher camps.

Our seven sherpas, the sirdar, two havildars and four cooks were always on the go at dawn and quickly drummed up porridge and hot tea, etc. They made porridge out of whatever was handy at the time, rice, barley, and occasionally something very like oatmeal or crushed maize. Biscuits, butter, cheese and jam completed a light meal, and very soon we were off in two's and three's carrying only 10 or 12 lb of personal kit in a rucksack, while our 30 lb kitbags were being picked up, two at a time, by our porters. Meanwhile our sirdar and his henchmen supervised the striking of the camp, the cooks cleaned up their pots, other porters shouldered the tents and camping gear and the camp site was left spotlessly clean for whoever might next come that way. Only the smoke blackened 'cooking stones', in groups of three, were left to mark the spot.

In an hour or so I would be overtaken by the cooks, singing at the top of their voices and going at a jog trot, the smallest sherpa laden with a jangling pile of cooking pots. This little chap Dorje, always carried an ice axe, or sherpa tin opener, as a kind of status symbol, and was never seen to use it even as a walking stick.

The cooks were sprinting ahead, to have the early lunch simmering on a wood fire by the time the main party caught up with them, around 11 o'clock. This was always an enjoyable and substantial picnic, usually by a stream, with the sun high in the sky. We might spend anything up to two hours at such a spot; washing, bathing, writing, or just basking in the sunshine. We were always loth to cut it short, even when our next camp was far away.

Our usual aim was to make camp about 4.00 p.m. and earlier if possible, as there was generally a lot to do on arrival. The cooks were always well up, and brewed up tea in no time; and while the second mug was going down the tent porters would begin to drift in. While the tents were being pitched the cooks would be starting to make soup and stew, and the scent of this on the air would bring in the baggage porters, many of whom put on a spurt over the last hundred yards as a gesture. And soon the sun would swing over the hill and we were due in the 'mess tent'. This was just a big fly-sheet, open all round and scarcely big enough to hold everyone standing and squatting inside, under a temperamental Tilley Lamp. Visions of cigar smoking Sahibs, enjoying a quiet rubber of bridge under such conditions, gave rise to more hilarity than regret, as we called it a day.

After ten days or so of this idyllic existence, we came steeply down to 5,200 feet to cross the gorge of the Dudh Kosi, the river which drains all the southern area of the Everest region, and the course of which we

were to follow northwards for the next five days. So far we had had only one glimpse of Everest, very far away.

Coming down to the suspension bridge, I saw a big chap coming up with a party of Sherpas, and he soon proved to be Sir Edmund Hillary, walking briskly to Katmandu. He and Eric Shipton are old friends, and it was an unexpected pleasure to share their meeting. In a medieval country like Nepal, with only hill tracks running through it here and there, one is bound to meet everyone who happens to be on the move in a given region; and this happy encounter was not so remarkable as it might seem.

Following the Dudh Kosi upstream one sees very little of the river except when crossing it occasionally. The track climbs high above a succession of gorges, traversing a few villages built on the easier slopes above. Here the forest leaves had been touched with frost, and their bright colours were enhanced by the occasional snow peak outlined against a clear blue sky. We were blessed with fine weather, after the monsoon and before the serious onset of winter; and the snow line seemed to recede ahead of us almost as fast as we advanced northwards.

In a few days we reached Namche Bazar, 11,300 feet, and took on fresh porters, all sherpas and several sherpanis, for the harder going ahead. They were a happy crowd, mostly related to our seven trusty men who had joined us in Katmandu, and they made light of their bulky loads.

Next day we pitched Camp 15 at Thyangboche Monastery in the compound of the Guest House. The Monastery stands on a knoll at 12,715 feet, just above the tree line, on one of the finest sites imaginable. We were hospitably welcomed here, and as we had been going steadily for fifteen days we were all glad to call a halt and enjoy a rest day in such very beautiful surroundings. Snow peaks tower above Thyangboche on all sides, the most striking feature being Ama Dablam 22,494 feet, barely seven miles away, to the east.

But the eye was inevitably drawn north-westwards to Lhotse and Nuptse, with the summit of Everest above and beyond them.

The lamas of Thyangboche had a herd of yaks, and we hired a couple to carry firewood to our higher camps. These animals, apparently so leisurely in their movements, seem to go better the rougher the ground, and it is by no means easy to keep up with them going uphill or over moraines.

From Thyangboche one can only go downhill, and soon we were at the Imja Khola and heading up the far bank towards the last few villages this side of Tibet. The trees were soon left behind, and

as we reached the upper yak pastures, now brown and bare, the country underfoot began to resemble the Cairngorm plateaux. Although we were now 10,000 feet higher than the Cairngorms, ground conditions were quite similar, due to the difference in latitude. Our luck held with regard to the weather, and the days continued bright and clear, with scarcely a breath of wind. As soon as the sun set, frost clamped down on the camp, and at all the higher camps our drill was a good hot meal at dusk, then straight into the tents and our sleeping bags to keep in the heat, and ensure a comfortable night.

The Khumbu Glacier which flows southwards from the Lho La on the Tibetan border, and is fed by ice from the Western Cwm of Everest and several tributary glaciers, is so heavily covered by moraines in its lower reaches that it has no perceptible snout.

It stirred the imagination to think that under perhaps 50 feet of stones and boulders, there might be several hundred feet of almost stationary ice. Higher up of course the ice shows through, and the moraine ridges become sharper and more unstable. One keeps as close as possible to the crest of the ridge, above the slipping and falling stones, which range in size from pebbles up to massive blocks as big as the Shelter Stone.

At Camp 17, which was a little higher than the top of Mont Blanc, many of us began to feel the altitude enough to slow things down a bit. Next day at 17,000 feet we reached a beautiful frozen lake on the glacier, where melt water had accumulated in a large hollow; and we pitched Camp 18 on a shelf above the lateral moraine, and overlooking the lake, to the west of the Khumbu Glacier. There was an easy ridge twelve to fifteen hundred feet above the camp, and after lunch most of the party went up, and were rewarded with really spectacular views of Everest and its neighbours.

The weather remained perfect, with all the famous peaks standing clear against a blue sky. The top of Everest was just a few miles away to the east, and from 18,500 feet, and seen across the trough of the glacier valley, it seemed difficult to believe that it was still 10,000 feet above us. Only the favourable weather had enabled us to get so high on this rocky crest, where we were safe from all local hazards. From Pumori, Nuptse and the lower slopes of Everest, avalanches were coming off at frequent intervals from hanging glaciers topped with monsoon snow. The upper rocks of Everest had only a dusting of snow on them, as it never consolidates at that altitude, and is constantly being whipped away in the wind.

We stayed two nights at Camp 18, which was within striking

distance of the 1953 Base Camp Site, near the foot of the Ice Fall. This had been our original objective when we set out from Katmandu, and most of us wanted to finish the job. However, having been higher the previous day, under such ideal conditions, the slog up the glacier was rather an anti-climax, although the weather continued to be kind. The historic camp site, on a large patch of moraine on the glacier, is of course only a map reference. Even had the camp been left standing as a memorial of the first ascent, it would have been swept away long ago.

As an alternative Eric Shipton kindly offered to lead a small party up the west side of the glacier, and on to a spur of Pumori, to get a better view of the Ice Fall. I opted for this attractive programme, but towards mid-day I realised I had reached my ceiling the previous afternoon. The tigers went on to 19,000 feet, as far as it was safe to climb, while I remained below looking down on the Base Camp Site and photographing the Ice Fall. I strolled back to Camp at leisure, just in time for tea, an undeserved bonus which the others unfortunately missed.

On the way home we got an airlift in small planes from an alpine meadow at Lukla above the east bank of the Dudh Kosi. This again was only possible because our good fortune with the weather continued till the end.

Summing up I would say that stamina, and the will to keep going day after day are far more important than technique, in the conditions we met with in Nepal, and I feel sure that many members of the Cairngorm Club would have enjoyed this experience as much as I did.



Rock-climbing on the North-East coastline

ROBIN J. GRANT

Autumn 1969 saw the production of a booklet which many Aberdeen climbers had awaited for several years – a revised and extended edition of the Etchachan Club rock-climbing guide to the North-East coastline of Scotland originally produced in 1961. In this article I should like to comment on the new guide, and at the same time give my own impressions of some of the climbs mentioned in it.

The guide includes a comprehensive account of the climbs in the Longhaven area, about 30 miles up the coast from Aberdeen. A few descriptions and gradings seem to me misleading. 'Shelf Route', leading to the top of the Plateau, is described as a 'Moderate' grassy shelf, providing 'the pedestrian way to the top in the nesting season', but it looked to me very loose, earthy and dangerous. In the main quarry, the route I enjoyed most was certainly the traverse of Scimitar Ridge from north to south, which provides a good variety of climbing and an exhilarating walk along its knife-edge crest, where, however, protection is difficult to arrange. For this reason, the best way to take a complete novice up to the top is probably via the connecting ridge which runs up from the saddle between Scimitar Ridge and the main coastline further back. Lochan Buttress also gives a good climb, in a series of steps, though it is awkward to reach the notch from which the climb starts unless one is descending the north end of Scimitar Ridge. Because of its relative shortness – 40 feet or so – it is similar in character to many of the good Souter Head climbs, though in general the rock in this quarry is not as clean or reliable as elsewhere at Longhaven, and certainly not as good as that at Souter Head. The Longhaven Circuit gives a marvellous expedition of about 700 feet, and because of its diversity I found it one of the most satisfying routes in the area, though it does not have any great technical interest.

One of the places where a description in the guide-book seems most misleading is in the next climbing area to the south – Red Wall and Quarry. On two occasions I have attempted to find Slab Wall, following the description and diagram in the guide, but I have yet to find the huge boulder referred to. There is a huge rock which protrudes from the bottom of a slabby face just to the north of the artificial platform in the middle of the quarry, but to get launched from here on to the face itself would certainly be more than 'Difficult'. Of the other climbs in the quarry, McLeod's climb is probably worth doing – the smooth wall

referred to in the guide can be climbed directly, or passed on the right – but the line of the climb is rather artificial and it certainly does not merit recommendation.

Stepped Ridge provides an excellent introduction to the climbs on Red Wall. Most of the difficulties before the last pitch, however, are avoidable – the short penultimate pitch, described as the crux in the guide, can easily be turned on the right. A little loose rock on the direct finish thereafter can be avoided by taking the variation to the left, though this does not provide such an elegant or satisfying finish to the climb. By far the best of the Red Wall routes which I have done, however, is Diagonal Crack. This is a superb line, following a crack high above the sea, and although the climb is technically fairly easy, the seriousness of the route is certainly sufficient to justify its ‘Very Difficult’ grading. The description in the guide-book is, I think, unnecessarily complicated – it is much easier for the second to belay from the Dais than from 15 feet above it, and the leader can bring the second up to a point just above the mantelshelf, using a piton belay if necessary.

A little south of this is the Alligator, where some of the best rock anywhere on the North-East coastline is to be found. Of the main climbs, Alligator Crawl and Viper’s Drag provide definitely the best routes to the crest of the ridge; of these, Viper’s Drag seemed to me to be the harder. The Parted Jaws provides an interesting problem at the start, where a small climber is at a distinct disadvantage, but it is easy after the initial overhang and so lacks the perilousness of a bona fide ‘Very Severe’. The last move of the V-climb is very awkward and, I think, merited the climb’s ‘Mild Severe’ rating in the old guide, though it has now been downgraded to ‘Very Difficult’. An alternative finish to this route is to climb the steep step on the left about 8 feet below the notch, thus gaining a slab leading easily to the crest of the Alligator ridge.

The most natural way to gain the cliff-top from the ridge is to climb out the last pitch of Alligator Crawl. In the old guide-book, this was graded ‘Very Severe’ due to a confusion about the exact line of the pitch, and although it has now been downgraded to ‘Severe’, the confusion has not been cleared up. The guide refers to ‘two slightly converging cracks’ but the easiest route is to follow the obvious fault to the left, leading to a steep finish. It is unnecessary to use the fixed peg for direct aid, and it is probably unwise to use it for belaying at the neck; there is a good place for a metal chockstone instead. Seller’s Sortie provides a very sensational alternative to the last pitch of Alligator Crawl; the situation of this route rivals that of Diagonal Crack, for

after the horizontal traverse the climber is directly above the sea. In many ways, it would be a much more serious lead even than Diagonal Crack, for it is certainly much harder technically, and there seems to be little choice of protection. There is a slight ambiguity in the guide as to the exact line – it is difficult to say whether ‘climb corner to top’ means that the climber should keep to the crack beyond the edge leading upwards, or whether he should climb the edge itself. It is probably much more satisfying to keep to the edge, which is cleaner and more photogenic, but there is one loose rock which should be treated with due respect. Lovat’s Escape involves an interesting move at the start, but is more an academic than a natural line, joining Alligator Crawl and Oboe.

Apart from Lovat’s Escape, the three climbs on the Back Wall mentioned in the guide are all graded ‘Difficult’: Rhino, Piccolo and Oboe. A better and more enjoyable route, not described in the guide, is a variation which we named ‘Cello’ (to fit in with the general musical nature of the cliff). This route, also about ‘Difficult’ in standard, starts as for Rhino by climbing the initial 15-foot rampart, but instead of following the slabby ledges into the recess in the middle of the wall, it ascends the prominent crack sloping up to the left. This leads through a narrow entrance into a large sentry-box just short of the top of the cliff, which provides an excellent stance with a grand situation. As a variation on this, the sentry-box can be entered from the seaward side; a direct start to this, from the foot of the Gangway, is an attractive proposition and looks feasible, but the first few moves would be very awkward.

One of the big additions in the new guide-book is the section on the Grey Mare Slabs about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile south of the Bullers of Buchan – described as providing ‘the finest slab climbing in the Longhaven area’. Unfortunately the description in the guide of how to find the slabs is rather misleading, and I spent quite a while one afternoon looking for them without success. They are described in the guide as below the coastguard station, but in fact they lie on the seaward side of a fairly large promontory just to the north of it. The slabs certainly looked as though they would provide some really good routes, of a longer and more varied nature than the Scimitar slabs.

The other part of the coast on which I have enjoyed some good climbs is the area around Souter Head; what the climbs here lack in length, many of them make up for in character and situation. There is quite a significant difference, however, to be noted in the grading of these climbs in the guide-book. A climb at Souter Head will in general

be much harder technically than a route of the same grade at Longhaven. While it is understandable that a grading should attempt to take into account the length and seriousness of a climb, it is a little discouraging for the average climber, who may be tackling 'Very Difficult' routes at Longhaven without too much trouble, to have to struggle with a 'Moderate' or 'Difficult' route at Souter Head. Typical examples of climbs here which seem much harder than their grade would suggest are Slab Top Chimney ('Moderate'), the Left Wall of Long Step Crack ('Moderate') and the Arête ('Very Difficult'). This latter climb is probably challenged only by Puffin's Overhang for being the finest and most elegant route at Souter Head. It is difficult to see, however, why this climb, harder now than a handhold at the start has disappeared, is still graded, as in the old guide-book, 'Very Difficult'. I think the awkwardness of the first moves would have justified up-grading the climb to 'Mild Severe', whereas as it stands it carries the same grade as Rainbow Crack, a much easier and less serious route.

Further up the coast, some very enjoyable routes may be had at the Black Rock Gulch, where is to be found what is probably the easiest worthwhile climb anywhere in this area, namely the chimney mentioned in the guide to the right of Astra. This is a perfect route for introducing complete novices to rock-climbing, for the rock is first-class, and although there are no technical problems, the situation of the climb is sufficient to give it character, with steep walls to the left and right. The route up the extreme left edge of Red Slab is also to be recommended – in the old guide it was 'Moderate', but there is a very awkward move half-way up, so it has now rightly been up-graded to 'Very Difficult'. One possible route here which does not appear to be mentioned starts just to the right of Red Slab and goes straight up past an awkward long step to finish in a right-angle corner. The best climbs, however, are probably Windy Ledge and Yellow Edge. Windy Ledge is possibly the more varied route, but the rock is definitely inferior to that of Yellow Edge, the situation and steepness of this latter climb being particularly impressive.

Starting near the Black Rock Gulch and running southwards along the coast is a fine traverse – the Purple Way. Although this is an enjoyable, open route there is only one awkward move, and it is difficult to see why it should have been up-graded from 'Difficult' to 'Very Difficult' in the new guide. The traverse leads to the foot of one of the best climbs in the area – the Plumbline ('Difficult'). This open route goes straight up a fine, steep wall above the sea and receives a lot of sun as it faces south. Though not technically difficult, the climb is

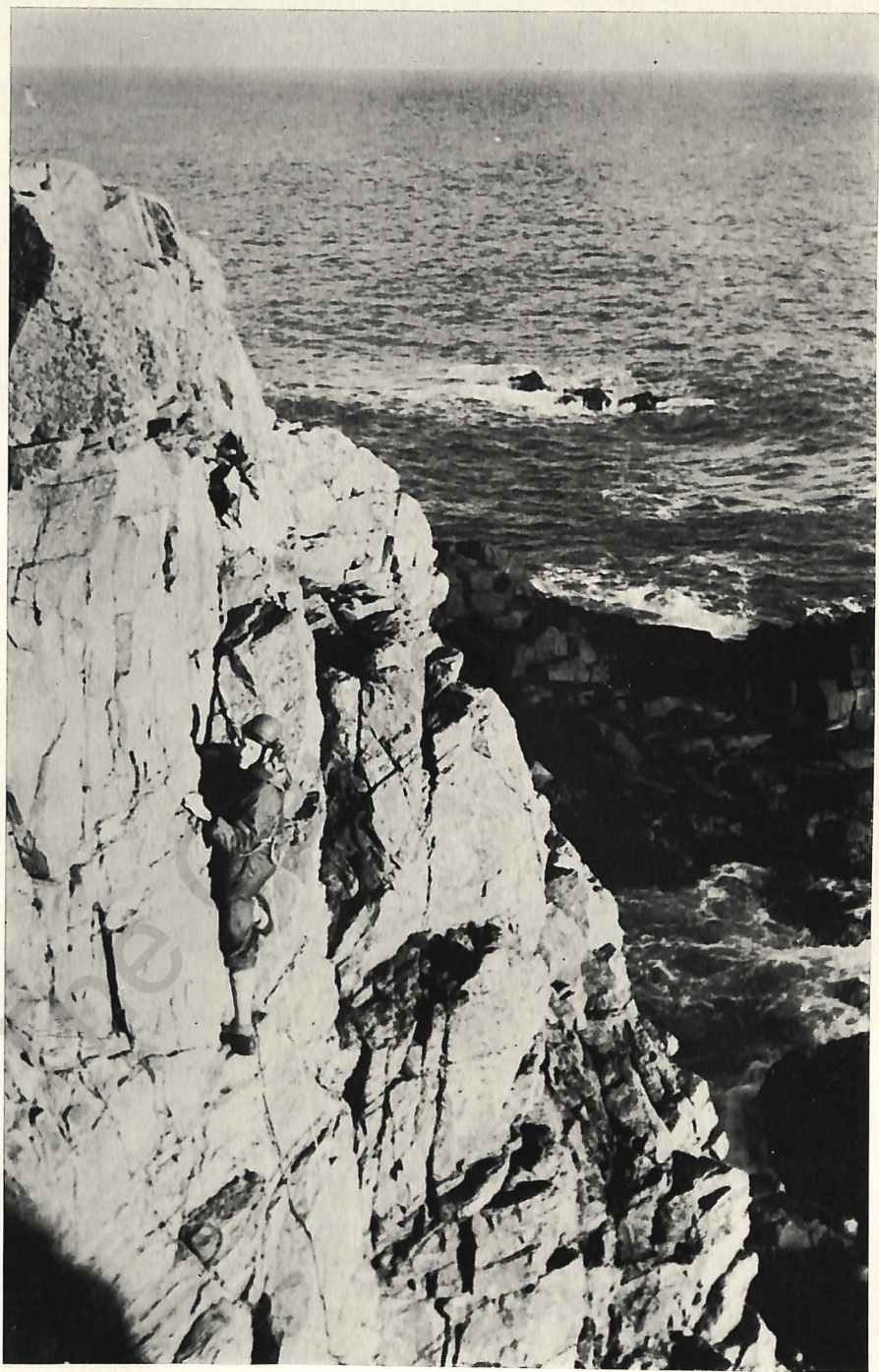
steep and satisfying, and for its grade probably enjoys the best situations of any route on this part of the coastline. The rock is excellent, and the holds, especially in the upper part of the climb, are like doorsteps. The only thing which worried me was the large detached block near the top over which the climber must pass, but so far this has shown no signs of moving!

Between the Plumblin and Souter Head itself the rock tends to be of poorer quality, but good rock is found again at Aitken's Pinnacle. This is an interesting climb, though often the pinnacle is cut off by the tide. Even when the neck connecting the pinnacle to the mainland is above water, the first few moves can be extremely slippery, so appropriate care should be taken. Further along, Nigg Wall and Nog Crack are pleasant, though rather short routes – the rock is particularly good on Nog Crack, but Nigg Wall has a fine finish up a slab straight above the sea. Milestone Direct is worth doing, though it has been spoiled by red and white paint on the holds, and the character of the route, I think, suffers from the fact that it is in a very narrow cleft and so the climb is often in shadow. Just behind the cleft is a pool, with the two traverses – these are short but good fun, the penalty for falling off being wet feet!

Just nearby is Rainbow Wall, a short but elegant route up a smooth, steep slab. Puffin's Perch, Rainbow Crack and Jimmy's Crack, all near the back of the cove, are also worth exploring. The Swing Seam, though shorter than the Arête, is of the same quality in rock and situation, but although it is graded 'Mild Severe' it did not seem as hard to me as the big routes of the cove.

Slightly further down the coast is another climb well worth doing – Overhanging Crack. This is a deceptively difficult route – the initial overhang is very awkward and it is a fallacy to assume that all the difficulty is over when this is passed. It certainly deserves its up-grading from 'Difficult' in the old guide to 'Very Difficult' in the new one. At the back of the large mass of rock which Overhanging Crack scales is Overhang Gully. At this point of the coast the rock has begun to deteriorate, but it is still fairly reliable here, and these climbs are worth exploring. Similar in character are the routes in the 'Chamonix Crack' area still further down the coast – these are situated on a fairly high, steep wall and give exhilarating climbs, but the wall faces north and so tends to be rather cold and sunless.

The areas on the coast which I have mentioned probably represent the most popular locations for climbing, but there are several other regions worth exploring – notably South Cove and Clashrodney,



Rock-climbing on the N.E. coastline

[photo by Donald Hawksworth]

which are fully described in the guide. In general, although there is not a great deal of difference between the old and new guides, those of us who rely on such a book to help us find the best climbs are very grateful to the Etchachan Club for this new edition. My only regret is that, having ascertained that the old guide was no longer obtainable, I had just finished copying out a friend's copy when the new guide was printed!



All the Munros (‘Quod erat faciendum’)

The veteran Dundee climber, Eric Maxwell (recently referred to jocularly as ‘pop of the tops!’), keeps the roll of those who have climbed all the ‘Munros’. His printed leaflets bringing matters up to date appear fairly regularly, with the ‘Q E F’ Latin tag at the head. Recently, three Club members attained the distinction of qualifying for mention amongst this august company, and their reflections at this critical stage in their climbing careers are printed below.

I IAN STEPHEN

‘What! Spend Saturdays toiling up hills when I could be enjoying myself at tennis or badminton? You must be joking!’ Just a normal reaction from an ‘unbeliever’? Yes, but that unbeliever was myself – just 15 years and 277 Munros ago. It took my friends Alex and Moira more than a year to persuade me to sample even one day in the hills. Why they should have bothered in the face of off-hand, even rude, refusals is a mystery; but their unselfish persistence has left me ever in their debt.

Finally I succumbed to an invitation to a May week-end based on Derry Lodge – provided that the girls in the party did all the cooking! That first day we lay in the sun, having lunch by Loch Etchachan. Obviously there was something to be said for the hills after all. Just one half hour later the rain had arrived, steady and relentless. It trickled down the back of my neck, dripped off the end of my nose, made my spectacles useless and soon proved that my boots (army, officers for the use of) were not waterproof – at least not in Scottish hill conditions. We plodded over Creagan a’ Choire Etchachan and squelched down the Luibeg burn. It was terrible – so was my temper – it was a lousy way to spend a week-end; we were so wet that it became, oddly, slightly amusing; before the end it was, incredibly, quite enjoyable – I was hooked, hooked on the hills.

That is the story of how my first Munro was *not* Ben Macdhui. In fact that first day on the hills failed to break my duck – it was explained that evening, carefully but sympathetically, that Creagan a’ Choire Etchachan, 3,629 feet or not, just did not count as a Munro. Consolation came just a fortnight later on Lochnagar with a scorching day and a magnificent all-round view. I gazed enthralled – to the north Ben Rinnes near my home area, to the west loomed the bulk of Ben Nevis, but the most vivid memory is of a slim white pencil to the east which

could only be Girdleness Lighthouse! The group descending Lochnagar that day was very happy, perhaps a trifle tired and certainly lobster red.

The years passed; the Munros accumulated, slowly at first and then more and more rapidly – the 100th in 1961, the 200th in 1965, while the 250th (Liathach) came on the club all-nighter in 1967. In extenuation for all this 'Munro-bagging', I must emphasise that the old favourites were not neglected – Lochnagar was climbed again and again, I stood on the top of Creag Meaghaidh on two successive days during the sun-blessed Easter Meet of 1968, while the lesser heights of The Cobbler, Morven, Mount Battock, Ben Rinnes and Bennachie proved just as enjoyable. By 1969, the end was in sight, though first must come the story of the day that I did not climb my last Munro, the day the Inaccessible Pinnacle lived up to its name.

That July week at the Memorial Hut in Glenbrittle, though the company was good the weather certainly was not – most of the time it was a struggle to see even the foothills. Robin had unselfishly postponed his final Munro so that we might finish in a contrived dead-heat, but it looked as though he might regret it. On our last possible day of that trip it started damp and windy and in Coire Lagan we couldn't even see the loch for the mist. Robin led us round to Sgurr Mhic Coinnich (my 276th) and back to the foot of the I.P. Here we were an hour late for a rendezvous with Pete Thomas – fortunately Pete had taken Terry up by Window Buttress and was just five minutes ahead of us. Pete was essential to nurse me up the last 40 feet, since I am a complete tyro on rock and had never before even had a rope tied to me!

The wind blew and the rain dripped down the rock (and our necks). Pete looked round at his motley crew, gave some last minute instructions and set off a little reluctantly up the 'short edge' of the Pinnacle. The wind still blew and the rain dripped down the rock more than ever and the one awkward step, the outward sloping ledge, was certainly not my idea of heaven! Fortunately for my peace of mind, Pete after one or two goes at the ledge decided (to the relief of most of us) that he would be daft to take any risks just to get a few 'Munro baggers' to the top, and a damp party retreated in good order to the glen.

The happy ending came just seventeen days later on our return to Skye when Pete took us quickly, efficiently and pleasantly up what in the dry and placid weather seemed no more than a scramble. The confirmatory photographs were taken – the end of an era for Robin and myself.

II ROBIN J. GRANT

Nothing disturbed the quiet mountain air as I pulled myself up from the steepest part of the pinnacle on to the flat roof, where the guide was belaying. I climbed past him to meet Ian Stephen, who was waiting for me. We proceeded to the top together, shaking hands cheerfully to congratulate each other on having climbed the Inaccessible Pinnacle of Sgurr Dearg in the Cuillins of Skye – and on having thus climbed all the Munros in Scotland. But was it all worth it?

It is not rare nowadays to hear fellow-mountaineers talking of 'Munro-baggers' with a definite note of contempt in their voice. 'Munro-baggers?' they say. 'They climb Scottish hills only in order to clock up another Munro, so that they can boast about how many they have done.' A mountaineer who goes as far as to collect tops, of course, is an even more despicable creature. To go actually out of your way to bring in all the tops of a mountain such as Ben Avon seems to them quite senseless.

But surely such people are missing the point. What does the average walker know of hills such as Bidean a'Choire Sheasgaich, Lurg Mhór, Ladhar Bheinn, A'Mhaighdean, An Riabhachan, Seana Bhràigh or Beinn Mhór in Mull? Huge tracks of land, notably Knoydart, between Lochs Nevis and Hourn, the area between Loch Maree and An Teallach, the hills at the heads of Loch Monar and Loch Mullardoch, and several other regions, remain virtually unexplored to the walker who is not a Munro-bagger, with the possible exception of the adventurous camper who has the time and equipment to explore the areas just for their own sake. The reason for this, of course, is that not only are these areas very remote and difficult of access, though not to the same extent as they were in Sir Hugh T. Munro's day, but also the mountains are not well known. Most walkers could place a mountain such as Bidean nam Bian on a map, but probably relatively few could pin-point Lurg Mhór. Poucher's 'Scottish Peaks' describes in great detail routes up famous hills like Ben Cruachan, Beinn Laoigh, Ben Nevis, the Five Sisters of Kintail, Liathach, or Ben Hope, but makes little or no mention of the remote, but in some ways more interesting, mountains in many parts of Scotland.

The second aspect in which the Munro-bagger gains more than the ordinary walker is, I think, in understanding and appreciating the character of a hill, which should surely be a very important factor among mountaineers. To achieve his aim, the Munro-bagger is forced

from time to time to climb in adverse conditions, conditions which might be sufficient to persuade any 'sane' person to stay off the hill-tops. Having motored the breadth of Scotland to climb a particular hill, he will not readily return empty-handed. The mountaineer who goes on a hill in bad weather will certainly have a completely different concept of its character from that of the fair-weather walker. In general, I feel that the former will have more respect for the hill concerned. For example, I climbed An Sgarsoch on a calm, warm, clear summer's day, with the result that it seems to me that it has little or no character, apart perhaps from its remoteness; but I am sure that if I were to re-visit this hill on a cold winter's day when the slopes were caked in ice, I would have more respect for it thereafter. On the other hand, Beinn Mhanach at the head of Loch Lyon I climbed on a misty, snowy day, but probably appreciated the hill more because of it.

Now that I have climbed all the Munros, I do not regret it one bit. Munro-bagging has introduced me to some very fascinating areas of Scotland – particularly Knoydart – and has given me a general concept of the topography of the Scottish mountains, thus enabling me to pick out my favourite areas and re-visit them. I would certainly support this form of mountaineering against anyone ready to condemn it, and I can recommend it to anyone prepared to try it.

III DONALD HAWKSWORTH

My last Munro was Culvain, climbed during a warm June traverse from Loch Arkaig to Loch Eil. There is no doubt of the sense of relief I felt on reaching this Ultima Thule. The daemon had been laid to rest, exorcised from the system! Now I can start to enjoy my climbing again! The question of 'What now?' arose. Some very energetic people have been round them all again – Hamish Brown three times. Then there are the 'Tops', and even the 'Deletions' – unfortunate hills eliminated on the revision of the Tables as being unworthy. No, I thought, I've been fanatical enough in climbing the 277 Munros – the 'Tops' don't interest me, the 'Deletions' even less.

I could, however, see more reason in polishing off the 3,000-foot tops 'Furth of Scotland', especially in view of the fact that I had climbed some of them already. The result of this decision was an unforgettable holiday in Ireland, where, in a week of exhilarating Easter weather, Patrick Scott and I made a whirlwind tour of the Irish 3,000-footers. These fall into four groups – Wicklow, Galtymore, Macgillicuddy's

Reeks, and Brandon Mountain in the Dingle Peninsula. The first two are gentle, rolling ranges; the Reeks rival our finest Scottish hills in majesty and spectacular rock scenery; Brandon, the most westerly 3,000-footer in the British Isles, looks out over the Atlantic, and is surely the only hill of this height to be graced ecclesiastically by having on its very summit the ruins of a small church – St Brendan's Oratory.

In my school days, I had climbed practically every Lake District fell except for Skiddaw. Perhaps the stern Baddely, whose famous guide book was my faithful companion during my boyish wanderings, had put me off, as he is rather severe in his criticism of this particular hill – unnecessarily so, I think, as I thoroughly enjoyed the climb one fine August day a couple of years ago.

Way back in 1947, I had traversed the Snowdon and Ogwen peaks of North Wales. I was glad to have the opportunity of revisiting this area to climb firstly the six Carnedd's, and then Y Garn and Elydir Fawr. The next milestone in my climbing career was reached when, in sweltering heat, I reached the cairn on the last named peak – all the hills 'Furth of Scotland' were in the bag!

I must confess that, on reaching the PM ('Post-Munro') stage, a certain incentive went out of my climbing – due to laziness? or old age? Whereas in my AM days, I would have gone to devilish lengths of ingenuity to fit in some remote, isolated peak, and would turn out in the most atrocious weather, achieving superhuman feats and epic walks just to tick one more off the list, nowadays, if the weather is not very promising, I feel inclined to have a rest day. I have also turned my attention to lower hills – Suilven, Cul Mor, Ben Resipol. Characteristic of my new attitude was the decision I recently made (encouraged by the author of part II of this trilogy) during a climbing excursion to Glen Dessary. The AM members of the party felt impelled to follow a most strenuous course round Sgurr Mhor, Sgurr nan Coireachan, and Sgurr na Ciche – Robin Grant and I (both revelling in the euphoria of the PM mentality) beheld a fine looking, sharp little peak up the glen (Sgurr na h'Aide), and felt a certain satisfaction in being able to ignore the Munros and climb another – but, no, I must avoid becoming consumed with the desire to start ticking off Corbetts! Perhaps I should finish off the 4,000-metre peaks in the Alps? You see, there's no end to it! Better rest content, and be grateful that I've been spared to finish the Munros, thus gaining an insight into some superb areas of Scotland, thereby immeasurably enriching my life.

Ruwenzori 1970 – an exclusive report

or

How I almost climbed to the top of the legendary, snow capped, remote, desolate, primeval, fabled Mountains of the Moon and failed to fall down a waterfall.

HAMISH NORBROOK*

The Ruwenzori are definitely still the hardest mountains in Africa to reach. Kilimanjaro is now considered generally to be quite a picnic – especially by people who have been up the Ruwenzori (though I gather that by about 18,000 feet most people consider that Epping Forest might have been a better choice of picnic spot). The whole process of organising an expedition up the Ruwenzori revolves not around the Uganda Mountain Club, who built the huts where you spend the nights, but on Bhimji's store in Fort Portal, where you buy the food, and John Mate, who organises porters and guide from Ibanda, at the end of the road.

Carelessly dismissing reports of two recent deaths from high altitude pneumonia ('You're sure you remembered to pack the Penicillin, Piriton, Chloramphenicol . . .') we set out at 2 in the afternoon. Seven minutes later we took a wrong turning and got lost. Three minutes after that we turned back – the car was unlocked. Meanwhile the porters filed past us. There were eleven of them plus one headman, by name Adoniyo. He spoke good English, though it was rather a problem that it consisted of only two sentences and the words Yes and No – normally in reply to the same question. Except for a slight habit of confusing hours with miles, which made little difference to the answers he gave about how far it was to the next hut, as normal speed was often one mile per hour, he was an excellent guide – quite up to Alpine standards. The pace he set was just right – seemed slow yet covered the ground very quickly but steadily. At the many times when we were in danger of falling he was excellent at sticking his ice axe into the rock and stopping us. We'll rejoin him in the middle of Bigo Bog.

A down-coming party told us they had taken seven hours to get up to the first hut, so we set off at quite a fast pace to get there before dark. At first the path lay through thick forest with elephant paths often visible.

* Hamish Norbrook is a Former Pupil of Aberdeen Grammar School, at present doing Voluntary Service Overseas in Burundi, Central Africa.

In this article, he describes an expedition he made with two friends, Marion Turner, a doctor, and John Harwood, a teacher.

Then after an hour, it sloped quite steeply, though steadily upward, through bracken till at last we came out on to a wooded ridge. After only $3\frac{1}{2}$ hours we arrived at the first hut – greatest surprise on the whole trip. It was built of aluminium, at 8,500 feet, and overlooked a deep valley rising up to a high mountain. One of the porters was made chief fire lighter and water bringer, and after supper we went to sleep – on bracken beds.

Next morning we breakfasted off bacon and eggs – not one egg was broken on the entire trip. Soon we turned right, down steeply into the valley, crossed a swing rope bridge, and rose steeply up. (I can guarantee that it was steep – I was carrying the rucksack at that point. We had one shared between John and myself.) Gradually the vegetation became more typical of the Ruwenzori – giant groundsel and lobelias began to appear. The last stretch up to the second hut, Nyamuleju, was over some large boulders. We met the Uganda Mountain Club secretary on his way down – he told us it would take 2 or $2\frac{1}{2}$ hours from Nyamuleju to Bigo, next hut. After lunch at Nyamuleju (the first hut is called Nyabitaba) we began to encounter that for which the Ruwenzori are most famous/notorious – thick, glutinous BOG. There are various adjectives to precede the word bog – select them according to which part of the climb you are on at the time. . . . freezing, 45 degree, 60 degree, ankle/knee/waist deep, etc. After a moss forest – in reality giant heather trees 20 feet high – we hit Bigo Bog. Two foot high tussocks stick out of it, and there is quite an art in using one's pole to vault from one to another without getting your feet wet. Unfortunately, the tussocks normally proved to be about four inches further away than one had estimated, so that you nose dived straight into the bog. Alternatively, your feet would touch down on the next tussock but then skid straight off again, in which case it was by no means exclusively your feet that got wet! It was pleasant finally to wade through a river and wash off some of the mud.

Bigo hut contained a cheerful warning not to leave food outside in case the leopards got it. At 11,500 feet we thought they must be joking, but later learned that they weren't. It was here we first discovered about water boiling at a much lower temperature at high altitudes. This is fine for making instant coffee, but awkward when one is trying to cook rice. During the night it rained hard, and the following morning the path lay up a surprisingly perpendicular stretch of bog over a small pass into the Bujuku valley. Adoniyo, who the previous day had got us from Nyamuleju to Bigo in only 1 hour 40 minutes, proved equally adept at getting us across the next stretch of bog – flat,

for a change. Then the bog (sorry, I meant to say path) reared up 45 degrees and it started to hail. We met a research botanist coming down, who informed us that there were two Englishmen who had flown on a package tour out from England up at Bujuku. One was suffering very badly from altitude sickness and was blue in the face. The next hour was pleasantly spent wading through thigh-deep freezing, shifting bog, in an icy hailstorm. And this on the sunny Equator! Finally we reached the rock shelter where the porters slept. They always had rock shelters near the huts. After de-freezing a bit, we squelched quickly up to Bujuku hut (13,200 feet). The blue-faced Englishman had toned down to a mottled pink by the time we arrived, and greeted us with a cup of tea, after which we sent down two of the porters. Roughly half the porters carried our food and clothes, the other half carried their own food - mainly dried fish and cassava flour. They carry 45 lb loads in sacks tied up with banana leaves - supported round their foreheads. They get 6s. per day and the headman/guide gets 11s. - and you would not get me doing it. They are all incredibly fit. Mind you, I think that we were pretty fit, too. We did the stages in very good times, and did not suffer from altitude while climbing. Living at 6,400 feet is a great advantage. It was only at night at Bujuku that we really first were hit by the altitude - nausea and a continual headache. It started snowing, and so finally we broached the bottle of brandy (medicinal purposes and all that) and I read a chapter of an Agatha Christie out loud.

There are three main mountains in the Ruwenzori - Stanley, Baker, and Speke. At 14,900 feet up on Stanley a little hut is perched just below a glacier. In normal weather it is a 2½-hour scramble up to it, but it took us 4½. The route lay first up Groundsel Gulley, which becomes steeper and steeper till the last twelve feet are vertical - with a stream of mud and slush pouring down. I took one look, shut my eyes and made a mad scramble after the guide. We then proceeded up some 45 degree frozen shifting bog through snow till we hit a steep scree slope, where I put on my climbing boots for the first time on the whole trip; (rest of trip in gym shoes/baseball boots). Up to this point they would have been of little use on account of the bogs. On the few occasions when the clouds cleared, we had impressive views of Bujuku lake and Mount Speke. After a steep snow climb we emerged on to a ridge. Half a mile away we could see Elena Hut, but it took an hour and a half to cover the distance - scrambling across 45-degree slabs covered with melting snow and moss. A party from South Africa had spent three days there in bad weather and were just leaving - they borrowed our

porters to take their kit down to the Scott–Elliot Pass, from where they continued to Kitandara, the next hut, and our porters returned to Bujuku. Elena consists of two chicken coop size huts perched on the rocks. After cramming the equipment inside we shut the door, cooked supper, piled on all available clothing and went to bed at 6 p.m. It was a very cold night.

Next morning we put on crampons and set off up a steep ice gully. At the top were some distinctly vertical rocks, and as I was feeling none too secure on the ice, I decided it would be better not to embark on a rock climbing career at that particular moment, and so John and Marion went on ahead. Marion got on to the Stanley Plateau and John got up Moebius, one of the peaks of Stanley. By the time they had got down, the porters had arrived and we set off down to the Scott–Elliot Pass and then on to Kitandara hut. On the way we passed beneath the vertical cliff face of Baker – an amazing sight. I have never seen a solid piece of rock so enormous. One of the most striking things about the Ruwenzori is just their immense size – it is difficult to take a photograph of any of the mountains unless you are far away.

Kitandara is in a beautiful setting – almost Swiss – set beside a lake. Only the primeval vegetation belies its country. The path up from it mounts very steeply through bog, matted tree roots, and thick bushy vegetation. It was a tricky and tiring scramble out over the top to the Freshfield pass at 14,000 feet, where it started to rain/hail/snow. This was the most tiring day's walk – 9 hours, mostly through thick bog and on steep slopes. After 5 hours we stopped for lunch in a rock shelter – a piece of dry ground underneath a cliff face. Gradually the path began to descend more and more steeply, till at last, near the end of the day, it followed the track of a waterfall which flowed extremely steeply, though not quite vertically, downhill. The path crossed it several times in its upper levels, then veered away as it became steeper and steeper. However, it then crossed it again. Adoniyo was away helping a porter at this point, and I was left to lead across the waterfall, which was not very wide – only about 15 feet – but very steep and slippery. I climbed two thirds of the way over successfully, then felt myself slipping on the mossy rocks, so flung myself over onto a ledge at the far side sideways and managed to cling on while I watched my stick career off down the waterfall. The others informed me afterwards that it was quite spectacular. Kwichuchu rock shelter lay below, but to reach it we first had to worm our way down a crack at the side of the cliff.

The overhanging cliff face keeps the rock shelters free from rain,

so we spent a dry but uncomfortable Hogmanay night before setting off through our final day of Ruwenzori forest – a fantasy world of prehistoric vegetation, where you would scramble over a tree trunk and see a gaping chasm filled with more trunks and boulders 6 feet below. It was rather a surprise to us that we failed to see any Hobbits. After a fast march through bamboo forests we reached Nyabitaba, the first hut, again, having done a round trip of all the huts. At this point we decided to arrange all the porters' wages. I had been more or less in charge of that side of the arrangements, and we got on extremely well, which made for a nice atmosphere. Some parties had had trouble with their porters. At any rate, I sorted out exactly what to pay each of them before we arrived back at Ibanda, taking into account double pay on snow, etc. The final stretch down to Ibanda was a simple slide through the mud, with the vegetation becoming more normal.

After paying off the porters, we packed up what was left of the food, put the worst smelling of the wet clothes in a sack on the roof, and motored back to Fort Portal in time for tea with Marion's cousin Robin, who is doctor there. All his family and relations were there in their best New Year clothes, and after a certain time we detected that, though people were still interested in what we had to say, they showed less inclination actually to sit next to us. Finally we realised why, when Robin and his wife started reminiscing about their own trip up the Mountains, . . .

'How we remember the smell of those Ruwenzori bogs. . . .'



Poems

JAMES WILL

MOUNTAIN SCULPTURE

hillstones pebbles and boulders
on the mountain slopes
ignored insulted abused despised
scraped scratched kicked and thrown
stumbled against slid over and sat upon
passed by unnoticed
and yet they are there
to be seen and marvelled at
silent forms of great dignity and loveliness
their infinite variety of shapes and colours
subtle tones of grey and white
clad in robes of lichen and moss
mustard olive russet lime and gold
encrusted rings and spirals
dots and blobs and pinpoints
gems of great beauty
we can so easily miss
these stones are not debris
scattered on the hillside
not the jetsam of the ages
these mountain boulders
have watched the passing seasons
unchanged
through a thousand years
our whole life to them
is but a moment
long after we are gone
the hillstones will be there
the mountain boulders will remain
our stepladder to the high places
our stairway
to the summits

HILLSEASONS—A WORDFUGUE

Spring is freshgreen hillslopes coolsparkling streams
 ptarmigan newborn fluffballs lifeness
 Spring is freshgreen hillslopes cool
 Spring is freshgreen
 Spring is
 Spring

Summer is buzzing hottired moors heather
 hazyedged mountainmasses sweetscented
 Summer is buzzing hottired warm
 Summer is buzzing
 Summer is
 Summer

Autumn is dampmisted glens goldrust leaves
 seedyred berried soft earthy decay
 Autumn is dampmisted glens cold
 Autumn is dampmisted
 Autumn is
 Autumn

Winter is iceblue sharpclear blackbrittle twigs
 pencilled skeleton frost purewhiteness
 Winter is iceblue sharpclear dead
 Winter is iceblue
 Winter is
 Winter



In memoriam

HUGH DOUGLAS WELSH
Honorary President 1956-69

Hugh Welsh, President of the Club from 1938 to 1946 and Honorary President from 1956, died at Aberdeen on 27 January 1969, aged 82.

In later years he was unable to participate in Club excursions but he was a regular attender at indoor meets and general meetings. Each year he took his place at the top table on the occasion of the annual dinner, where it was his privilege to say grace. Many will recall with appreciation the peculiarly appropriate words which he always used:

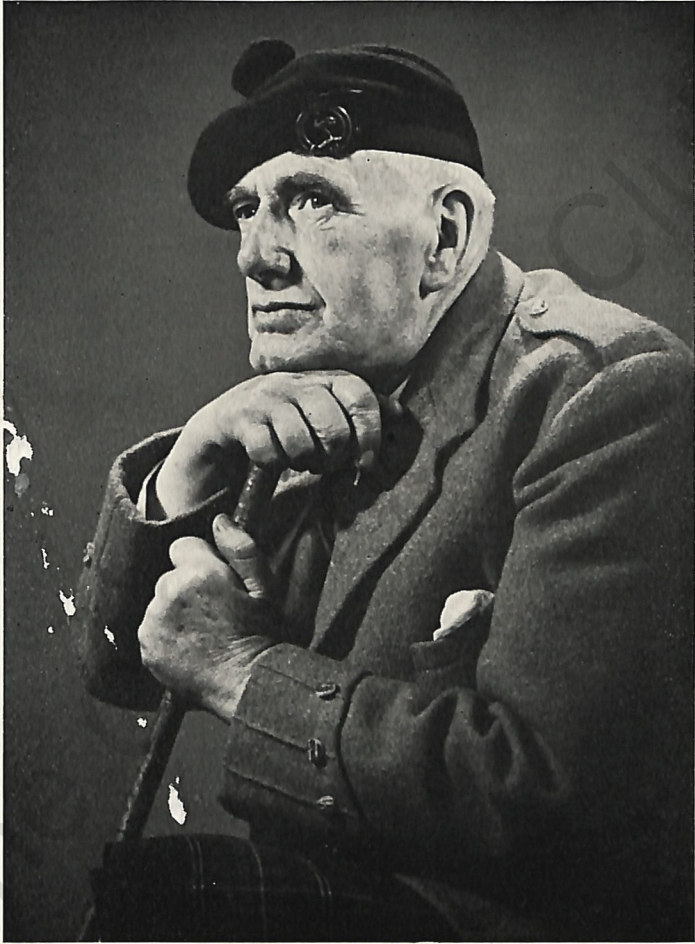
We who are privileged to tread the high places and are humbled by the glory and majesty of the Creator's handiwork on earth and in the heavens give thanks for the many favours bestowed upon us, and ask a blessing on the fruits of the earth of which we are now to partake.

His death came less than nine months after the Club had held a complimentary dinner in his honour to mark the completion of sixty years' membership. (He had joined in 1908). This was held in the Treetops Hotel, Aberdeen on 17 May 1968. Alan C. R. Watt, president, was in the chair and the company of about sixty included six past presidents, in addition to the guest of honour, viz. E. B. Reid, W. M. Duff, A. L. Hay, Robert Bain, J. E. Bothwell and R. A. Gerstenberg. It is unfortunate that the very happy recollections of this function—believed to be the first such event in the Club's history—are now tinged with regret and a very real sense of loss.

In proposing the toast of 'Hugh Douglas Welsh', the president made passing reference to his career at the North of Scotland College of Agriculture and the Macaulay Institute, his interest in music as composer as well as critic and connoisseur, and his devotion to An Comunn Gaidhealach, but stated that these other strings to his bow were muted that night. The president continued:

It is to his lifelong devotion to the high and remote places, his love of the lingering echoes from the corries, his abiding interest in those who frequent the hills and his rare gift of conveying his enthusiasm to others—it is to such things that I would refer.

As regards mountains, Hugh Welsh has been something of a specialist. No peak-bagger nor ardent disciple of Sir Hugh Munro, he has largely confined his affection to the Cairngorms and to his second love—The Cuillin.



Hugh Douglas Welsh

From time to time he has forsaken the granite of the former for the gabbro of the latter, the mod inconst. of the Shelter Stone for the fleshpots of Sligachan—but never for long.

It is significant that his spiritual home has been the Etchachan—Shelter Stone—Loch Avon area. The Club was formally founded in Aberdeen in January 1889 but the preliminary junketings of the founders took place in June 1887 on the Dairymaid's Field at the head of Loch Avon. It was only seventeen years thereafter that Hugh Welsh paid his first visit there—in 1904—and for many years his brother and he were wont to spend a fortnight each year camping in various parts of the Cairngorms but principally in this area. Like the founders of the Club, he drew his inspiration from there and was imbued with the same spirit. One can readily imagine with what facility and community of feeling he proposed the toast of 'The Founders' on the only occasion when the memory of these stalwarts has been honoured—at the Jubilee Dinner of the Club in November 1938.

On one of these camping holidays—in July 1907—the Welsh brothers organized an 'At Home' at the Shelter Stone to which various guests were invited and for which function there was a formal menu, a wine list, and musical programme. The last of these was as follows:

'During the banquet the wind will play selections among the precipices, while the solitary bee will play a bugle solo. Trains in Aviemore, if heard, will accompany now and again on their whistles.'

These were the days! In some respects things were very different—Donald Fraser reigned supreme at Derry Lodge and the bothies at Corrou and Glen Einich were occupied by persons quaintly styled 'watchers'. There were no modern refinements such as foot-bridges, no locked gates and no cars to spoil the Derry road. Some things, however, were no different: snow fell in July, and not infrequently it rained for days on end. One of Hugh Welsh's excursions is comparable with some of the odd things that go on these days such as walking for six hours in torrential rain or members voluntarily exposing themselves to blizzard conditions. It is encouraging to know that our honorary president sometimes indulged in activities no less perverted. (See 'A Daft Day'—vol. XIII, no. 74, p. 166.)

His article concludes 'In spite of the discomfort, we had had a wonderful day, a day we will look back upon with great pleasure'. Such a conclusion will come as no surprise to members of the Cairngorm Club: to others it would provide evidence for summary certification!

Hugh Welsh's presidency—covering as it did the war years—was the longest in the Club's history. For many years he led excursions and contributed articles to the *Journal*. He was a pioneer in the giving of illustrated talks on the hills. His 'Echoes from the Corries' was a means of introducing many to the attractions of high places. At one time he was known in Club circles as 'St. Christopher', the patron saint of travellers.

Throughout his life Hugh Welsh has been an adopted resident of Braemar and his kenspeckle figure has been well known to more than one generation of natives and visitors. Resplendent in his kilt, he is not averse during his annual stay in Braemar to being photographed as a representative native!

However, if Braemar has been his headquarters, it is Inverey that has

regularly been his advanced base. He was a friend of Mrs Gruer at Thistle Cottage until she died in 1909, and for the next thirty years he was a close buddy of the indefatigable Maggie Gruer, who acquired an almost legendary fame for her hospitality to climbers. She held court seated on a chair by her fireside, and following her death Hugh Welsh acquired this chair. He has now presented it to the Club, and it is being used to-night for the first time as the president's chair on a formal occasion.

When he retired from the presidency in 1946, it was said of Hugh Welsh by his successor: 'If he has no first ascents to his credit, he has certainly done more towards spreading an interest in hill walking and mountaineering into a widening community than has anyone in the Club since its inception.' This was said over twenty years ago but it is still true. No Club function is complete without him and I trust that he may long be spared to encourage and inspire us with his unrivalled knowledge and experience and to delight us with his company. Quite uniquely, he personifies all that the Club stands for.

The toast was honoured by the company with enthusiasm, and Hugh Welsh then replied in reminiscent vein. His humorous sallies, his apt quotations, and his lyrical descriptions of some of the moments during his long experience on the hills which lingered in his memory combined to set the seal on a memorable evening.

Unfortunately our honorary president was not long spared after this function. In his will he bequeathed to the Club Maggie Gruer's chair and such of his books and lantern slides as would be of interest to the Club. In fact he had presented the chair and many of his books and slides to the Club during his lifetime and these now form an important part of the Club library.

JAMES GRAY KYD, C.B.E., F.F.A., F.R.S.E.

As briefly reported in the last issue of the *Journal*, J. G. Kyd, the senior member of the Club, died in Sussex on 25 June 1968, aged eighty-five. Born in Aberdeen, he was with the Northern Assurance Co. Ltd. there until about 1912. He then held actuarial posts in Ireland and London and he was Registrar-General for Scotland from 1937 to 1948, when he retired and went to live in England. He rose to the top of his profession and was president of the Faculty of Actuaries in 1944-46. It was at his instigation that the mammoth task of preparing the Third Statistical Account of Scotland was undertaken. The First Statistical Account was prepared between 1791 and 1798 and the Second between 1834 and 1845; he suggested that the middle of the twentieth century was a suitable time for putting on record a further comprehensive study

at a local level of traditions and conditions throughout the country. Most of the local reports were prepared by ministers and he used to remark humorously that, as Convener of the Church of Scotland's Aged and Infirm Ministers' Fund, he was in a strong position to put pressure on any minister who might be dilatory in submitting his report!

His interests covered a wide field: he was chairman of the Scots Ancestry Research Society, a member of the Council of the National Trust for Scotland, and a director of the Scottish Rights of Way Society Ltd.

He joined the Cairngorm Club in 1901 and was secretary of the Club and editor of the *Journal* from 1910 to 1912. To mark the Club's coming-of-age he contributed an article entitled 'Twenty-one Years of our Club' in the issue of January 1910 (vol. vi, no. 34).

One of the pioneers of ski-ing in Britain, he also retained his interest in hill-walking throughout his life. In 1958 he published a booklet on *The Drove Roads and Bridle Paths around Braemar* and dedicated it to the Cairngorm Club 'through which I first learned the wonder of the hills more than sixty years ago'. In a concluding chapter on the changing character of Braemar, he wrote that there was one feature which could never change and that was the strength of the everlasting hills, which had been the greatest inspiration in his life. The booklet, which ran to three editions, contains a great deal of interesting information about the various passes through the Cairngorms and many walks in the Braemar area. Times are given for each walk 'but the fact that they are those taken by the author after attaining sixty-five years suggests that they probably overstate the times which would be required by the young and vigorous'.

GEORGE A. ROBERTS

George Arthur Roberts strove for complete proficiency in everything he did. Of his varied and sometimes conflicting interests, that in the Scottish hills took pride of place. The war interrupted his climbing shortly after he joined the Club in 1939, but on his return to the family furnishing business he was soon back in the Cairngorms. He took up serious rock-climbing and in 1947, with his brother Ian, made a new route from Raeburn's Gully to the Tough-Brown Ridge of Lochnagar, at a time when the interest of most climbers was in established routes. His experience widened to include winter and summer climbing in many areas, particularly on Skye rock. He was elected to the Scottish Mountaineering Club in 1958 and, in the following year, was entrusted

with the reorganisation of the mountain rescue service in the Aberdeen area. Subsequently he became secretary of the Mountain Rescue Committee of Scotland and a vice-chairman of the Association of Scottish Climbing Clubs. During this period George regularly attended Club excursions and annual dinners. He served for two spells on the committee and was Vice-President from 1959 to 1962.

His interest in the hills was complemented by a considerable photographic ability; landscapes and portraits submitted to exhibitions and portfolios gained numerous awards. His musical talent found expression in the violin and in choral singing. The competence with which he operated an amateur radio transmitter stemmed from his war service in the Royal Air Force, in which, after surviving the sinking of the *Lancastria* by bombing off St. Nazaire, he served in India and Assam. His call-sign GM3NOV was recognized by enthusiasts in the five continents, and it was instructive to spend an evening in his 'shack' in Great Southern Road while his calls brought responses from all over the world. After the early death of his wife Margaret, who had also been a Club member, George turned more and more to this interest.

Later, angling became his primary outdoor activity. On his off-day on a climbing trip, more active colleagues would on occasion find a meal of freshly-caught trout awaiting their return to camp.

George Roberts will be remembered by Club members for his mountaineering and his companionship: his death in September 1970, in his 55th year, was a sad loss not only to his son, his father and his brothers, but also to the many who had enjoyed his company and his counsel in the hills.

As this number was being prepared for press, we heard with regret of the death of Lt.-Col. H. J. Butchart, a long standing and much respected member of the Club. He was recently made an Honorary Member. A full tribute will appear in the next issue of the *Journal*.

Proceedings of the Club

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETINGS

The *Eightieth* Annual General Meeting was held on 19 November 1968. The President, Mr A. C. R. Watt, in opening the meeting, referred with regret to the death of Mr J. G. Kyd who was the senior member of the Club.

Mr Watt, on behalf of the Committee, proposed that Mr Robert Bain be elected an Honorary Member of the Club. Tribute was paid to the work done by Mr Bain on behalf of the Club both as Huts Custodian and as President and he was unanimously elected to Honorary Membership.

Office-bearers appointed were: *President* Mr A. C. R. Watt; *Vice-Presidents* Mr E. F. Johnston and Miss S. Murray; *Hon. Secretary* Mr E. F. Johnston; *Hon. Treasurer* Mr W. A. H. Reid; *Hon. Editor and Librarian* Dr R. L. Mitchell; *Hon. Meets Secretary* Mr G. Ewen. The President announced that Mr K. W. Fraser would be leaving Aberdeen and would not be able to continue as Huts Custodian. It was agreed to leave the appointment of a successor to Mr Fraser to be dealt with by the Committee. (Mrs K. W. Fraser kindly acted as Huts Custodian until Mrs A. A. Graham was appointed by the Committee at their February 1969 meeting.)

At a Special General Meeting preceding the 1968 A.G.M. a resolution was passed amending the Constitution and Rules to increase the Life Membership subscription from 10 guineas to £15.

The *Eighty-first* Annual General Meeting was held on 18 November 1969. Before commencing the business the President, Mr A. C. R. Watt, referred with regret to the deaths of Mr H. Welsh, Hon. President of the Club; Lt.-Col. C. Reid and Mr A. Mutch.

Before the election of office-bearers the President stated that Dr R. L. Mitchell would not be standing for re-election as Editor and Librarian and he thanked Dr Mitchell for his many years of service to the Club both as a committee member and as Editor and Librarian. Office-bearers appointed were: *Hon. President* Col. E. Birnie Reid; *President* Mr A. C. R. Watt; *Vice-Presidents* Miss S. Murray and Mr J. S. Galloway; *Hon. Secretary* Mr E. F. Johnston; *Hon. Treasurer* Mr W. A. H. Reid; *Hon. Editor and Librarian* Mr D. Hawksworth; *Hon. Meets Secretary* Mr G. Ewen; *Hon. Huts Custodian* Mrs A. A. Graham.

The *Eighty-second* Annual General Meeting, which was held on 25 November 1970, was preceded by a Special General Meeting called to consider a new Club Constitution proposed by the Committee. The new Constitution was adopted with minor amendment.

Before commencing the business of the Annual General Meeting the President, Mr A. C. R. Watt, referred with regret to the deaths of Mr J. W. Milne and Mr G. Roberts.

A proposal from the Committee that subscriptions be increased was put to the meeting and, after amendment, it was decided that for the year commencing 1 October 1971 annual subscriptions would be, members over age 21, £2, or they may commute the subscription by a single payment of £20;

members under age 21, £1; members residing outwith a 50-mile radius of Aberdeen, £1.

Mr Watt, on behalf of the Committee, proposed that Lt.-Col. H. J. Butchart and Dr R. L. Mitchell be elected Honorary Members of the Club. Tribute was paid to the long service rendered to the Club by both and they were unanimously elected to Honorary Membership.

Office-bearers appointed were: *Hon. President* Col. E. Birnie Reid; *President* Miss S. Murray; *Vice-Presidents* Mr J. S. Galloway and Dr S. A. B. Black; *Secretary* Mr E. F. Johnston; *Treasurer* Mr W. A. H. Reid; *Editor* Mr D. Hawksworth; *Librarian* Miss J. A. Callander; *Meets Secretary* Mr G. Ewen; *Huts Custodian* Mr P. F. Howgate; *Indoor Meets Secretary* Mr J. S. Galloway.

At the close of the meeting Mr Watt was thanked for all he had accomplished during his term as President and particularly for the preparatory work he had undertaken in revising the Club Constitution.

ANNUAL DINNERS

The 1968 and 1969 Dinners were held in the Caledonian Hotel on a Saturday in November. The 1970 Dinner saw a departure from tradition in that the Dinner was held in the Northern Hotel for the first time. The excellent speakers at these Dinners were:

1968 John E. M. Duff: Mountain rescue in the Rockies and the Cairngorms

1969 Tom Weir: Climbing in Scotland

1970 Miss Esme Murray Speakman: The Ladies' Scottish Climbing Club Expedition to Greenland 1970

The 1970 Dinner was an historic occasion for two main reasons. The first was the change of venue already mentioned. The second was the appearance on the scene of our first Lady President. Miss Sheila Murray presided at the Dinner with the charm and efficiency that she has since brought to the chairing of Club meetings. It seems astonishing that, in this age of emancipation, the Club has not before elected a lady as President, but I think that all Club members are genuinely delighted that this state of affairs has at last been remedied.

MEETS AND EXCURSIONS 1968-70

The chief problem in organising excursions is that of providing seats, for all who wish to attend, at an economic rate. Often, the bus is not filled to capacity but, on several occasions, the number booking has exceeded forty-one by a dozen or so and a second bus has been engaged. Too often the surplus dozen is reduced by late cancellations to around eight - an uneconomic figure. In 1968 and 1969 we provided three seats for every two people; in 1970 the ratio of seats provided over the year to seats occupied was 1.12 to 1, a step nearer the ideal, achieved by engaging mini-buses, which, though relatively expensive to hire, prove more economic than sparsely filled second buses. The mini-bus is not necessarily wholly responsible for the improved ratio; probably other random factors enter. The greatest loss sustained on any one excursion occurred

in May 1970 (Ben Wyvis), when we were nearly £16 down, an unacceptable figure. The loss occurred partly because we had engaged a mini-bus, which was only sparsely filled, five having failed to turn up. (There were other factors – e.g. a large number of Junior Members carried at half-fare.) Some future Club historian may be a little puzzled by the figures for April 1969 when forty-eight people shared forty-one seats. He might search long for the explanation. The two-tier post was introduced at this time, and some letters were delayed, with the result that forty-eight people turned up, all thinking I had received their bookings. Since then I have advised booking by telephone.

I have noted the number attending on each date, hoping that this would provide some clue to the kind of excursion most favoured by members. I am not sure that anything conclusive emerges, but obviously the Ladder Hills and Mount Battock occupy a low place while, curiously, the Correen Hills attracted forty-one and Lochnagar, erstwhile favourite outing, failed to attract (twice) in 1968. The Monega Pass attracted sixty-one, yet, on a previous occasion the Monega excursion had to be cancelled for lack of support.

Only one excursion, to Glen Clunie in February 1969, was cancelled, the reason being very bad road conditions in the Aberdeen area and, on police advice not to travel unless the journey was really necessary, the decision was taken to cancel the excursion. In terms of achievement the poorest excursion was Lochnagar (February 1970) where no party reached the top – not surprisingly, since it was such a day that one donned a cagoule before going from the bus as far as the boot. One considerable 'day' fell to a South African colleague-guest who, in response to my query: 'What do you want to do?' replied: 'As much as possible.' I sent him off with Junior Members Patterson and Falconer, who took him over Cairngorm, Cairn Lochan, Ben Macdhui and Derry Cairngorm to the Linn of Dee in some seven hours. He agreed that he had had a good day; I observed him on Monday having some difficulty in mounting the school stair, and, on Friday, he confessed he was still sore. That seems to put his Drakensberg excursions in proper perspective!

The overnight excursion of 1969 produced a little variety for some. The Army was in occupation of Alltbeithe Youth Hostel, where some members had hoped to snatch an hour or two of sleep, but either Lights Out was very late or Reveille very early; the Army was awake, the 'bar' was open and a piper entertained us to the Green Hills of Tyrol, an unusual lullaby. The overnight excursion of 1970 demonstrated once again how really tricky it can be to negotiate the broken country of the West Coast in darkness and mist.

The Easter Meet 1969 was held at Achnasheen and was attended by forty people. The weather for once was perfect and many hills were climbed by different parties over a wide area. There was little snow for this time of the year and most of the climbs were without incident. One party, however, required two attempts before they succeeded in climbing Beinn Eighe and certain parts of Beinn Alligin were tricky owing to hard frozen grass on the steep slopes around the summit. Members of the party were particularly pleased with the Ledgowan Hotel.

During the second week of July 1969 a meet was held at Glen Brittle in Skye. It was attended by some twenty-four people, most of whom stayed at the Glen Brittle Memorial Hut or camped at the beach site. The weather during most of the week was very bad, especially during the first three days. Those

who had not visited Glen Brittle before began to have considerable doubts as to the existence of the Cuillins. Owing to the bad weather members spent the first few days in various non-mountaineering activities. On Sunday the hut party went to church at Carbost while those at the camp site spent the day digging drainage ditches. Monday saw quite a large party on the boat at Uig for a day trip to Lewis and Harris. By Wednesday the weather had cleared up considerably and a number of tops were reached by various parties, including Sgurr Alasdair and Sgurr nan Gillean. Unfortunately the unsettled weather returned on Thursday, following a thunderstorm on Wednesday night, and a party who climbed Sgurr na Banachdich reported almost winter conditions on the top although the less adventurous of us, who visited the Old Man of Storr, had a very pleasant day. Most of the party returned to Aberdeen on the Friday, having to wait two hours for the ferry at Kyleakin before making good their escape.

The Easter Meet 1970 was held at the Inchnadamph Hotel in Sutherland. The hotel could not accommodate the complete party, the surplus being accommodated in nearby farmhouses and a caravan, and fed in the hotel. Getting there proved a rather hazardous business, especially for those who were late in leaving Aberdeen on the Thursday, due to a heavy snowstorm north of Inverness. The sudden cold spell obviously caught the hotel staff by surprise and we huddled round a single fire in the hotel that night. Bad weather lasted throughout the meet, but despite this a large number of members climbed the two Munros of the area – Conival and Ben More Assynt. One member had a rather narrow escape on the narrow ridge between the two when a cornice on which he was standing gave way suddenly and he just managed to jump clear in time. A number of the smaller hills in the area were climbed, including Cul Mor, Cul Beag, Canisp and Ben More Coigach. The limestone caves proved an attraction for some as did the Eas Mor waterfall, reputed to be the highest fall in the country.

It would seem that many tend to underestimate, sometimes grossly, the time required for the descent. In the Cairngorms one can almost always complete a descent in a relatively short time; on rougher, steeper, less familiar ground, this is often not the case; add mist, rain, wind and, in the case of the overnight excursion, darkness, and the descent may actually take much longer than the ascent. This was the case on Sgurr a' Mhaoraich and on Lawers, apparently. It is galling to have to stop short of one's objective but, in some circumstances, there is no alternative.

The performance of two junior members (on Ben Lawers) is perhaps worthy of comment. Not surprisingly, in those appalling conditions they went off course, but soon noticed that they were descending a valley running north but which of two such they could not for a time decide. Finally, they noted that the burn turned westward and they concluded, correctly, that they must be in the Fin Glen. When they reached the confluence with the Allt a' Chobhair they were sure of their location, reversed their route up the main stream, crossed the col to Coire Odhar and descended to the car park, retrieving the situation in a most commendable manner. They should be acquiring confidence in their map reading.

We have been unfortunate as regards weather over the past few months, with only one or two really good days. The Lochnagar outing provided con-

ditions similar to those encountered on Ben Lawers; but the sun shone for one member who had a brief encounter with Royalty! If there is anything in the Law of Averages we should have a run of perfect weather for the rest of the year.

G.E.

Post Script, May 1971. And so it turned out! We have had eight consecutive good-weather excursions, since the Ben Avon outing, followed by an almost summery Easter Meet (again held at the Ledgowan Hotel, Achnasheen) – a near record, surely. The hills carried even less snow this Easter than in 1969, with the result that three parties were persuaded to include Liathach among their objectives, while one of the forty-seven who attended the meet climbed twelve Munros in the period, including those ultra-remote hills, Lurg Mhor and Bidein a Choire Sheasgaich.

G.E.

EXCURSIONS

1968

- 21 Jan. Lochnagar (29)
- 11 Feb. Glen Clunie (35)
- 3 Mar. Lochnagar (26)
- 24 Mar. Beinn a Bhuird (35)
- 5 May Glen Doll (31)
- 26 May Ben Lawers (30)
- Midsummer. Kingshouse to Loch Tulla (35)
- 8 Sept. Cairngorm (34)
- 5 Oct. Jock's Road (38)
- 27 Oct. Cairnwell to Inverey (49)
- 17 Nov. Ben Rinnes (44)
- 8 Dec. Clachnaben (39)

1969

- 12 Jan. Lochnagar (44)
- 9 Mar. Beinn a Bhuird (43)
- 27 Apr. Mount Keen (48)
- 17 May Beinn a' Ghlo (39)
- 8 June Loch Morlich to Tomintoul (30)
- Midsummer. Affric to Bridge of Croe (51)
- 7 Sept. Coylum Bridge to Linn of Dee (41)
- 4 Oct. Lochnagar (55)
- 26 Oct. Monega Pass (61)
- 15 Nov. Morven (41)
- 7 Dec. Correen Hills (41)

1970

- 10 Jan. Mount Battock (29)
- 1 Feb. Lochnagar (42)

1970

- 21 Feb. Glen Clunie (31)
- 15 Mar. Ladder Hills (27)
- 26 Apr. Glen Clova to Glen Isla (41)
- 16 May Ben Wyvis (47)
- 7 June Glen Feshie (50)
- Midsummer. Quoich Bridge to Glen Shiel (40)
- 30 Aug. Ben Lawers (33)
- 20 Sept. Lochnagar (39)
- 18 Oct. Ben Avon (55)
- 7 Nov. Auchallater to Glen Muick (41)
- 22 Nov. Corryhabbie (37)
- 13 Dec. Bennachie (40)

1971

- 10 Jan. Glen Clunie (38)
- 30 Jan. Lochnagar (56)
- 21 Feb. Beinn a Bhuird (62)
- 14 Mar. Glas Tulaichean (45)
- 25 Apr. Auchallater (37)
- 16 May Glen Lyon (41)
- 5 June Cairngorm to Linn of Dee (57)
- 26/27 June Kinlochleven to Glen Nevis (42)
- 22 Aug. Bynack More (33)

EASTER MEETS

- 1968 Laggan Inn
- 1969 Achnasheen
- 1970 Inchnadamph
- 1971 Achnasheen

Notes

HOW TO JOIN THE CAIRNGORM CLUB

'For easy things, that may be got at will,
Most sorts of men do set but little store.'

Newly arrived in an unfamiliar city my great desire was to get in touch with the local climbing club. I decided to consult the list of clubs in the latest copy of *The Climber* which itself is often difficult to find. However, no mention of the Cairngorm Club but I did spot this unusual notice.

Aberdeen—Boots repaired
by fellow climber
Baxter.

Obviously the Secretary operated through at least one 'cut-out'. At Mr Baxter's I asked for a tin of dubbin and then leant across the counter 'How do I get in touch with the Cairngorm Club?' He didn't give anything away — merely saying he didn't know himself. 'You should try Diack's.' This was a climbing shop in George Street. As I left he added 'Don't be put off by the outside.'

Diack's gave no indication of its business. With its frosted glass windows it could have been a bank or a dispensary: this impression was further confirmed by the interior. A clerkess looked up. I found myself saying 'Is this a climbing shop?'

'Oh Yes, just go through' pointing to a door marked 'Private'. I opened it.

'Mind the steps' she said as members of the staff closed in. What steps I wondered? They opened a hatch in the floor. 'Just go down.' A ladder led steeply into the cellar.

A young man introduced himself. What did I want? I explained. He made one or two 'phone calls and gave me a number to ring. As I left I said 'This is like a secret organisation'.

'It is a secret organisation!' he grinned.

So in this way contact was made and a rendezvous arranged — a street corner in a quiet Angus county town. There I was met, taken away in a coach and twelve hours later dropped again at the same spot. What happened in between is another story.

I smile whenever I think of the interview for my real life job in Aberdeen. They asked, 'You're not just coming here to climb the Cairngorms are you?'

PETER N. DAVIDSON

MIDGES GALORE

Several times the proposal to hold a meet with an opportunity of climbing Ben Alder has been made during the planning of the year's programme. On other occasions, members of the Club have been heard to say, 'Perhaps a small group could get together and do Ben Alder over a weekend'. However, the look of the map, and measurement of the distances involved, led to deferment of plans for a full-scale meet.

But Ben Alder has the irresistible appeal of remoteness and inaccessibility, with the result that in the early summer of 1969 its name was increasingly mentioned. It appeared that there was a bothy at Culra Lodge and that camping space was abundant. A group of Club members decided, therefore, to go ahead and try to do the deed.

A letter to the County Clerk of Inverness-shire gave us the name of the factor and of the head stalker of Ben Alder Lodge Estate. A long telephone call to Dalwhinnie furnished permission to camp or bothy in the region of Loch Pattack – some eight miles along the track from Dalwhinnie. And so it was that some dozen Club members converged on Loch Pattack one August day, prepared for great things. Flat and fairly dry ground near the loch tempted the party to camp there rather than to carry loads to the bothy, some two miles from the road.

On our first day, we climbed Geal Gharn, Creag Pitridh and Beinn a' Chlachair in good weather, with hopes of magnificent views on the morrow from Ben Alder itself.

However, as so often seems to happen in the Scottish hills, the following morning Ben Alder was nowhere to be seen! We set off regardless, as it was at least dry, and walked up past Culra Lodge – where the bothy is weatherproof and furnished with rough bunks – to ascend from the West side of Ben Alder. The top was found, with little difficulty despite the mist, and lunch was taken in the hope of a clearance. However, it became thicker still, and, wet with it, we made our way down to the Bealach Breabeg and so back to camp, either by the track or via Beinn Bheoil with variations from the correct route by one determined to see Loch Ericht at all costs!

Back at Loch Pattack the trouble started. Dense clouds of minute Highland beasties appeared to greet our return and obviously decided that it was a splendid opportunity for a banquet!

A variety of strategies was applied in an attempt to evade their attentions. One member of the party, accustomed to the midge of southern England, with its docile nature and modest appetite, went about unconcernedly in shorts until the full horror of their Scottish cousins became apparent, and then, putting on every available article of clothing, promptly retreated to the car! One tent was armed with insect-repellent, while another, occupied obviously by an experienced Scottish camper, was fumigated by the expedient of smoking as many cigarettes as possible as fast as possible! The classical approach also indicated experience of the beasties – meals were taken at the double, marching up and down the track with a fine net over the head and shoulders, raising the net at brief intervals to allow ingestion of a spoonful of mince.

After our midge-ridden supper, the head stalker appeared to see if we

were comfortable. He made us welcome and explained that the Estate welcomed visitors if they asked in advance; while they were advised not to go on to the tops during the stalking season, there was no objection to their walking through the glens. His comfort, or rather discomfort, at the jaws of the midges was soon at a level which caused him to retreat to the shelter of his house.

The following morning brought yet more midges, and torrential rain, so that some of the campers returned, itching, to Aberdeen, the remnant finally retiring hurt to the drier and less midge-infested region of the Monadh Liath hills – whence Ben Alder was seen in all its glory and the more attractive for its having been ascended, despite the attendant discomforts.

A return visit in 1970 revealed yet more pot-holes in the road along Loch Ericht, but far fewer midges in the area than before – maybe even a midge has a conscience!

ANON

AVALANCHES

In a recent *Scots Magazine*, Ben Humble contributed an excellent article about avalanches in Scotland, and, with the author's and editor's permission, this short excerpt is reprinted, giving as it does, some excellent advice which might be of use to members on their winter peregrinations into the hills:

'In recent years, both in Scotland and in other countries, there has been detailed investigation into snow structure and avalanche causes with a view to avalanche prediction, but even so, many are still unpredictable.

'Numerous factors have to be considered – the time of the year, the weather conditions for some weeks previously, the immediate weather conditions, and the nature of the ground below the snow. Apart from the cornice type, avalanches usually occur where the underlying ground is smooth and regular, while if the slope is convex the possibility is still greater.

'Just as excessive rainfall means possible flooding, so heavy snowfall means possible avalanche conditions. They may occur in stormy weather with much new snow, or in fair weather, when there is a rapidly-rising temperature.

'Steep gullies are, of course, the main sites, while in other areas the danger zone is where the slope is more than 35 degrees.

'It can be easily understood that where the underlying ground is smooth rock, avalanches are highly possible. The famous Red Slab of the cliffs of Coire an Lochain in the Cairngorms is the best example of this. Every year the snow slides down from it, while all other parts of the cliffs are still covered.'

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

19 February 1971

Box 354

Hudson Heights, Quebec

Revered Editor,

You in a crazed moment asked me last year to write an article on glaciers for the sake, I presume, of silly Scottish scramblers who have not yet trod them. Why I cannot tell; I am an unsuccessful prof. but am supposed to know something about compressed snow. True, I have perambulated on glaciers in many

parts of the world and have written the only significant scientific paper in my life on a certain aspect of glaciology.

But these dubious qualifications cannot make me the instructor to your panting readers as to how to behave on glaciers. I treat them cavalierly. Just before going to the 1948 Oslo conference of the International Union of Geodesy and Geophysics (whereat for some obscure political reason I got named the secretary of the Commission on glaciers) I was wandering alone on the glacier below the Fanaråken in Norway and was castigated by a roped party for my folly. With dignity I pointed out in bad Norwegian that I was *the* expert on glaciers presently in Norway.

But I guess they were right. It is asking for trouble to wander lonely upon the ice. I do it all the time. My survival to date is entirely due to the configuration of the stars at my birth date. And I have never yet fallen into a crevasse – well not beyond my waist anyway. But I have hauled a lot of companions out of them and know full well what a job this can be. But the technique of crevasse rescue has been described so well elsewhere that I can add nothing to this. Only to reassure our readers that in ordinary mountain country (excepting the Antarctic perhaps) crevasses cannot exceed 50 metres in depth. Ice flows below this and closes the crack. So this is as far as you can go.

One has to have a special skill to spot snow-hidden crevasses by noting little changes in the surface. But I had to lead in 1967 a very tired group of climbers down a glacier in the Yukon in a complete whiteout. I could see *nothing* let alone little surface changes. It was a ropy situation – I mean I relied on the man behind me to tighten that rope if I went in. I stayed in the middle. Like canoeing the worst troubles are at the sides.

Scotland has no glaciers. A pity. We are told by experts like Gordon Manley that if our mountains were 150 metres higher we would have them. Perhaps the increasing CO₂ in the atmosphere may do the trick, but I fear that long before this happens man may have eliminated himself or so controlled the environment sufficiently to prevent it. But the mountains will live on.

PATRICK D. BAIRD

THE DERRY ROAD

Tom Weir, guest speaker at our 1969 Annual Dinner, referred to his visit in 'My Month' in the *Scots Magazine* of February 1970, at the same time making some hard-hitting, but entirely justified, remarks about the continuing frustration caused by the locked gate of the Derry Road – all the more galling to Cairngorm Club members since the Club has donated financially to the maintenance of the Black Bridge on that road. This excerpt is reproduced by permission of the author and the editor of the *Scots Magazine*:

'I had come to Aberdeen for the Cairngorm Club dinner, and was pleased to be sitting next to the president, Alan Watt, who brought his own chair with him. It was Maggie Gruer's fireside comforter, which is homage, indeed, to a fine old lady who played host in Inverey to many a Cairngormer. With 140 or thereabouts at the dinner, the Club could be said to be in good heart. They

have to organise a second bus for some of their meets, which shows great keenness when morning starts are sometimes 6 a.m.

'What I wasn't so pleased to hear about was the current situation in Glen Derry and its approach road from the Linn of Dee. Climbers, on payment of a small sum, have always enjoyed the privilege of motoring to Derry Lodge on the Braemar side of the Lairig Ghru. Now there is absolutely no admission unless you are on an official visit.

'The explanation offered to climbers is that the road had got into a very bad state, and since its repair it has been necessary to restrict usage. This is causing resentment among outdoor folk, especially since the fine right-of-way path up Glen Derry has been bulldozed for Land-Rovers and some of the charm of the Lairig an Laoigh has been lost. It is the Glen Feshie story all over again.

'At the Cairngorm Club dinner I made the point that surely they should raise a voice in public protest against the latter sort of measure. I think they must, and so should every other outdoor organisation in Scotland. The landowner has no moral right to bulldoze an ancient path. Certainly, he can close a private road, but even so, surely it would have been better to try to come to some financial arrangement with the clubs before taking this unpopular action.'

THE LOCHNAGAR TRACK

Tom Weir's concern about the locked gate to the Derry Road is but one of the actions by landowners which give cause of annoyance to the climber. As he also mentions, the bulldozing of tracks in the Cairngorms has recently been changing the character of some of our favourite approaches to the mountains. First to spring to mind is the usual approach track to Lochnagar from the Allt na Giubhsaich, until recently a delightful track, but now a muddy, churned-up morass. Similar things have been happening in the Glen Feshie area, and other parts may be threatened. This sort of thing happens overnight, and, once the deed is done, so is the damage, and complaint afterwards can only be of use if it prevents further despoiling. One remembers the fuss about the Coruisk track – in this case, public outcry was so great that the Army stopped their no doubt well-intentioned 'improvements'. The Club is to draw the attention of the Countryside Commission to these recent operations by landowners, and it is to be hoped that some amicable compromise might be arrived at with the landowners, which would take into consideration the opinions of bodies, like our own Club, which are concerned with the preservation of the countryside.

ALTERATIONS AT MUIR OF INVEREY

As reported in the Notes in the last issue of the *Journal*, the Club relinquished the lease of Derry Lodge at Whitsunday 1967. This naturally increased the demand from Club members for accommodation at Muir and the Committee reluctantly decided to restrict the number of places available to members of other organisations. It was agreed that Muir should be extended and improved

as it was for such works that the late Dr George Taylor left a most generous legacy to the Club. The Committee decided, however, that no extensive alterations should be made until the Hut, which had been leased since 1949, was the Club's own property.

Negotiations were begun in 1968 with Captain Alexander Ramsay of Mar and terms were eventually agreed. While these negotiations were proceeding, the Huts Sub-committee considered ways of extending the Hut to provide accommodation for eighteen persons. Plans were prepared for the demolition of the existing wooden annexe and the erection of a dormitory block with consequent alterations in the common room and kitchen. Provisional estimates of cost indicated that the money available from the Taylor Bequest would be insufficient and it was decided to apply to the Scottish Education Department, Aberdeen Town Council, and Aberdeen County Council for grants under the Physical Training and Recreation Act, 1937. So far, offers of grants of £3,700 from the Department and £172.80 from the County Council have been received.

The position as the *Journal* goes to press is that estimates for the various works amounting to £10,000 have been accepted and that the works are about to be begun.



Some recent climbing books

The Mountain World 1968/69. English version ed. MALCOLM BARNES. George Allen and Unwin, 1970. £3.

This is the tenth volume (English series) of this well-known publication and, alas, the last. The publishers (Swiss Foundation for Alpine Research) think that their aim, to record the exploration of the world's mountains, has now been largely fulfilled and that their efforts must now take a new direction. Like its predecessors it is a sumptuous volume, beautifully illustrated, ranging widely over the globe; indeed, practically the only considerable area nowhere mentioned in the text is the North American scene.

The volume opens with an obituary of Marcel Kurz (1887-1967), in which Walter Amstutz outlines the achievements of this remarkable Alpine historian and topographer, whose interests ranged far beyond his native Alps.

The only Alpine climbing feature is the account of the first winter ascent of the N.E. face of the Piz Badile, an Italo-Swiss venture, undertaken between 21 December 1967 and 2 January 1968, using Himalayan tactics. One can only admire the skill and tenacity displayed, though the thought of spending even one winter night in wet clothes in an ice-cave is appalling! (There was an interruption of four days, due to bad weather, when the climbers descended to improved living conditions, presumably.)

There is an appreciative account of an ascent of Demavend, Persia's highest mountain, inspired by a glimpse of the peak from the windows of a plane, while that of the Franco-Swiss expedition to the mountains of Anatolia is especially interesting for its comments on the local Kurdish tribesmen.

Inevitably, expeditions to the Himalaya take up most space - Czech and Japanese expeditions to Hindu Kush; an Austrian party to N.E. Chitral; Dutch and Swiss parties in Nepal and an important investigation into the Glaciers of North Bhutan.

D. J. Bennet reviews climbing in the Staunings Alps, Greenland (72°N.), while that veteran of the New Zealand Alps, John Pascoe, presents an excellent summary of conditions in New Zealand, with comments on some recent expeditions there.

Two highly interesting nature articles more or less complete the tale: Simien - Ethiopia's Threatened Mountain area and the Alpine Salamander by Hans Peter Häfeli.

Quite comprehensive and good value at £3.

W.A.E.

The Big Grey Man of Ben Macdhui. AFFLECK GRAY. Impulse Books, Aberdeen, 1970. £2.

This is an enthralling book for lovers of the mountains who will appreciate the varying conditions in which it has been possible for uncanny experiences to occur. Mr Gray has gathered together a remarkable collection of evidence regarding Ben Macdhui's apparition and other weird phenomena seen, felt or

heard among the hills in Scotland and in other parts of the world, and many interesting theories are discussed.

The anecdotes have been linked together in a fascinating chronicle and include several reports by members of the Cairngorm Club. There are appropriate photographs of the Ben Macdhui region. The reader is left to form in general his own conclusions about the ghostly figures and strange foot-falls and the absorbing mystery of An Ferla Mhor. An index would have been helpful.

R.K.J.

Mountain Midsummer. MICHAEL GILL. Hodder & Stoughton, 1969. £2.50.

At the beginning of his book, Mr Gill talks of falling in love with mountains. His first loves, and it would seem his greatest ones, are the very wet and comparatively little known Darrans in his native New Zealand. The extremely tough conditions he found there and in other mountains in New Zealand gave an excellent training for higher and more exotic ranges. Perhaps the chapters on the Darrans are the most interesting as these hills are so little known.

An answer to an advertisement in the *Auckland Star* led to a meeting with Hillary, who was immediately taken by this resourceful doctor. Mr Gill went with him on two Himalayan and one Antarctic expeditions, and his very varied experiences on them make absorbing reading. He went to Nepal the first time via U.S.A., Great Britain, where he rock climbed in Wales, and fitted in a visit to Chamonix before flying to Katmandu. This is typical of him. He seems to have an enviable ability to surmount any kind of difficulty, and to make himself comfortable in, for example, a disintegrating snow-cave high in the New Zealand Alps, or in a small tent in the middle of an Antarctic blizzard. An *interesting* man who has written an unusual book.

J.C.A.

Everest, the West Ridge. THOMAS F. HORNBEIN. George Allen & Unwin, 1971. £3.50.

In 1963, a large American expedition put six men on the summit of Mt Everest, four by the South Col route, and two, the author and Willi Unsoeld by the unclimbed West Ridge. Hornbein was fanatically keen that an attempt should be made to traverse Everest by the Ridge and the South Col, but he and his fellow 'West Ridgers' had a long, and frustrating wait while most of the expedition's men and supplies were used to ensure the first ascent. But at last, he and Unsoeld were able to make their bid for the top from a comparatively low camp. Not quite sure of the route, but certain that they had passed the point of no return, they reached the summit late in the day. They descended in the tracks of Bishop and Jersted who had come up earlier that day on the South Col route, and eventually met up with their friends. Exhausted and almost oxygenless, the four men spent the night in the open at about 28,000 feet. They all got back safely, but Bishop and Unsoeld had to be flown by helicopter to Katmandu for urgent treatment for frost-bite – less than five days after they had stood on the summit.

By any standard, this was a tremendous achievement, the first major Himalayan traverse carried off in the face of many difficulties. Hornbein, however, remained curiously dissatisfied and doubtful. The final sentence in his book is typical of his attitude. 'It is strange how when a dream is fulfilled there is little left but doubt'. Much of his material was taken from diaries, on-the-spot tape recordings and questionnaires which expedition members filled out for their psychologist and sociologist, but it is very much his story. He has said he does not like to write, and one can believe this, but that he wanted to tell his own story. This must be one of the most intimate accounts of a major expedition ever written, and certainly is an unusual book.

J.C.A.

That Untravelled World. ERIC SHIPTON. Hodder & Stoughton, 1969. £2.25.

On his own admission, Eric Shipton prefers exploration to pure mountaineering, but has often managed to combine both. Of necessity his autobiography repeats much that has been written before, but there is also new material in this frank and vividly written book. Born in Ceylon, he travelled extensively with his family as a small child and has gone on travelling all his life. Although he did many climbs in the Alps prior to going to East Africa to work, there was a gap of thirty-seven years before he went back there. In that time he climbed the East African giants, went on several pre-war Everest and other Himalayan expeditions, explored in the Karakorum, acted as British Consul-General in Kashgar during the war, and then went on in a similar capacity to Kunming in South China at the time when the Communists were taking over. Having got his family and himself safely home, almost immediately he set off to look at Everest from the hitherto forbidden Nepalese side, Patagonia, Chile, Galapagos, Alaska – and back to the Alps at last for the Matterhorn centenary celebrations. He didn't want to go – he never liked crowds, but 'as President of the Alpine Club, I could hardly decline the invitation'. He was delighted when bad weather cancelled the planned mass ascent.

He is always interesting, very often funny, and shows once more that he is one of our most unusual and fascinating mountaineers.

J.C.A.

The Kandahar Story. SIR ARNOLD LUNN. George Allen & Unwin, 1969. 80p.

This little book (101 pages in paperback) is really a collection of reminiscences and anecdotes about the development of downhill ski-racing in Switzerland. The initiative for the departure, in 1924, from the cross-country race of Scandinavian origin came from a group of Englishmen who reckoned that the best way to test downhill skiing was to race downhill. The almost total triumph of downhill over cross-country can be seen any ski-able weekend in Scotland when thousands throng the lifts at Glenshee and Cairngorm but the ski-tourer meets none but a walker or two.

Sir Arnold Lunn invented the modern slalom race and he writes about its history and development with authority. Although the main appeal of this book will be to addicts, there are many points of general interest, thus 'I find in the

Swiss Press welcome evidence that our influence has not diminished, as for instance the competitor who had "die feste Nonstopzeit". Perhaps the Club could adopt the term for the speed merchants on the weekend excursions.

D.G.H.

Climbing. JAMES LOVELOCK. Batsford, 1971. £1.70.

As the author says 'This is basically a how-to-do-it book, not a why-you-do-it book'. He starts by giving a brief history of mountaineering then goes on to deal with equipment and kitting-out, rock climbing technique and snow and ice climbing. There is a complete chapter written by Trevor Jones on Artificial Climbing which deals clearly and concisely with the subject from such basic matters as belays and running belays to more complicated climbing with bongs and expansion bolts. Lovelock then details the main climbing areas of England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland, neatly done in just one chapter where unfortunately some inaccuracies in spelling and locations were noticed in the Scottish section.

The final chapter is on Safety, Survival and First Aid and goes into these serious matters very carefully and is particularly interesting when dealing with the quantity of food and water one should take on the hill. The photographs, forty in number, and the illustrations are generally excellent.

The book is completed by a bibliography, a glossary and lists of guide books, mountaineering clubs, First Aid posts and rescue teams.

G.J.S.

The Book of Modern Mountaineering. Edited by MALCOLM MILNE. Arthur Barker, 1968. £3.15.

This is an exciting anthology of recent developments, and fully justifies its title. There are ten sections, and the list of contributors reads like a compendium of the greatest names in the climbing world - W. H. Murray, Chris Bonington, Tom Patey, C. Douglas Milner, Tilman, Shipton, etc. The photographs are superb, although sometimes the reproduction has too much of a blue tinge. I have seen two copies of the book, and there was a marked difference in quality of colour rendering. However, the view from Everest, Dawn on the Eigerwand, splendid pictures of Alpamayo, incredible shots of Yosemite walls - these are a few of the illustrations which would alone make the book worth buying. The hazards as well as the exhilarations of modern mountaineering are covered, and there is an interesting chapter on 'The Woman Climber'. Altogether a first-class publication, strongly recommended.

D.H.

Annapurna South Face. CHRIS BONINGTON. Cassell, 1971. £3.25.

Annapurna has a special place in the history of Himalayan climbing as the first of the 8,000 metre peaks to be climbed; and now, twenty years later, in the

quest for more and more difficult climbs, its South Face becomes the first of the major faces to be climbed by modern Alpine siege tactics.

The outline of this successful expedition with its tragic ending is already well known, especially to viewers of 'News at Ten', and Bonington now tells the whole story very frankly and without hiding the clashes of personality which are not exclusive to international expeditions. He writes well and gradually builds a fascinating character study of his talented team.

Haston contributes a chapter on the experience of the summit pair which seems to get to the heart of this desperate standard of climbing where the will takes over. He writes of his 'total despair' as his rucksack with food and gear disappeared into space as they struggled to set up Camp VI at 24,000 feet and, after reaching the top with Whillans who 'picked a beautiful line through towards the summit ridge', of the 'supreme concentration' needed to get down.

The forty-eight pages of colour photographs are superb, but the cover higher up the mountain is scanty. The summit pair were not camera minded, and none of the climbers who reached Camp VI thought to photograph the site. The American, Frost, who made a lone unsuccessful summit bid, took a series of pictures at 25,000 feet, but these are not shown.

This is a handsome and comprehensive book, as befits a Mount Everest Foundation publication, and there are nine appendices written by expedition members, and a glossary of terms for the general reader.

E.F.J.

Mountaineering in the Alps. CLAIRE ELIANE ENGEL. George Allen & Unwin, 1971. £5.25.

The casual reader, without some previous knowledge of alpine history and geography, would find this historical survey somewhat difficult to digest. The discussion of the first ascent of Mont Blanc, for instance, presents the four chief protagonists, Paccard, Balmat, Bourrit and De Saussure, rather differently from older accounts of the struggle to reach the summit. The narrative is spun around this and other major developments—the Matterhorn, the Dru, the North Wall of the Eiger—together with consideration of changes in climbing techniques, of the development of winter mountaineering and of the influence of the alpine clubs. In consequence the presentation is occasionally haphazard and shows signs of incomplete revision, with similar comments on an incident or climber appearing in more than one section. Perhaps we can more readily excuse a foreign author writing in a strange tongue for the information that Haston was the one Englishman to complete the first direct winter ascent of the North Wall, than the occasional misspellings of proper names that caught the eye.

The whole approach, despite its shortcomings, has a freshness and character that encourages some consideration of the philosophy of the climber. The interested reader will find a most useful summary of the earliest approaches to the mountains and a good chronological bibliography, although it is difficult to accept that a factual chapter on mountains in war-time fits tidily within the general structure. The modern photographs 'in keeping with the changed aspect of alpine mountaineering' as the dust-cover has it, are unfortunately

not as informative as might have been hoped, or indeed as the earlier illustrations from other sources are. This book complements well the historical surveys written a few years ago to commemorate the centenaries of the Alpine Club and the Matterhorn ascent, and will be enjoyed particularly by those members who have an interest in the development of their recreation.

R.L.M.

CLIMBING JOURNALS

We have received several Journals of Kindred Clubs, and we express our thanks for these interesting publications, which can be found in the Club Library.



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