

The Cairngorm Club Journal



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Drawings by Keith A. Fraser

Cartoon by Norman Shepherd

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In search of mountain flowers

ALEX TEWNION

The particular feature that attracted me to the mountains of South Norway was the mountain flora. I knew that the mountain plants of Britain and Scandinavia share many affinities, that the richness and variety found on the Scandinavian mountains contrast very favourably with our own undoubtedly impoverished mountain flora, and that flowers that are scarce or rare here are common there. However, since seeing for oneself usually brings a personal satisfaction transcending mere second-hand knowledge, high summer one year found my family up on the Sognefjell at 1,200 metres, driving through cuttings in deep snow drifts and looking for a suitable spot to park so that Doreen and our children, Lesley and Hamish, could get out and enjoy the sun while I examined the flowers. The mountain scenery also demanded attention. A few kilometres to the south rose the spiry peaks of the Hurrungadn mountains, and equally eye-catching was the greeny-blue sheen of glaciers that hugged the steep slopes and corries of these westerly lying flankers of the Jotunheimen. Once halted, a few steps took us up a bank on to the gently undulating fjell, here partly covered with a shrubby heath composed largely of crowberry, blaeberry, cowberry and other dwarf shrubs. Beside a lichen-encrusted boulder grew a patch of purple-flowered heather. It looked vaguely unfamiliar and I peered more closely at it. The bells were large, deep purple in colour, and unmistakable – it was *Phyllodoce coerulea*, the blue mountain heath.

Avoiding the numerous patches of melting snow I walked about for a few minutes and examined various plants to get my eye in. Wherever I glanced, it seemed, the *Phyllodoce* was growing beside the low rocks which dotted the fjell. The sight gave cause for some satisfaction. Within a few minutes of arriving in the mountains, quite by chance I had stumbled on a profusion of flowers of one of the species I had come hoping to photograph – one rare at home, common here. Although the blue mountain heath is a sub-arctic plant with an almost circumboreal distribution, in Britain it grows only in a few spots in Badenoch and Atholl and is one of our rarest mountain plants. Until a few years ago its only known site in Scotland was on the Sow of Atholl. The flowers are purple at first but turn blue later, hence *coerulea*. In Scotland, as in Norway, the species grows in sites with late

snow cover in spring and there are other understandable similarities of habitat, though the Scottish sites lie at much steeper angles than those I saw on Sognefjell and elsewhere in Norway.

Another very attractive snowbed heath species that I photographed on Sognefjell was *Harrimanella hypnoides*, probably better known to most mountain plant lovers as *Cassiope hypnoides*, the mossy mountain-heather. It is not found in Britain. As this small shrub attains only about 5 centimetres in height, and the specimens I found were growing in the middle of carpets of the least willow, *Salix herbacea* – so common also on Scottish hills – it was difficult to see its slender moss-like branches among the relatively broad spreading leaves of the willow. The heather's short erect stems with their terminal drooping white bells seemed to spring straight from the willow leaves. Nearby on more open ground among lichens and trifid rush grew tufts of *Lychnis alpina*, the red alpine catchfly. This attractively-flowered plant with its rather grass-like leaves is another very rare mountain species in Britain, in Scotland occurring only on serpentine outcrops near the summit of one of the Clova hills. While I knelt in the meltwater to photograph it I became aware that the light had dulled. Clouds were rolling across the mountains and spilling down the glaciers towards the fjell. But I had time to feel only a momentary regret. As I gazed across the fjell a sparrow-sized black and white bird alighted on a boulder only 50 metres away and emitted a burst of loud, sweet, whistling notes. A cock snow-bunting! I now realised I had been so engrossed in examining the flowers that I had successfully been ignoring snow-bunting song in the background for some considerable time – an admission that will surprise those of my ornithological friends who know of my 20-years study of this bird in the Cairngorms. Later as we motored slowly along the Sognefjell road I counted five cocks with food in bills in a one-kilometre stretch. The terrain was not unlike the high stony plateau of the Cairngorms but the mosaic carpeting of dwarf heath with its admixture of herbaceous species here provided a richer vegetation which undoubtedly nourished large numbers of insects and other invertebrates on which the snow-buntings could feed. In this part of Norway, however, as in Scotland, the snow-bunting occupies marginal habitat at the southern limit of its breeding distribution and I may have been lucky to see such a number in a small area at an altitude equal to that of the summit of Ben Macdhui but only a few degrees of latitude farther north. Perhaps numbers are increasing here at present, just as they have been in the Cairngorms since about 1970. From a knoll at the roadside I watched two cocks

flying purposefully across the fjell and alighting on heaps of jumbled scree, where they vanished into holes to feed their young. Even at 100 metres the loud chirping of the feeding nestlings was plainly audible. This decided me. Next day if the weather cleared I would return and inspect the nests, search for others, and perhaps obtain a few pictures. Meantime rain had begun falling and the green glacial rivers and lakes with their snow-and-ice-floes dimmed and disappeared as the rain increased to a downpour. We motored 30 kilometres north to Rysheim and camped in dismal weather. With only one naturalist in a family of four the odds were against my returning to the Sognefjell to study snow-buntings unless a sunny spell intervened, while the nearby Galdhøpiggen, highest peak of the Jotunheimen and an alternative focal point of our interests, held no attraction for Lesley, Hamish or myself in the miserable conditions prevailing.

Having only a limited time in Norway, after three days hanging about we changed plans, moved east and leaving our car at Hövringen on the outskirts of Rondane National Park, set off on a walking tour in the Rondane mountains. The weather seemed to be improving. Dark clouds still hung over the Jotunheimen but the sun shone warmly at Hövringen and the peaks of Rondane beckoned ahead. A gravelled road ran 5 kilometres eastwards to a small lake, stocked with trout for anglers. We followed the road across a moor covered with dense thickets of dwarf birch and dwarf juniper, the birch growing much more luxuriantly than in Scotland and reaching about 40 centimetres in height. Redstarts flitted about in the juniper thickets and wheatears chucked on the open moor. Beyond the lake a footpath led us past a large pool in the middle of a marsh where a greenshank called anxiously, probably with chicks, while another anxious parent, a peregrine falcon, betrayed its nest site by flying backwards and forwards and making a tremendous fuss at a crag above. The lower hill slopes here were so thickly covered with a dominant yellow lichen, *Cladonia alpestris*, that hundreds of acres literally bore a yellow carpet. Our feet sank 5 or 6 centimetres in it at every step. This yellow quickly changed to grey when a chill east wind sprang up and brought a return of the rain. Passing Per Gyntyttå – named after Peer Gynt, the Rondane being Peer Gynt's country where seemingly he associated with mountain trolls – we trudged on in increasingly heavy, ice-cold rain and were soon soaked, Lesley being particularly miserable as she was suffering from mosquito bites and now felt quite ill and light-headed. Nothing else but to push on, though, and at length we saw ahead the long narrow lake, Rondvatnet, with at its mouth the

mountain chalet of Rondvassbu where we intended staying the night. Following a slippery descent on a steep muddy path we soon got cleaned up by having to wade through floodwaters to reach the bridge over the river, the chalet being on the far side. The main building was very large (for a mountain hut), comfortable and warm, fortunately for us, for last call for dinner was just sounding. After booking in we had dinner straight away, still in our wet clothes.

After dinner we experienced the greatest disappointment of our Norwegian trip – nothing to do with the Norwegians, I hasten to add: throughout our 25-day stay all we met were consistently friendly, considerate and helpful. No; it was when Doreen and I came to unpack our new packframe Karrimor sacs to change into dry clothing and found our dry changes wetter than those we were wearing! The new nylon sacs had leaked badly at the seams and every item in them bar my camera equipment – which I had wrapped separately in polythene bags – had got soaked. How we regretted dispensing with our old frame rucksacks. Uncomfortable they no doubt were compared with the packframes, but at least they were waterproof. But Rondvassbu possessed a most efficient drying room and in another hour or so we were again dry and warmly clad. Discussing the matter afterwards with some Norwegians, we learned they had encountered the same problem with modern nylon sacs and either lined each pocket with a large polythene bag or had a waterproof outer cover for the whole sac. These remarks on rucksacks are included in the hope that some reader may benefit from our experience and thoroughly test a newly purchased nylon sac before using it in remote regions. We were lucky because our goal that night had been a serviced mountain hut; had we been camping we could easily have landed in difficulty.

About the mountain chalet at Rondvassbu. Before leaving Scotland we had become members of Den Norske Turistforening (the Norwegian Mountain Travel Association, DNT for short), which owns networks of mountain huts throughout the ranges of South Norway. These huts are so conveniently situated at anything from a few hours' to a day's walk from each other that walking tours to suit most hikers are easily planned. Nobody seeking overnight accommodation is turned away, since even when a hut is already fully occupied, mattress, blankets and a space on the living room floor can usually be provided. At one hut we stayed in later, Gjendebu in south Jotunheimen, hikers even slept in the hallway and on staircase landings one exceptionally busy night. Rondvassbu however was quite large, with accommodation for about 150 people. Our intention was to stay

in it for a couple of nights and climb Rondslottet, Rondane's highest peak at 2,183 metres. But, as frequently happens, our plans went agley. I still like climbing a mountain occasionally, but only if I can enjoy a view from it and take photographs unimpeded by mist or rain. On this occasion the rain was past a joke, even to the Norwegians who seemed to go everywhere in the mountains perpetually clad in water-proofs. Some of them even wore rubber boots in preference to climbing boots. But even rubber boots were now useless for a crossing of the bridge at the mouth of Rondvatnet – the lake had risen about two metres and the footbridge was a tiny isolated object in the middle of a roaring flood. Its footboards were awash but miraculously it was not swept away. Next evening when five hikers arrived on the far side and a boat had to be sent out to ferry them across, it transpired they had not intended visiting Rondvassbu at all but another hut farther east which they had been unable to reach because of another unfordable river about one kilometre from it. Altogether they had walked 50 kilometres that day, practically non-stop.

When the rain eventually eased, Doreen and I walked up to the foot of the Rondslottet ridge, passing on the way late-flowering patches of mountain *Loiseleuria* bedecked with tiny china-pink bells. Other plants in flower included blue mountain-heath, cowberry, alpine catchfly, red campion, starry saxifrage and *Polygonum viviparum*, while the few birds populating the slopes were meadow pipits and wheatears. At Rondvassbu a recently fledged family of pied wagtails flitted about the buildings looking for scraps and three house martins hawked for insects over the lake. That evening the rain ceased and by next morning the level of the lake had dropped more than a metre. With streams once more fordable, numerous parties of walkers packed up and left. We too moved out and hiked eastwards through Illmandalen to another DNT chalet at Bjornholia, a short walk of 12 kilometres but thoroughly enjoyable as Illmandalen resembles a glorified Lairig Ghru. Steep snow-patched slopes rose on either hand, on our left reaching to around 2,000 metres in altitude and only a little less on the right. Clumps of a bushy willow, *Salix glauca*, grew by the path lower down and on damper ground by the stream; but up towards the summit of the pass at over 1,200 metres we again entered the more barren country of snow-buntings. Snow-birds were surprisingly common, with newly fledged young being fed by their parents every 100 metres or so alongside the path. With about a dozen families on this stretch, snow-buntings here were commoner than wheatears and meadow pipits. In the Rondane 10 years ago, snow-buntings were as scarce

as in the Cairngorms then, so that here too a noticeable, perhaps even remarkable, increase has occurred. Almost as interesting in another way was the presence of a woodland plant, *Trientalis europaea* (chickweed wintergreen), which was flowering here in snow-bunting habitat along with the heathy shrubs, alpine catchfly, etc., that I have already described for the Sognefjell.

Along the highest part of Illmandalen was a chain of shapely small lakes with common sandpipers calling and curtseying on their banks. Over the watershed, bramblings flitted among the thickets of *Salix glauca* and purple splashes of crowberry juice and seeds on flat-topped rocks suggested some kind of thrush – probably fieldfares, which we saw on reaching the widespread birch woods above Bjornholia and again next day on the open hillside above the tree line. Bjornholia occupied an ideal site on the eastern border of Rondane, in a hollow near a small lake and surrounded by birch-clad foothills. We spent two nights there, then hiked southwest up the valley of Musvoldalen and across an extensive grassy heath, apparently ideal for dotterel – though we saw only one cock with a very young chick, in addition to several golden plovers – to the mountain hamlet of Mysusetter where we stayed overnight in a comfortable, scrupulously clean *pensjonat* (boarding house).

The rest of our Norwegian visit continued in similar vein. We camped a few days at Dovre and while the others rested and sunbathed at the camp-site I motored on two successive days to Dovrefjell to photograph arctic-alpine plants. The more interesting species included *Saussurea alpina* and *Bartsia alpina*, the latter rare in Britain, and *Astragalus norvegicus* and *A. frigidus*, two milkvetches which do not grow in Britain. Another was an orange-petalled variety of yellow mountain saxifrage, *Saxifraga aizoides*. I have not seen this variety in Scotland – where the normal yellow-flowered type is common in wet stony places in the mountains – but since both varieties were growing side by side on Dovrefjell the genetic difference presumably is small and the mutant may yet appear in Scotland (I have seen similar plants in Switzerland).

Towards the close of our Norwegian tour Doreen, Hamish and I passed a couple of days walking in south Jotunheimen in the neighbourhood of Lake Bygdin, where we stayed a night at Eidsbugaren and another in the DNT hut, Gjendebu, at the head of Lake Gjende. Conditions for mountain photography were again disappointing. Clouds and drizzle prevailed and shrouded the peaks and glaciers on either side of Svartdalen when we crossed the pass to Gjendebu,



Hahnenmoos, Wildstrubel beyond

[photo by Alex. Tewnton



Rondvassbu, a DNT hut in Rondane

[photo by Alex. Tewnton

tantalisingly lifting and falling, lifting and falling again so that we caught only fleeting glimpses of jagged ridges above and a glacier snout 200 metres distant across the valley. But again the mountain plants made my day. Among others I photographed – despite the drizzle – a mountain variety of the Scottish bluebell with only one terminal flower per stem; and a most striking lousewort, named *Pedicularis sceptrum-carolinum* in honour of the Swedish King Charles XII. Other species new to me were the dwarf fleabane, *Erigeron uniflorus*, whose single-headed stems with yellow disk-flowers and purple rays decorated grassy patches among stones; and the glacier buttercup, *Ranunculus glacialis*, which grew in the most barren spots affected by solifluction. At first I thought there were two varieties of this species – one white-flowered, the other purple – until I found a plant with both colours of flowers growing on it. This apparently is quite normal; I read later that the petals, at first white, change through pink to purple. On a dry stony bank at Gjendebu I photographed alpine cat's foot, *Antennaria alpina*, a plant similar to our own common cat's foot or mountain everlasting. Cottongrass can make quite an attractive picture given suitable conditions and next day during a sunny spell on the return to Lake Bygdin via Vesladalen I could not resist photographing an especially fine cluster of the arctic cottongrass, *Eriophorum scheuchzeri*. Equally irresistible proved a clump of roseroot, so familiar at home on cliff ledges and crannies by the sea and on the higher hills. But this clump was growing by the pathside on as level a stretch of ground as we had covered all day and I snapped it with Hamish kneeling beside it and studying it intently, the ideal image of a budding botanist.

Interesting though had been this Norwegian visit, the mountain plants observed were mainly species that flourish in acidic soils. To see the other side of the picture, as it were, a visit to a region with basic soils was indicated. The Bernese Oberland in the Swiss Alps seemed ideal for such a trip, partly because the mountains are of limestone, partly because, by joining an organised tour, finances would not be overstrained. Thus it was that, sans children, sans car, sans camping gear and most of our usual impedimenta, Doreen and I found ourselves in circumstances that until now we had abhorred – in a fixed base and associated with a party of complete strangers. However, the hotel, located in Adelboden in the Engstligen valley, was quite comfortable and as our associates proved to be very pleasant, an agreeable routine was soon established. Since I was the only botanising member of the party and the others were walkers, not climbers, this routine can be

easily guessed – during the day I usually went my own way alone and the others mostly went in a group led by the party courier, walking in the valleys or on the lower mountains. When planning the trip I had read that Engstligenalp at the head of the valley was an excellent site for alpine flowers, consequently a couple of days after arrival I joined a locally arranged botanical excursion to the alp. Led by a German-speaking Swiss, the plant-hunting group formed a motley crowd composed of at least half a dozen nationalities, oddly enough including three Scots – Doreen, myself, and even more oddly another member of the Cairngorm Club,* one of our Adelboden party who had decided to accompany Doreen for the day.

Travelling by bus and gondola car we were soon at 2,000 metres altitude on the floor of the alp, an enormous, level, richly verdant arena about $1\frac{1}{2}$ kilometres square and walled on three sides by steep snow slopes and sheer cliffs of the Steghorn (3,147 metres), Wildstrubel (3,243 metres) and other rather lower mountains. Once on the alp our guide was in his element and led us from one spot to another, discoursing the while on the habits and habitats of the wonderful variety of lime-loving flowers – but of course all in Swiss-German of which I understood about one word in ten. Terms like 'Zwerg-Mannschild', 'Immergrüner Steinbrech' and 'Bärtige Glockenblume' flowing from his lips meant nothing to me, but an English-speaking French Algerian who was accompanied by his German wife providentially solved my difficulties. My queries regarding nomenclature were passed in French to his wife, who in German elicited the desired information from the guide and relayed it in French to her husband, who in turn told me the English or Latin name. A week later when I was the only English speaker on another botanical excursion to a mountain ridge in a different valley I had to fend for myself; but by then, having recalled sufficient German to ask 'Die Lateinische Name, bitte', I managed tolerably well. In addition I had obtained a copy of Professor Landolt's little book, *Unsere Alpenflora*, and found it extremely useful. It listed the Latin, French and English names in parallel columns, and also gave the German and Latin names under descriptions of individual species.

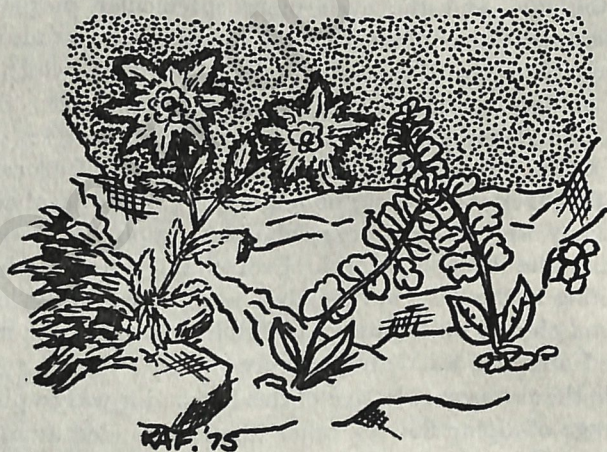
Immediately after my first visit to Engstligenalp there followed several days of snowstorms high up, cloud and rain low down. But the return of the sun took me once again up to the alp, where I spent a further four delightful days mainly photographing alpinists in a variety of habitats on the level floor, on rocky knolls and ridges and on

* Eva McLennan.

the surrounding slopes. The non-botanical reader would find detailed lists or series of descriptions equally dull but I think brief mention of several calcicolous species that I considered especially attractive is justified. The white alpine anemone, *Pulsatilla alpina*, with white petals delicately tinged with blue is one; another the alpine snowbell, *Soldanella alpina*, with pale violet, pendulous bell-shaped flowers deeply cut into narrow segments. This plant graced snowbeds and snowpatches and in several places, truly an astonishing spectacle, its flowers protruded through holes their unfolding stalks had made in the snow. A dainty little plant, the alpine toadflax, *Linaria alpina*, beautified otherwise bare scree patches with its terminal clusters of orange-blotched violet flowers. Here and there the tops of angular limestone blocks were thickly covered with white or cream-flowered carpets of the livelong saxifrage, *Saxifraga aizoon*. On level grassy patches grew a most striking orchid – *Nigritella nigra* – with small dark-red flowers grouped in dense terminal spikes. Gentians included the trumpet gentian *Gentiana clusii* with magnificent large blue flowers pointing towards the sun, and the even more spectacular purple gentian *Gentiana purpurea*. Other plants that my camera found irresistible were the two species of brilliant red-flowered alpenroses, which are not roses at all but rhododendrons – *Rhododendron hirsutum*, the hairy alpenrose, and *R. ferrugineum* which is just called alpenrose (this latter grows on acidic soils as well as on limestone). And of course I could not leave the Oberland without photographing the flower that perhaps more than any other has come to symbolise the alpine flora – edelweiss. This species has become rare in Switzerland through thoughtless overcollecting in the past, but luckily I was advised of the location of a number of clumps on a massive limestone knob in a nature reserve and there I obtained the desired pictures.

While the primary objective of this Swiss visit was to photograph a wide range of alpine flowers, other items demanded attention from time to time. One unnatural phenomenon that could not be ignored was the supersonic bangs created by jet-fighters of the Swiss Air Force. These were deliberately done to avalanche the vast masses of newly fallen snow and make the peaks safe for climbers. On a much smaller scale but more pleasing to ear and mind, the wild whistlings of alpine marmots resounded across the boulder-fields littering the slopes on the few occasions I tried to stalk these animals – always unsuccessfully, for this species proved to be much wilder than the hoary marmots I had stalked and photographed in the Canadian Rockies a few years earlier. Other cherished memories include sight of a swallowtail

butterfly at 2,200 metres on a ridge of the Tierberg, a flock of 140 alpine choughs probing for insect larvae in the grassy floor of Engstligenalp, a family of snow finches in what I would regard as typical snow-bunting habitat below the snowy slopes and crags of Wildstrubel, an alpine hare loping easily up an alpine ridge, the sweet heady scent rising on a hot sunny day from the incredible luxuriance of wild flowers adorning a steep slope above Hahnenmoos; and, equally unforgettable yet so very different, the wild jangling carillon-like music that chimed all day long across the broad basin of Engstligenalp from the cow-bells worn by herds of cattle up for the summer grazing.





Machapuchare



Dhaulagiri

[photos by H. D. Whitehouse

1974 – a vintage year

H. D. WHITEHOUSE

On 1 January, we left Florida on our way home from Costa Rica. We had been there as members of an astronomical expedition to observe the comet Kohoutek and also an annular eclipse of the sun. We had a camp on the Pacific coast, a short distance from beautiful sandy beaches where one could sunbathe all day and the water was always warm. It was good to watch the sun go down into the sea every evening and afterwards to study the constellations with the aid of modern telescopes. What a place to spend Christmas, far from the dull skies and damp cold at home!

In March we left with a party of twenty people – including three members of the Cairngorm Club* – for a trek in Nepal under the guidance of a very competent leader provided by Bales' tours. We spent two days in Delhi and went to Agra to see the Taj Mahal. The short flight from Delhi to Kathmandu gave us superb views of some of the world's highest mountains. Kathmandu is a fascinating mixture of the old and the new – Buddhist temples, modern buildings, bazaars full of exotic goods and a supermarket in the course of being built by old and well-tried and very labour-intensive methods. Inevitably, modern hotels and banks and offices are changing the character of the old city, but the ancient temples and statues were being repaired and the Nepalese are obviously proud of their heritage. We found everyone very friendly and there were few obvious signs of the appalling poverty so often seen in the Indian sub-continent. Another short flight over the mountains took us to Pokhara where our trek was to commence. Each day we would walk about 8 or 10 miles to a camp site where tents and food would be provided for us. All we had to contribute was our own sleeping bag. Our porters comprised a large band of men and three girls and we also had one charming and super-efficient Sherpani. Everything was carried on human backs and all the party seemed happy, singing as they strode along with the most daunting loads – apparently 60 kilos is quite a normal load in these parts. Mostly we were going up or down very steep paths where wheeled traffic is unknown and impossible. Many of the fields were being ploughed ready for spring sowing of the staple foods, principally rice. We were generally about 8,000 feet above sea level and there were

* Leslie Hay, Millicent Whitehouse, Harry Whitehouse.

many small villages. The snow-line in these parts seems to be around 15,000 feet at this time of year, though we did have some wet snow falling at just over 10,000 feet on one occasion. As we progressed we had occasional glimpses of snow covered mountains, particularly Annapurna and Machapuchare, but unfortunately the weather was often cloudy and we had quite a lot of rain.

Our furthest and highest camp should have provided us with magnificent views of the Annapurna range, but heavy rain clouds prevented all but a few photographs being taken. We were, however, able to get plenty of pictures of people as our camp sites and lunch stops always attracted a crowd of children if we were near a village. Quite often a villager would come and play us a tune on a locally made fiddle. Several of the villages had schools and some of the children could speak a little English. We also met some Gurkhas on leave and one of them gave us a resumé of the Chancellor's Budget. In spite of the rain, water was often a problem at camp sites though our cook never failed to provide copious supplies of tea. We also filled our water bottles with tea for the day's march. The rhododendron display, so we were told, was not up to its usual splendour, but we did see a lot of tree orchids and magnolia trees in bloom. Occasionally we would have tantalising glimpses of the great mountains, but the photographer had to be quick! Our last camp on the shore of a lake was reached by dugout canoe. From here we were able to walk right to our aeroplane. Our Sherpas presented each of us with the ceremonial white scarf and we felt sad to be parting from our hardworking Sherpas and porters who had looked after us so well.

In July we joined a Wildlife Safari to Indonesia, the party being made up of eight Swiss and us two Britishers. This party of ten assembled in Frankfurt and we flew to Singapore by Lufthansa. We only had a short time there, but gained the impression of a prosperous and rapidly growing city. We were told that 60 per cent of the population is under 25 years of age. From Singapore we flew on to Medan, the capital of northern Sumatra. We found the service on Garuda Indonesian airways equal to anywhere and the stewardesses ahead of anywhere else in beauty, elegance and manner. After our arrival in Sumatra we had a long drive into the hills to Lake Toba. We were glad to reach a hotel and enjoy a shower and a sleep after a journey which had taken us nearly halfway round the world. Lake Toba is described as the pride of north Sumatra and lies in a setting of jungle-covered hills with villages along the shore and on the various islands. Some of these we were able to visit by boat and see something of the

way of life of the Batak people who live there. The Batak houses with their high, horn-shaped roofs are a characteristic and unique feature.

From Lake Toba we drove through tropical country, often stopping at wayside villages to talk to people or watch what they were doing or to buy the most delicious fruit, most of it of kinds we had never seen before. The land was obviously very fertile and we saw little sign of poverty, and most of the children seemed to be able to attend school. As we entered the jungle area and approached the rain forest where we were to camp, the road became worse and worse and the bridges unusable. However, we arrived eventually, long after dark, and were glad to find the tents ready for us in a clearing surrounded by all the noises of the jungle. A short walk from the camp led to a sparkling clear river which provided us with washing facilities and all other mod cons. This part of the country is where the orang-utans are found, and we were able to see several of these at a centre where some young animals are fed and protected in the hope of increasing the population. They were relatively tame and allowed themselves to be stroked, though they are quite free to wander in the jungle.

As we walked along the jungle trails, we saw lots of huge butterflies, while various kinds of monkeys chattered and screamed in the trees. Tree frogs and cicadas added their own contributions to the concert. We were told that there were no poisonous snakes in Sumatra, but we did see one very large snake which had been killed, so one rather wondered. Leeches were by far the worst feature, as they get inside shoes, travel up the inside of one's trousers, and, indeed, attach themselves anywhere so that constant vigilance is necessary. However, no serious harm seems to result from their attentions.

After leaving Sumatra, we visited Jakarta and Surabaya in Java. Both cities are growing rapidly and showing every sign of prosperity though one can still get about very cheaply in the cycle 'rickshaws'. The dances and shadow plays which we were able to see are a traditional feature and totally unlike anything we had seen before.

Our most distant point from home was the island of Bali, only around 2,000 miles from Australia. Bali has high volcanic mountains, rice paddies, tropical fruit in profusion, flowers everywhere and, of course, the world-famed beaches. Outrigger sampans with triangular brightly coloured sails look most picturesque. There are always plenty available to take tourists for a sail, and few can resist them. Again we watched dances, shadow plays and religious processions. The latter are very frequent and present an absolute riot of colour. The women wear their gayest sarongs, put flowers in their hair, and carry offerings

beautifully fashioned from palm leaf or flowers or even food. Apart from looking beautiful, the people seem to be artists in whatever they do. Whether they are just serving a meal, weaving cloth, pounding rice, carving wood or making silver ornaments, they seem always to be graceful in their movements and the end product is always pleasing to the eye. There are endless shops selling the locally made batik cloth which is most attractive to the tourist, especially those whose figures are not made for gay patterns. We would usually have our meals at a beach restaurant, just tables and chairs on the sand and a matting roof overhead. We will always remember the delicious freshly caught fish which was grilled to perfection and served with fresh limes.

On our way home we spent a day or two at Jogjakarta and were able to visit the world famous Buddhist temple at Borobudur – an enormous structure of stone with innumerable statues of Buddha and stone carvings of scenes from his life. Borobudur has been described as a religion in stone and it certainly inspires awe and wonder. After that, it was home via Jakarta, Singapore, Bangkok and farewell to our Swiss friends in Frankfurt.



The land where there is always room at the inn

JEAN MURRAY DOWNIE

I sailed from Tyne Commission Quay on a beautiful afternoon in late July 1974. My fears of sea-sickness were thus allayed and I enjoyed a restful dinner with a boisterous Norwegian nurse and a gentle English lady for company. We gossiped until midnight over our after-dinner brandies. Margaret Acors, who had travelled by train and plane from Wales, met me in Bergen at noon, after I had passed through customs, and we ate a large lunch in an upstairs restaurant overlooking a very busy main street.

We had decided to spend a walking holiday in the Jotunheimen. Margaret had planned a route so that we could stay overnight at manned mountain huts. We carried warm sleeping bags, for emergency use, and enough food to provide ourselves with several packed lunches. We both knew, from experience of previous trips to Norway, that money did not buy as much there as it did in Britain. Packed lunches could be bought at the manned huts and chocolate, fruit and postcards were usually on sale at the reception desks. We expected rain and were fully equipped to endure many wet days. My 'load' was 13 kilos and we never ceased to be amazed at how expert the Scandinavians were at travelling light. Their ladies' loads very seldom exceeded 9 kilos. I decided not to tempt the 'Weather Trolls' and carried only fifty-six transparencies. As a result we enjoyed 14 days of blue skies with bright sunshine reflecting off the high snows and, by the second day, I had used one complete film of thirty-six exposures. Our combined films were rationed from then on!

After lunch we left Bergen. In Norway the connections connect! We travelled by train to Voss then by bus - ferry - bus - fast boat and bus to reach Eidsbugarden by noon the next day. There we shouldered our loads and walked all afternoon, in a light drizzle, to Gjendebu. That night we were fortunate to have a double bunk room for ourselves but were on the second sitting for dinner. By the time the beautiful waitresses, dressed in national costume, had cleared and re-set the tables, we would have eaten the piping hot soup, succulent lamb and sweetest of sweets standing up in the reception area, but the civilising atmosphere provided by the coffee round the log fire with the paraffin lamps lit was well worth the wait. This hut received its supplies by boat, from the far end of the lake.

Next morning the weather had cleared, after a fresh fall of snow – just a dusting on the tops – and we set off determined to dine early. The Mamurubu hut accommodates about forty people. After our high plateau walk, with views of hanging glaciers, we arrived at 4.0 pm. In spite of our efforts we were on the third dinner sitting and were told we would be sleeping on the lounge floor!

The tiny dining room was separated from an even tinier lounge by painted sliding doors. The painted doors depicted scenes of travel in the Jotunheimen. As these doors opened, during the second sitting, we could see lapskans then rømmegrøt being served. We ate all four courses including second helpings of the two main ones. At 10.30 pm we were ushered into the miniature hallway. A tractor arrived in the darkness, and our mattresses – thick foam rubber – were tossed through the open lounge windows. The costumed girls arranged them on the floor, then we were ordered to remove our shoes and allowed to enter. Twenty tired walkers prepared for slumber. Margaret and I chose to use the hearth step of the fireplace as our pillow. A huge, young, bearded, teddy-bear of a Norwegian had the same idea and in seconds had tucked his lower half into his sleeping bag, lain down on his back, crossed his arms on his massive chest, and gone to sleep next to us. I thought wryly, 'He will snore all night and if he turns over I will be rolled flat'. At 6.30 am the painted doors opened and a waitress shouted 'WAK-OOP'. The teddy bear had neither snored nor moved. He blinked his blue eyes and was first up. The tractor arrived again, and the mattresses went as they had come. The twenty travellers who had slept together were at the first breakfast sitting because the teddy bear completely filled the door-way to the lounge which was the only access to the dining room.

On our way to Glitterheim next day, in the bright sunshine, our Scandinavian fellow travellers spent hours, on the route, sunbathing near patches of snow to ensure the utmost concentration of tanning rays. They lounged behind boulders on the well-marked track with their faces turned to the skies and their eyes tightly shut. We marched determinedly on. We would beat them all! We made good speed in a lather of perspiration – or was it sweat? At 4.30 pm, 8 kilometres from home, all the bronzed, long-legged giants and giantesses, dressed in bathing costumes, unhurriedly strode past us and disappeared along the track. We had a four-bunk room and the second sitting that night in a hut with beds for over 100, but at least we were not on the floor. We passed the hungry hour before our meal wallowing in a hot shower and washing our sticky clothes.

We pattered round the hut next morning, but, inspired by the gorgeous weather, we set out to climb Glittertind. By 3.0 pm we were triumphantly on top of the 10 metres of snow which caps this friendly mountain whose height varies with the snowfall of the current year. The view, from the top, of the snow-covered rolling mountains, had to be lingered over.

Next day, feeling very fit, we strode along the track through the now familiar rocky scenery to Spiterstulen. This hut was at the end of a dirt road and accessible by car. Grey-suited, elderly gentlemen and perfectly coiffured elegant ladies mingled contentedly with the walkers dressed in breeches and jerseys. They could probably have out-walked us if they had changed their footwear. There were no beds available. Very slowly and carefully the receptionist explained to us that they always kept one or two spare rooms for family groups or elderly people who came in late, but they would let us know. At 9.30 pm we had a bed. We were not a family group nor did we consider ourselves elderly. Perhaps these friendly people were being courteous to visitors from abroad!

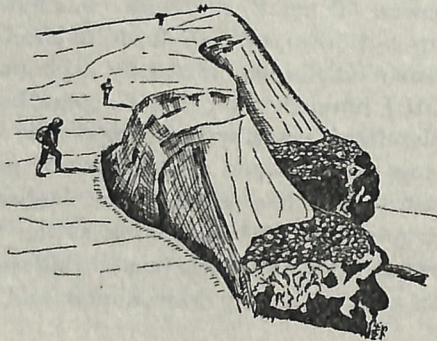
Guides were available, in the morning, to take parties across the glaciers and on to the top of Galdhöppigen. We hired instep crampons and signed on. Apart from one tough-looking wiry gentleman, the group were all 20 years younger than we were, but the two guides roped up our party of twenty, and we climbed through and over the glacier. The wiry gentleman translated the guide's story for us once he recognised my Scottish voice. He had spent part of the war years training on Rannoch Moor. We had an anchor man on our rope who spent the climb using a cine-camera. Unfortunately for our waists, he was always facing down-hill as we stepped forwards.

The roped part of the climb was not as gruelling as I expected, but the steep climb from the glacier-filled valley floor to the mountain top was. The boulders were too large for my short legs, but I made good use of my knees. 'Tomaas', the guide, was most conscientious, always climbing up and down, up and down, to check that I was still coming. On one such visit he confidentially explained to me that I would tire myself if I hurried but I had no spare breath to explain confidentially to *him* that it was physically impossible for me to hurry. I was last on the top, and he again consoled me by pointing out that I could now boast that I had climbed the highest mountain in Northern Europe. A snowstorm was raging at the time, and as it cleared my breath went again. The view was magnificent! We glissaded down using our feet as skis. Coming down a mountain in this manner,

on soft snow, is fast and exhilarating. We celebrated that night with a bottle of wine, because the huts do not sell spirits.

We then made our way to Leirvassbu where a homesick waitress – a Ross-shire student – enjoyed chatting with us between courses. Filled with the usual mammoth Norwegian breakfast from the groaning table of food provided each morning, we spent a day visiting Olavsbu – an unmanned hut – and the following day made our way downwards, through pine and birch woods to the Skogadalsbøen hut. It had been built on a natural promontory and commanded picturesque views both up and down the wooded valley – a nice change from rocks, lakes and snow. Here the custodian brewed and sold his own home-made beer which tasted like cider and could be quaffed a litre at a time. His home-baked bread was also worth sampling and was a packed lunch in itself – the filling was superfluous. His coffee was also fortifying. We chose the less-frequented route back to Eidsbugarden, meeting only one person that day. A Norwegian girl was walking on her own in the opposite direction. She too was complaining about the many 'stein'. Now we knew why it was the less popular track!

We completed our stay with a few rest days at Eidsbugarden, but how we wished that we were back on the high tops in such perfect weather. We opted for a change of route home which included travelling part of the way by coastal steamer down the Sogne Fjord. It rained all the way, and we sat and stared at dripping cliff walls across water peppered with rain. The tourists on board all seemed to be complaining about something – the prices; the food; the weather. We were stunned into silence. Had we come from another world? The bus from the boat at Newcastle would have missed the train connection north by ten minutes, but the train had been delayed forty minutes at York, so I caught it – I was home among British connections!



Midsummer excursions

J. E. BOTHWELL

In the Club *Journal* of 1932 there is a brief report of what is described as 'the Summer Solstice Excursion'. The then President, James McCoss, had a keen interest in astronomy as well as mountaineering, and although the high-sounding title did not survive his presidency the Midsummer Overnight Excursion introduced by him has featured in the Club programme now for more than 40 years. It has been my good fortune to have attended the first of these excursions and a good many since, and I hope that some personal recollections may be of interest to readers of the *Journal*.

The first Excursion was to Bennachie – not a very ambitious start, certainly, but from small beginnings great things develop. The night was cloudy and after visiting the Mither Tap we went on to Oxen Craig which was reached at 2.30 am. There, according to the official report, 'tea was partaken by the members'.

Perhaps I was not over-impressed with the possibilities thus opened up to members as I did not attend the Summer Solstice Excursion the following year. The loss was mine, however, for the *Journal* tells us that the excursion to Lochnagar in 1933 was so successful that 'the Club has probably never held an outing with more satisfactory results'. The Astronomer noted that Mars and Jupiter kept the party company all night and that Arcturus was also prominent at one point in the ascent.

In 1934 President William Malcolm took us through the Lairig Ghru. This excursion is described in more sober terms as having been in all respects a most enjoyable one. It is interesting to recall that we went up to Boat of Garten on the Speyside Excursion train, the fare being 3s. (which would have covered the return), and then on to Aviemore for a few pence more. It was a beautiful summer evening by the time we left Aviemore and I have particularly pleasant memories of my first walk through the Lairig.

I missed the excursion to Ben Avon the following year. The ascent was from Invercauld by the Bealach Dearg and the return over Carn Eas and down the Slugain. Conditions at the summit were described as calm and beautiful.

In 1936 we had a grand night for the Lairig an Laoigh. Again we set out from Aberdeen on the Speyside Excursion train and this duly landed us at Nethy Bridge, where high tea, now a recognised part

of the programme, was much enjoyed. It was a night for the heights, and I can remember a large party congregating at the Barns of Bynack around midnight. In spite of an order from the Chief Constable of Kincardine for silence during the hours of darkness, there was little peace. Some were up and going long before sunrise and the Shelter Stone had early morning visitors. For most of us it was sufficient to descend over A' Choinneach to the Avon and take the Lairig an Laoigh track to Derry and the Linn.

In 1937 it was again a Speyside to Deeside walk, but this was a special occasion. We were to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Club by a visit to its birthplace at the head of Loch Avon. This must have been about the last of the Club's journeys up Speyside by train, journeys which were in themselves a pleasure. It was a non-stop run to Dufftown after which there was a very interesting stretch of the line down the Fiddich to Craigellachie and then on up Speyside, following the bends of the river past pretty little stations like Ballindalloch, Advie and Cromdale. It was sad to see them again, a quarter of a century later, shabby and neglected. There is, however, a possibility that part at least of the line may be in use again before very long. I hope that as soon as a steam engine again pulls a train out of Boat of Garten for Aviemore our Committee will see fit to organise another Speyside to Deeside excursion and that the Club Circular will announce that the party will go by motor-coach to Boat of Garten and thence by rail to Aviemore Junction!

But I am digressing and must return to 1937. After tea at Nethy Bridge, we set off through the pine trees to Forest Lodge and on by the track to Rynethin and Ryvoan. From there parties went their various ways, some over Ben Bynack and some over Cairngorm, but all heading for the Shelter Stone. Most of us chose the line of least resistance and went up by the side of the stream between Ben Bynack and Cairngorm. It was a very pleasant walk for the first few miles but higher up there was rough going before we got to the Saddle, and by the time we were half-way along Loch Avon the light was fading with cloud low down the hillsides. Eventually all reached the Shelter Stone where President Dr David Levack presided over this special extraordinary meeting of the Club. About a dozen of us spent the next three hours under the Shelter Stone, and in the early morning we headed for the Linn by Coire Etchachan and Glen Derry. A few of the more ambitious members of the company left the Shelter Stone early intending to cross Ben Macdhuì. They failed to appear at the Linn by the appointed hour or within a reasonable time thereafter. To

wait or not to wait is a question which has plagued successive Presidents over the years, particularly on overnight excursions. It has now become recognised that the many must not suffer for the few and that a President must, after a reasonable time, give the order to move off, abandoning the laggards. A former Meets Secretary, E. W. Smith, took a hard line here and regarded late comers as lacking in consideration for others or just plain incompetent. A recovery operation has always been arranged, and the guilty parties have suffered nothing worse than on occasion missing a meal for which they had already paid.

In 1938 the overnight excursion was from Cockbridge over Ben Avon to Braemar, and in 1939 there was another Speyside to Deeside walk. I was unable to attend either of these excursions but gather from the *Journal* that both were duly carried through in spite of wind and bad weather.

Having given some account of the earlier overnight excursions and brought the record up to the beginning of the Second World War, I must skim over the next 35 years, with perhaps a brief reference to the highlights of that period. The activities of the Club were very much restricted till 1946, but there were a few overnight walks such as Ballater to Braemar over Lochnagar. In the early post-war years Speyside to Deeside was still the favourite route with Blair Atholl to the Linn of Dee as an occasional variation. I see from the records that there was a night in the Gaick and Drumochter area in 1948, when President E. B. Reid took some of the party over the Minigaig Pass from Glen Bruar to Glen Tromie.

It came to be realised, however, that the overnight excursion gave scope for going further afield, and in 1952, with President W. M. Duff, we set off on a Saturday afternoon for Tummel and Loch Rannoch. We were able to get our bus as far as the Hydro-Electric dam at the south-west end of Loch Ericht from where we made our various ways to Dalwhinnie. My outstanding recollection is of the view from the summit of Beinn Eibhinn. In the clear light of early morning, all the tops from Ben More and Ben Lui in the south round by the Black Mount and the Glencoe Hills to Ben Nevis stood out against a pale blue sky. To the east, however, there was not a hill to be seen, but curious humps of cloud like cotton wool rose here and there from a sea of mist. It took us a few moments to realise that the humps were Ben Alder and the summits across the Bealach Dubh. By 8.0 am we were coming off Carn Dearg to the Culrea path, and I venture to think that my good companions, Ruth Jackson and

Marion Hoggarth, have never, before or since, bagged four new Munros before breakfast-time on a Sunday morning!

Other good nights come to mind in abundance, but a special mention must be given to an 'allnighter' in the 1950s, which took us for the first time beyond the Great Glen. The route in 1959 was from Glen Cluanie to Loch Affric, which allowed of many interesting variations. It was a perfect night and I can remember a few of us resting at the summit of Sgùrr nan Conbhairean around midnight with a full moon coming up over the hills to the south of Glen Cluanie.

In the 1960s, the Grey Corries deserve at least a three-star rating for the overnight accommodation as well as for the three Munros crossed on the way to Glen Nevis. But the highlight of that decade, if not of a lifetime, must be the crossing in 1966 from the road above Dundonnell to Kinlochewe. None of us who climbed up from Loch an Nid in the early morning over the white quartz slabs on the east flank of Sgurr Ban will forget the magnificent view which we got from the summit, with the hills of Harris showing clearly across the Minch.

We are now half way through the 1970s, but it is unlikely that the Club will have a better midnight excursion than the second crossing from Glen Cluanie to Loch Affric in 1973. It would take a whole *Journal* to cover adequately the adventures of the various parties, but there can hardly have been a Munro within 5 miles of the head of Loch Affric which was not climbed that night. It is regrettable to have to record that the President's party failed to reach the bus on time next morning – or indeed within a reasonable time thereafter. This was certainly not due to lack of consideration for others and it cannot have been due to incompetence. Perhaps the party suffered from a surfeit of seniority, or perhaps the steep slopes of Sgùrr nan Ceathreamhnan should have been tackled the night before, but at 7.0 am on the summit we still felt that we had time to follow the ridge to An Socach and drop down to upper Glen Affric with three hours to reach the bus at the head of Loch Beinn a' Mheadhoin. We had, however, grossly underestimated the distance down the glen. It was some consolation to find that we were not the only defaulters, and a very real consolation to drink the tea which was brewed for us at the burn side. Apologies and thanks must, however, be recorded to the Meets Secretary, who organised the recovery operation, to the long-suffering Mr. Duguid, who had an extra round trip of some 40 miles, and to the rest of the party, who had to wait for us.

Perhaps a word of warning should be given to any members who have not yet been on a Summer Solstice Excursion and who may feel

tempted by what they have read to book for the next one. There are not always perfect nights and magnificent views from the summits with glorious mornings to follow. If truth be told, there have been nights of cloud and rain. On such a night there took place the Seventy-fifth Anniversary Excursion to the Shelter Stone in 1962, which will go down in history like the 'Wet Review'. There were snow showers on Beinn Dearg and Beinn a' Ghlo in 1957; the hills between Glen Shiel and Glen Quoich, enshrouded in mist, have baffled more than one party; but only once was the weather so atrocious that the programme had to be abandoned. In 1961 we arrived at Inveroran on a wild night of wind and rain, and it was decided not to attempt crossing the tops of the Black Mount. The bus was taken round to Kingshouse Inn as it was thought that conditions there might be better. Only one party, however, consisting of three strong lady climbers, had the courage to set out for the hills. The rest of us sought temporary shelter in Kingshouse Inn before returning to spend a cramped and almost sleepless night in the bus. Any fears for the safety of our ladies were allayed next morning when they re-appeared, looking remarkably fresh and cheerful, if modestly reticent about their overnight activities. It transpired later that they had spent a comfortable night half a mile away in the Ladies' Scottish Climbing Club hut at Black Rock!

A recent recruit to the Club, examining the Summer programme with interest and apparently regarding the Midsummer Excursion with some misgivings, asked, 'What do you *do* all night?' It is as difficult to answer that question as it is to fill in the required particulars of your intended route in the Meets Secretary's notebook, which is now circulated in the bus. On the overnight Excursion from Glen Quoich to Glen Shiel a few years ago it would have needed the gift of second sight to enable two ladies to state their route which turned out to be – Sgurr a' Mhaoraich, Kinlochhourn, breakfast at the big house, a lift to Invergarry, rejoining the bus at Invermoriston – all of which goes to show one never knows what one will do from one day to the next!



Cairns

PATRICK W. SCOTT

The Scots are a nation of cairn builders. Conical piles of stones, loosely thrown together, are to be found in profusion throughout our country. Nearly every hill in Scotland from Brimmond to Ben Nevis has a cairn on its summit. No climber worthy of the name is satisfied until he has reached and indeed touched the cairn. Most of these cairns are of fairly modern origin as are those which have been erected in order to indicate a path whose exact position might otherwise tend to become obscure. A great line of cairns now guides the intrepid climber from the top of the Ski-Lift to the summit of Cairngorm.

There are, however, very ancient cairns which the walker may come across. Their positions on maps are usually indicated in Gothic lettering. There are many places in the North-East where ancient cairns are situated, so let me give a few examples. Cairns are located on Brimmond Hill near Aberdeen, on Craiglich Hill between Tarland and Lumphanan, on the Correen Hills, on Craig Dhubh near Braeroddach Loch about a mile north of the Dinnet-Aboyne road, on Abbey Hill and Hill of Rowan in Glen Esk, and on Noth Hill near Rhynie.

In many cases, when these cairns have been opened, they have been found to contain sepulchral urns. The Celtic peoples seem to have favoured this form of burial and such urns have been discovered wherever the Celts have settled. The earliest cemeteries or urnfields of the Celts have been found in Austria and Bohemia. These urnfields often yield examples of Celtic ornaments, weaponry and household articles, many embellished with the distinctive abstract designs for which the Celts are famous.

From their earliest homeland in Central Europe, the Celts migrated to Western Europe and eventually to the British Isles. Some authorities believe that they first reached our shores as early as 1800 B.C. They naturally brought with them many traditions including that of raising a cairn over a grave.

Cairn-building is referred to in ancient Gaelic manuscripts. The 'Duan Eireanach', an Irish poem, gives a description of the erection of a family cairn while the 'Senchus Mòr', a collection of laws, prescribes a fine of three cows for 'not building the cairn of thy chief'.

The tribes of ancient Gaeldom would gather at a cairn to settle matters of importance. A new king or 'righ' was inaugurated at the cairn of one of his predecessors. Here, the righ was given a ritual drink by the druids of the tribe. This act signified the union of the righ with the mother-spirit of his domain. A rod of authority was handed to him while the bards extolled his worthiness in specially composed poems. The professional historian of the tribe, the seanchaidh, recited his exalted genealogy. A famous illustrated manuscript, now in Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, shows a seanchaidh reciting the descent of the boy-king Alexander III at his coronation at Scone in 1249. The druids would also present the righ with several 'gessa' or taboos which, if broken, would not only bring shame upon the king but also disaster to the tribe. From the day of his cairn-inauguration, the righ was regarded as a sacred personage, hide-bound by traditions. He settled disputes, led his people in battle and represented them at inter-tribal meetings. His character had to be above reproach and his body remain unblemished by any form of disfigurement during his kingship, otherwise he would forfeit his position among his people.

The Gaelic for cairn is 'càrn' and the Highlanders have the interesting phrase 'fear air charn' which means literally 'a man on a cairn' but is used to mean an outlaw. In certain parts of the Highlands it used to be the custom to erect a cairn over the place where an outlaw was buried.

In mediaeval times, cairns are often referred to as boundary marks though they were not originally built for this purpose. In 1221 A.D., King Alexander II, granting the lands of Burgyn to the monks of Kinross, describes the boundary as passing 'from the great oak of Malevin as far as "Rune Pictorum"', which is explained as meaning the 'Carne of the Pecht's fieldis', the cairn of the Pict's fields.

The habit of erecting a cairn as a memorial to the dead is a custom still common. Many of our war-memorials are built in the form of cairns. A great cairn marks the site of the Battle of Culloden and of the graves of the Highlanders. Queen Victoria had a cairn erected at Balmoral in memory of her husband Albert.

To be buried in a grave without the shriving benefits of a priest would have filled the Highlanders with abhorrence. The soul of such a person suffered hideous torment in the hottest part of purgatory, a tradition common throughout Christendom. And so, the custom arose for the passer-by to add a stone to the cairn erected above the grave of the unshriven deceased and at the same time to pray for his soul's

release from torment. We have the well-known phrase 'Cuiridh mi clach 'nad charn' (I'll put a stone on your cairn) by which we mean that a person's memory will be kept alive.

Before the extension of our road system to the Highlands and the coming of the internal combustion engine, a funeral was often a very difficult undertaking. The churchyard might be many miles from the dead man's croft and his relations and friends would have to carry the coffin along rough tracks which wound through woods and bogs, along glens and over mountain passes. From time to time the mourners would stop to rest, and the custom arose of erecting a cairn at the place where a funeral procession had halted. Wayfarers were expected to add a stone to the cairn and pray for the deceased.

Adding a stone to a cairn is generally believed to bring good-luck, and certainly most climbers will add one to the cairn on the summit of a hill. I myself always do so with a feeling of relief and a prayer of thankfulness that another thrawn Munro has been conquered. Over forty Munros incorporate 'càrn' or 'cairn' in their names.

For example we have:

'Càrn Nan Fiaclan' (266), The Cairn of the Teeth

'Càrn An Rìgh' (98), The King's Cairn

'Càrn Balloch' (264), The Speckled Cairn.

No fewer than four Munros share the name 'Geal Charn', White Cairn.

In Aberdeenshire, 'Càrn', or 'Cairn', names occur frequently. However, in East Aberdeenshire, the Gaelic 'càrn', is very rare, being almost universally replaced by the Anglicised form 'cairn'. Here we find Cairnmore (Rathven), the Big Cairn; Cairnglass (Lonmay), the Grey Cairn and Cairncummer (Old Deer), the Cairn of the Confluence.

However, in West Aberdeenshire, especially in the upland part of the county, the 'càrn' form preponderates. Here the old language survived much longer, and indeed at the beginning of the century native Gaelic speakers were to be found in the Braemar district. 'Càrn' was commonly used to describe a rocky hill of a conical shape, and amongst the càrns of this area we have

Càrn a' Gheoidh (175), The Goose's Cairn

Càrn Bhac (217), The Cairn of Banks

Càrn Ime, Butter Cairn

and Càrn Cruimm, The Rounded Cairn.

'Càrn' appears in at least sixty place-names in West Aberdeenshire.

An interesting càrn in this area is Càrn Ghille gun Triubhas, the Hill of the Lad without Trousers. The tale is told of a Braemar lad

who, after the '45, took strong exception at being compelled by law to discontinue the wearing of the kilt. Long after more timid souls had complied with the new ruling, he was to be seen in broad day-light going about his business clad in his beloved kilt. At last the authorities decided that they would have to do something about this Civil Rights nuisance. So one afternoon, soldiers concealed themselves behind a rocky outcrop near a mountain path, and there waited for the kilted lad to make his appearance. At last he came striding past. They rushed at him, knocking him to the ground. While some held him down, others tore off his kilt and forced him into a pair of the hated trews. This done, they released him and, with a push, helped him on his way. But the lad had not gone far when he stopped, hauled off the trews, threw them contemptuously from him, and continued on his way trouserless!

One of the few instances in the Braemar district of 'cairn' replacing 'càrn' is the name 'The Cairnwell'. One might be excused for thinking that the meaning of this word is 'Cairn of the Well'. However, the name is derived from 'Càrn a' Bhailg' [pronounced Carn a Vallak] which means 'Cairn of the Sack'. 'Balg' meaning bag or sack is frequently applied to round-shaped hills. At the other end of Aberdeenshire lies the village of Cairnbulg whose name means exactly the same as Cairnwell.

Finally, let us consider another of Aberdeenshire's three-thousand foot cairns - Càrn Aosda (276). This is an example of a name invented by an over-zealous Ordnance Survey official. The local people pronounced the name of this hill Carn Nòsh and the name is more properly written Càrn Naois, the meaning of which is uncertain though Naois may refer to an ancient Celtic hero. Why was the name changed? Since the second word 'naois' is like 'aois' meaning 'age', the Ordnance Survey decided to describe the hill as 'old-aged'. So the Gaelic adjective 'aosda' [pronounced òsda] giving this meaning was used. The more correct pronunciation still survives especially among the well-informed members of the Cairngorm Club - or is it more properly the Càrn Gorm Club?



Alpine memories

EDITH A. MURRAY

1974 was my Jubilee as member of the Ladies' Alpine Club which, this year, has amalgamated with the Alpine Club. My first climb was a true example of beginners' luck since my sister, the late Dr Maud Cairney, and I chose the Jungfrau (4,166 m), a snow peak, to begin on to see if we liked climbing. We knew that boots were of the first importance so we invested in Carter's hand-made alpine boots and stout sticks with spikes. Our boots were a joy from the start. We set off by train via Paris in the summer of 1922, paying a quick visit to the Louvre where we caused not a little surprise, clattering over the polished floors in our nailed boots. The train decanted us at Fiesch from where we had a three hours' walk up to the Eggishorn Hotel. The mule-post took our luggage. We were invited to hitch on to the mules' tails, but they set off uphill at such a terrific pace that we soon dropped off! At Eggishorn we found several members of both Alpine and Ladies' Alpine Clubs who were very kind to us and initiated us into practice on the huge Aletsch glacier. The weather was fine though extremely hot. Our expedition was organised, the hotel finding us a guide and young porter. The lower slopes of the long glacier were all clear of snow with a well marked trail winding through the wide crevasses. The ice-mills, with their rushing waters below, were particularly impressive. The Concordia Hut was very full and stuffy. During the night there was a storm and cries for help were heard out on the glacier. Men went out to bring in a distressed couple who had lost their lantern and their way; the girl was rather shocked but soon recovered with hot tea and hot bottles under her blankets.

The climbers were early astir but we made a later start, following the others out into a clear star-lit night. Already many parties were well up on the great snow fields with their lanterns twinkling back at us as they dispersed in different directions; it was a magical setting for a first climb. After some time we found that we had a passenger who asked permission to tie on to our rope. As daylight came we made out a large bearded man with an alpenstock and rather battered boots. He was a cheerful addition to the party and spoke several languages, but, as the gradient grew steeper, he untied to await another party going up to the Joch. It was intensely hot as we laboured up the sticky wet snow. We were climbing the shoulder of a large hollow when an avalanche came down on the opposite side. Up on the

'Sattel' the guide began to fuss, warning us to go carefully as the steps were not holding. The great Bernese Oberland summits were all around with the Alps of the Valais beyond, which, later, we came to know so well. In our preparations we had not known of an anti-sun cream and, in this hot sun and fresh snow, lanoline melted. After a blissful hour on top, we started down. My inclination to sit was sternly repressed as we crept back along the ridge trying not to look at the awful depths below. Once we were on the homeward side, the tension eased. Suddenly a heavy blow knocked me on to the back of the porter who went first on the descent: this was my sister, who in turn had been dislodged by the guide when a step broke under him. Away we all went, rolling over and over in the deep snow for about 200 feet. Luckily the slope eased off and we managed to stop. I was at the bottom of the heap with the rope round my neck and the guide was frantically feeling for any broken bones, but no one was injured. We were having a rest and some tea when the 'Herr Professor' arrived and a furious argument followed as he had been waiting around to see us safely down. Henceforth our ways separated and we ploughed wearily back to the hut for another night, our faces badly burnt. On reaching Eggishorn we segregated ourselves for a couple of days. When we emerged the other climbers gave us sensible advice and the names of a family of guides in Saas-Fee who became our life-long friends. En route for Saas on the mule-path, under borrowed umbrellas to protect our faces, we met an ascending family. On seeing us, they stopped dead and exclaimed 'Mon Dieu! C'est affreux!'

During the rest of that season and the next, we climbed around Saas and Zermatt, and then went on to Zinal. In 1925 we were at Arolla where among other climbs we did the Aiguille de la Za by the face. On its top we met G. W. Murray, climbing with his sister, and this eventually led to the breaking up of the Cairney Sisters' partnership and the start of the Murray one. In the meantime we were held up by weather at Bricolla before making the ascent of the Grand Cornier by the south arête, an exciting climb necessitating progression 'à cheval' in places and in others by friction, with disastrous effect on our clothing. There was one sensational jump where the landing was on a downward sloping slab. I was never much use at jumping, a fact which Alfred Supersaxo, who had climbed with me throughout the years, well knew. Laughingly he said: 'Jump, I will catch you'. So, shutting my eyes, I took a wild leap. Our descent to Mountet by the Durand Glacier was in a very bad condition, so we had to make an extremely steep staircase in the ice, cutting steps for an hour to

and fro in a zig-zag, a slow process moving one at a time. Théophile Theytaz from Ayer was Maud's guide and a great personality, so when the local inn-keeper of Mountet saw our party approaching, he always came to meet us with a bottle of hot tea laced with wine, an endearing gesture. The Zinal Rothorn, in perfect condition, provided further training and we were able to leave our axes at the end of the ice ridge, climbing the dry, sound rock unimpeded. A cold, north wind blew, so we climbed fast, taking four hours from Mountet to spend about four minutes on the summit with chattering teeth.

The Dent Blanche by the Viereseelgrat had long been our secret ambition. It had been twice climbed by women, twenty years before, and, that year, by Mlle Michel of the S.F.A.C. with Théophile. He now suggested that we should try, and brought along his two brothers, also guides, making us a strong party. We climbed in two ropes of three with Alfred at the head of my rope and Théophile leading. As the inn-keeper overslept, we were half an hour behind schedule and it was 2.30 am when we swung out across the glacier at a great pace to make up for lost time. It seemed to be too warm but we hoped to reach the top before the worst happened. We arrived on the ridge just as daylight permitted us to do without lanterns. The rocks were not difficult but rotten, and the utmost care was needed to avoid dropping stones on the rest of the party. In spite of this we had numerous mishaps, fortunately none serious. After some hours we all had a somewhat battered air. The wind was gusty and cold but we mounted rapidly and were attacking the formidable cornices before we realised it. They were fragile and broken, often on both sides, with large holes through which one could look down thousands of feet. Somehow we all got over them and arrived at the summit in eight hours twenty minutes, a time with which the guides were greatly delighted. After an hour's rest on top in gathering and ominous-looking clouds, truly thankful for our good fortune, we descended by the usual way in thickly falling snow, arriving at the Schönbuhl hut at 6.0 pm, a weary but happy band, to a great welcome. This marked the end of our climbing programme for 1925 - my first year as a member of the Ladies' Alpine Club.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

High Level Bothies

The following bothies are to be re-sited, and will be removed from their present locations on 6 June 1975 or as soon as possible thereafter.

It is most important that no plans be made involving the use of these bothies after 6 June 1975.

CURRAN

situated beside Lochan Buidhe at MR 983010.

ST VALERY

on the cliffs above the west end of Loch Avon at MR 002022.

The Cairngorms high level bothies

JOHN DUFF

On Friday, 13 June 1975, the last of the fabric from the controversial Curran Bothy was carried down to Glen Derry by Naval Apprentices from H.M.S. *Caledonia*, Rosyth, thus concluding the demolition of Curran and St Valery Bothies.

Now that the first stage in the resiting of the three high level bothies is almost complete (El Alamein has not yet been dismantled), it seems appropriate to set down a factual history of these three shelters, which have several times made headline news, and which caused one of the most heated disputes in recent British mountaineering history.

The facts are as follows:

- July 1963:* Members of the 51st Highland Division Engineers (T.A.) erected St Valery and El Alamein shelters for the (now defunct) Cairngorm Trust. At that time it was intended that these should be the first of a chain of high level shelters on the Cairngorm/Ben Macdhui plateau. It is believed that El Alamein, because of a mistaken map reference, was built in the wrong place (unverified).
- July 1967:* Apprentices from H.M.S. *Caledonia* erected Curran Bothy for Cairngorm Mountain Rescue Association.
- August 1967:* Banff County Council granted planning permission for Curran.

- November 1967:* At a meeting of Scottish Mountain Rescue Teams held by the Mountain Rescue Committee of Scotland, the Braemar Team protested about the lack of consultation as regards Curran, and also about the siting of the high level refuge huts.
- November 1968:* At a meeting of the Mountain Rescue Committee of Scotland, the whole subject of Mountain Bothies was discussed, and the Committee was unanimous in its opposition in general to high level shelters.
- December 1968:* After consultation with the Chief Constable of the Scottish North-Eastern Counties Constabulary and Mountain Rescue organisations, the Navy decided not to build another shelter near the Wells of Dee and instead renovated an existing low level shelter at Fords of Avon.
- November 1971:* Six teenagers died heading for Curran Bothy, and one rescuer was almost killed while searching for St Valery at night in a snowstorm.
- February 1972:* Public Inquiry at Banff into the Feith Buidhe Disaster. The two expert witnesses who sat through the entire Inquiry both described in their evidence the dangers of high level bothies. At the end of the Inquiry, one of the Jury's recommendations was that 'In the matter of high level bothies, advice as to their removal or otherwise should be left to the experts.'
- February 1972:* At a meeting of the Mountain Rescue Committee of Scotland the Committee decided that the St Valery, El Alamein and Curran Refuges should be removed. No one spoke against the decision, which was unanimous.
- April 1972:* At a meeting of the Scottish Committee of the Nature Conservancy, the Committee agreed with the view that the high level bothies should be removed, and that, if necessary, others should be constructed in safe localities with minimum disturbance to the environment.
- May 1972:* At the Annual General Meeting of the Mountain Rescue Committee of Scotland, the representative of Cairngorm Mountain Rescue Association said that his Association considered Curran Bothy as their (Cairngorm Mountain Rescue Association's) property and was opposed to its removal.
- October 1972:* A police decision that the three bothies should be dismantled in June 1973 was made known at a meeting of the Mountain Rescue Committee of Scotland. It was decided to print a warning in the Mountain Rescue Committee Handbook, to inform the Ordnance Survey, and to contact the Scottish Sports Council to press for a meeting of all interested parties.

November 1972: The Secretary of State for Scotland requested the Scottish Sports Council to consult various interests regarding the removal of the high level bothies with a view to reaching an agreed solution. Further steps in the provisional police plans for the removal of the bothies were meanwhile suspended.

December 1972: The Mountaineering Council of Scotland circulated to all its member Mountaineering Clubs for their views on keeping or removing the three high level bothies.

January 1973: The investigations by the Scottish Sports Council and the Mountaineering Council of Scotland both independently showed that the vast majority of informed mountaineering opinion in the country favoured the removal of the high level bothies.

May 1973: On 5 May 1973 the Annual Team Meeting, followed in the afternoon by a Committee Meeting of the Mountain Rescue Committee of Scotland, was held. Although the Cairngorms Shelters were on the Agenda for the Committee Meeting, no representative of those opposing the demolition was present. At this meeting, the firm decision to demolish the bothies on the weekend of 2/3 June was announced.

30 May 1973: Following several days of sensational last minute press coverage and intense political activity, including letters to the Secretary of State for Scotland, the removal of the bothies was temporarily cancelled.

There then followed a protracted period of negotiation, letter writing, persuasion and political pressure. Although it was clear that demolition was the wish of the informed majority, no one felt able to take a stand against the political pressure exerted by those who wished the bothies retained. Although the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Scottish Home and Health Department had become involved, this was merely in a fact finding capacity, and the Secretary of State denied any statutory responsibility in the matter. Although ownership of the bothies rested with the landowners concerned, no one was prepared to involve them in a controversy which was not of their making. Understandably, the landowners themselves said nothing!

19 October 1973: In a letter to Inverness Joint Police Committee, the Scottish Office summarised the situation regarding the bothies, and made two important points: (a) that the building authorities would require to grant warrants for the demolition of the shelters, and (b) that the Secretary of State had no power to prevent, or to

arrange for the demolition of the shelters. The letter suggested that one of the local authorities or police authorities concerned should convene a joint meeting. This proved finally to be the key to the impasse.

- 7 *December 1973*: A meeting was held between representatives of the Inverness and Scottish North-Eastern Counties Constabularies and the County Councils of Inverness and Banff. This meeting decided to hold a further meeting to be attended by the Mountain Rescue Committee of Scotland; Mountaineering Council for Scotland; Countryside Commission; Nature Conservancy; Cairngorm Mountain Rescue Association; Braemar Mountain Rescue Association; Aberdeen Mountain Rescue Team.
- 15 *February 1974*: The meeting decided on was held in Inverness, and a Working Party was appointed to consider the best location for mountain shelters in the Cairngorms and to submit a report.
- 25 *February 1974*: A meeting of the Working Party was held in Inverness, and after a vote confined to those representing expert mountain rescue opinion, it was decided by five votes to one that:
- El Alamein be moved to Strathnethy at 023060
 - St Valery be moved to the Lairig an Laoigh path at 047075
 - Curran be moved to the ruins of Upper Geldie Lodge at 955867.

Representatives of the Mountaineering Council of Scotland, the Scottish Sports Council and Braemar Mountain Rescue Association all asked that their view be recorded that they thought that no case had been established for the provision of further shelters, and that they were agreeing to the resiting merely so that the objective of greater importance, namely the removal of the high level shelters, could be proceeded with.

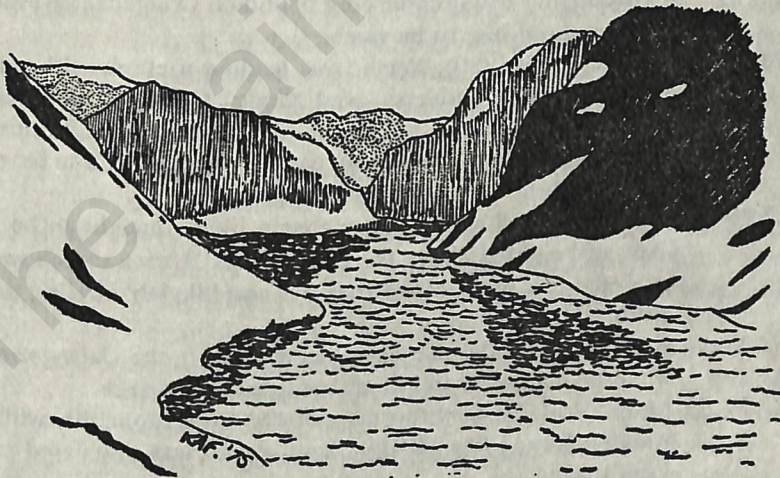
The Working Party Report was accepted by the parent committee, by Inverness Joint Police Committee, and by the Scottish North-Eastern Counties Police Board. However, Banff County Council, whose representative had opposed the removal of Curran and St Valery bothies (both situated in Banffshire), declared themselves opposed to the proposals. This again produced a stalemate, as Banff County Council would have to issue the warrant for demolition.

- 3 *October 1974*: The Chief Constable of the Scottish North-Eastern Counties Constabulary addressed Banff County Council Planning Committee at Banff on the subject of high level bothies, but the Committee decided not to withdraw their opposition to the removal of Curran and St Valery.

8 May 1975: Following an official application by the Scottish North-Eastern Counties Police Board, Banff County Council issued a warrant to demolish Curran and St Valery Bothies.

8-13 June 1975: Curran and St Valery Bothies were removed by Naval Apprentices.

So far, no action to remove El Alamein has been taken. The materials from Curran have been taken back to Rosyth where they will be kept till a new site is found. The bothy will then be remodelled and rebuilt. The proprietors of Mar Lodge Estate have refused permission to rebuild it on their land, so its future is uncertain. The materials from St Valery are at Derry Lodge. The proposed new site for it is in the Highland Region, and the resiting will be done from that side. It remains to be seen whether this is the end of the high level bothy controversy. If it is not, let us only hope that any future discussion can be governed by logic and not emotion, and that politicians, whether amateur or professional, do not become involved.



Mountain accidents— Grampians and Cairngorms

- 1.2.73 *Erratum. Journal* no. 95 (1973) p. 94 l. 15 for Frank Harrington read William George Harrington.
- 12.2.73 It was reported that a flashing light was seen, apparently on the summit of Creagan Gorm, near Glenmore, and after search parties were out it was discovered that the light came from Portmahomack Lighthouse, Ross-shire.
- 3.3.73 It was reported that a skier had been injured in Coire na Ciste in the Cairngorms. After a search it was learned that he had only been slightly injured and had been attended to by the Ski Patrol.
- 5.3.73 A male student was practising braking with an ice axe in Coire na Ciste in the Cairngorms when his ice axe punctured his femoral artery.
- 24.3.73 An 8-year-old boy slipped whilst climbing the lower grass slopes of Craigellachie Rock, Aviemore and was injured.
- 12.5.73 A 10-year-old boy became crag bound on Craigellachie Hill, Aviemore and had to be rescued.
- 17.6.73 Alan R. White (30), Perth, was leading a climb with one companion on 'Guinness', Red Craig, Glendoll when he dislodged a rock and fell about 15 feet. Sustained fracture of left leg. Held by companion then lowered by him to ledge from which he was taken by other climbers.
- 2.7.73 It was reported at Aviemore that a light, thought to be a flare, was sighted above the Cairngorms. After a search was carried out it was learned that this was 'Skylab' circling the earth.
- 4.7.73 A 39-year-old sales manager was walking in the Cairngorms when he collapsed and died due to a heart attack.
- 5.7.73 Mark Bee (15), Scunthorpe, suffered from bronchitis while walking from Glen Tilt to Braemar and was evacuated by Landrover.
- 6.8.73 John Hargrave (57), Yorks, became separated from the other members of his party while walking with cycles across Jock's Road and was reported missing. Had fallen over cycle and slightly injured his knee. Evacuated by Landrover.

- 13.8.73 It was reported at Aviemore that what appeared to be a distress flare had been sighted above the Cairngorms. An all night search was carried out but nothing was found and no person was reported missing.
- 19.8.73 Mrs C. Forrest (66), Stoneywood, broke her right ankle while walking on Bennachie.
- 1.9.73 Joseph Brown (65), Manchester, died of natural causes while walking on Morrone.
- 20.10.73 Malcolm Livingston (26), Aberdeen, delayed by snowstorm while walking from Linn of Dee to Coylum Bridge. Turned back before Pools of Dee and spent night at Corroul. Search mounted but found safe and well.
- 29.10.73 Four soldiers aged 29, 28, 19 and 18 years were reported overdue on a navigation exercise in the Cairngorms. After a search they were found next morning having followed an erroneous compass bearing.
- 19.12.73 A 23-year-old climbing instructor was avalanched whilst climbing in Coire an Sneachda in the Cairngorms and was injured.
- 23.12.73 A 20-year-old male student was avalanched whilst climbing in Coire an Sneachda in the Cairngorms and was injured.
- 30.12.73 Sheila Mearns (17), Carnoustie, one of party of three, walking in Corrie Fee, Glendoll found recognised route too difficult because of black ice, retreated and tried to climb out by even more difficult route and became stranded on icy rock. Taken off rocks by other climbers and evacuated by Mountain Rescue Team and civilians. Girl suffered from shock and exposure.
- 3.1.74 A party of three 19-year-old men left Braemar Youth Hostel to climb Beinn a' Bhuid. Route sheet showed return time of 6 pm. Reported missing at 10.15 pm. Traced to Mar Lodge, having been there since 5 pm.
- 5.1.74 A 28-year-old draughtsman was reported having been seen in an exhausted condition in the Cairngorms. Whilst a search was in progress, he returned to Aviemore, having been lost in 'white out' conditions.
- 13.1.74 A 24-year-old student was reported overdue in Glenfeshie where he was engaged in carrying out a deer count. A search was mounted and the man traced to a house near Kingussie, where he had gone without reporting to his employer.

- 17.3.73 A party of climbers were avalanched in Coire Laogh Mor in the Cairngorms, resulting in a 17-year-old schoolboy and a 23-year-old mountaineering instructor sustaining injury.
- 24.3.74 A 20-year-old warehouseman fell whilst climbing in Coire an Lochan, Cairngorm and was injured.
- 24.3.74 Edward Dunthorne, Aberdeen, took wrong route off An Sgarsoch and arrived at the Tarf. Attempted to go to Bynack Lodge and arrived instead at Fealar where he was benighted. Search mounted. Found safe and well next morning.
- 7.4.74 A 23-year-old male student and a 24-year-old female student were avalanched whilst climbing in Coire an Lochan, Cairngorm and sustained serious injuries.
- 13.4.74 Garry Morton (18), South Shields, slipped and fell on snow on Beinn a' Bhuid. Broken nose, bruising, lacerations. Evacuated by helicopter.
- 12.5.74 Eric Clark (17), Aberdeen, fell about 100 feet on Creag Ghiubhais. Broken neck. During rescue a half-ton boulder, loosened during Clark's fall, became dislodged, rolled down the hillside, bounced over the heads of two members of the rescue party and the patient, and demolished the stretcher.
- 12.5.74 Douglas Buchan (72), Elspet Buchan (59), both of Aberdeen and Elspet Paterson (58), Banchory, became detached from a large party walking from Tarfside to Forest of Birse and were subsequently benighted on the Upper Aven near Mount Battock. Search started in heavy rain and thick fog during night. The lost party were sheltering in a grouse hut and during the night saw flashes of light which they thought to be lightning but were almost certainly the lights of a search party about 50 yards away. Found next afternoon suffering from exposure.
- 15.5.74 Two female domestic workers, aged 30 and 24 years, were reported overdue in the Cairngorms. They were found unharmed after a search.
- 18.5.74 James Hood (40), Aberdeen, became separated from a party of forty-one on a walk through Jock's Road to Braemar. Turned back and subsequently tried unsuccessfully to pass word to Braemar that he had done so. Reported missing but traced before search got under way.
- 30.5.74 A 25-year-old schoolteacher became ill whilst walking near the Pools of Dee in the Cairngorms and had to be rescued.

- 3.6.74 Kenneth Freeman (20), Aberdeen, climbing with companion on 'The Pyramid', Corrie Fee, Glendoll slipped on lichen-covered rock and fell 100 feet. Sustained fractured pelvis and two fractures to right arm.
- 12.6.74 A 24-year-old Youth Hostel Warden was found lying ill near Loch Etchachan in the Cairngorms and had to be rescued.
- 12.6.74 John Rosenfield taken ill and evacuated from Shelter Stone by helicopter.
- 21.6.74 A 16-year-old schoolboy became ill whilst hill-walking at Chalamain Gap in the Cairngorms and had to be rescued.
- 26.7.74 L. Blackmore, Fife, aged about 20 years, reported missing on a walk from Loch Morlich Youth Hostel to Braemar via March Burn. Found asleep in Corrour Bothy.
- 11.8.74 Two Austrian girls were reported missing on a walk from Braemar to Aviemore via the Lairig Ghru. An extensive search was mounted but the girls were traced to a hostel in Sutherland, not having reported their safe arrival at Aviemore as arranged.
- 18.8.74 Four French girls were directed from Braemar through Lairig Ghru to Aviemore. Lost bearings and walked up Allt Carn a' Mhaim. In evening found their way to Lairig Ghru. By this time it was raining and a man directed them to Corrour Bothy where they spent the night (they were carrying sleeping bags). Next morning they were found at Corrour Bridge about 11 am, not having eaten anything since the previous morning. They were given something to eat and directed back to Aberdeen to go to Aviemore by train. Not reported missing.
- 25.8.74 A 20-year-old student was reported missing in the Cairngorms. He was found after a search safe and well, having been benighted.
- 5.10.74 Four junior soldiers, aged 16-17 years, were overcome by carbon monoxide fumes from 'Hexamine' fuel cookers whilst on an expedition in the Cairngorms, and had to be evacuated to hospital.
- 9.11.74 Iain Gaul (15), Dundee. Fell on hard snow above Loch Etchachan. Unable to brake with ice axe, and slid about 200 feet. Facial abrasions, bruising, bad gash on left leg.
- 10.12.74 Nine females, aged 16 to 26 years, were reported overdue on an expedition in the Glenfeshie area. They were found safe after a search, having been disorientated.

- 26.1.75 An 18-year-old student was killed when he either stepped over or slipped from the ridge in very bad weather conditions and fell about 600 feet into Coire an Lochan, Cairngorm, pulling with him a 20-year-old student companion to whom he was roped. The companion suffered only slight injury.
- 27.1.75 Norman Keir (26), Aberdeen and David Wright (28), Kemnay, reported overdue from a climb on Creag an Dubh Loch. Search mounted but climbers turned up safe and well, having been benighted on climb.
- 9.2.75 Stephen Thomson (7), Inverurie, lost on Bennachie while walking with his parents. Reported missing but turned up safe and well before search started.
- 15.2.75 Several skiers reported missing at Cairnwell. All turned up quite soon except one boy who was subsequently traced. Other three skiers who had been lost but not missed also turned up safe and well.
- 20.2.75 Paul Bennet (28), London and Robin Brooks (30), Chatham, were benighted on a climb of West Gully, Lochnagar. Reported missing and search mounted. At one stage it was believed that they were cragfast in the gully, and rescue equipment was taken to the top but soon afterwards the two men turned up at their camp safe and well, having reached the top of the gully minus a compass and wandered down Glas Allt.
- 23.2.75 Charles Blanchett (33), Liz Wilson (25) and Morag Singer (25), all from Aberdeen, reported missing on a walk from Coire Kander round County Boundary to Glas Maol and Devil's Elbow. Before search got under way they turned up at Tulchan, Glen Isla, safe and well.
- 20.3.75 Patricia Gough (29), Reading, one of a party of ten climbing unroped in South-east Gully of Creag an Dubh Loch, was dislodged when other three of her companions fell from above her. All four fell to the foot of the gully but only Gough sustained injury. (Broken left leg).
- 25.3.75 Jonathan Koster (19), Solihull, suffered a suspected hernia while descending from Cairngorm to Fords of Avon. Evacuated from Fords of Avon by helicopter.
- 29.3.75 Brian Fraser (20), Aberdeen, and companion benighted while climbing 'Look C' Gully, Corrie Fee, Glendoll. Suffered from exposure and frostbite. Taken to top of cliffs by Police Mountain Rescue Team and evacuated to hospital by RAF helicopter.

- 7.4.75 A 21-year-old student was reported as missing in 'white out' conditions on a walk between Loch Einich and Loch-an-Eilean, by Aviemore, but she turned up safe and well just as a search was being commenced.
- 7.4.75 A 51-year-old electrical engineer was reported missing in 'white out' conditions in the vicinity of the Coire Cas car park, Cairngorm where he had left his wife and infant son to ski in the near vicinity. A full scale search and rescue operation involving approximately seventy men, search and rescue dogs and a helicopter was mounted in atrocious weather conditions and maintained without success until the forenoon of 10 April when a search and rescue dog found the body of the missing man buried in the snow about three hundred yards south-west of the White Lady Sheiling. A post-mortem examination revealed that he had died from: (1) Myocardial Ischaemia; (2) Exposure.
- 30.4.75 A party of four RAF Apprentices were avalanched whilst climbing in Coire an Lochan, Cairngorm. One of the party sustained a slight leg injury which necessitated his removal by stretcher.
- 30.4.75 A party of nine on a cross-country ski-ing expedition was avalanched when climbing a gully on the east side of the Lairig Ghru. Three members of the party were injured but none seriously.
- 10.5.75 Martin Douglas Kydd (19), Dundee, climbing alone on 'The Shute', Dunkeld, dislodged rock which struck him on head causing him to fall about 25 feet. Taken to hospital - concussion. Not wearing climbing helmet.
- 11.5.75 Kevin Tindell (23), York, was taken ill while staying at Corrour Bothy and evacuated by helicopter.
- 8.6.75 Colin Rowe (18) and Brian Tilley, both Royal Marines, injured on 'King Rat', Creag an Dubh Loch when Rowe fell while leading, and a peg belay came out. Rowe suffered a badly gashed leg and fractured pelvis, and Tilley severe rope burns.

The Editor is very grateful to Sergeant John Duff for compiling the above list, and also acknowledges the help given by Grampian and Tayside Police and Northern Constabulary who all co-operated in supplying information.

Poem

HILLS OF THE MIDDLE DISTANCE (Blair Atholl to the Shelter Stone)

ARCHIE MITCHELL

Hills of the middle distance: crooked backs,
heavy with winter snow;
Trails of the nearer foreground: frozen tracks,
leading us where to go.
Journeys in ice-bound landscapes: shade and light,
perspectives that reveal
Worlds of new dimensions: depth and height,
pain and the power to heal.
Healing for so much sorrow: mountain balm,
backcloth of happiness;
Hills of the middle distance: storm and calm,
each with their friendliness.

In memoriam

It is with regret that we record the deaths of the following members:

Mrs J. C. Blacklaw
Miss Lena G. Browne
Miss Elizabeth J. Mavor
Mrs J. Ross McKenzie
Mr J. B. McAndrew

Mr Duncan McArthur
Mr Frederick A. Ritson
Mr G. Roy Symmers
Sir George A. Williamson

Proceedings of the Club

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETINGS

The *Eighty-fifth* Annual General Meeting was held on 28 November 1973. Office-Bearers appointed were: *Hon. President* Col. E. Birnie Reid; *President* Dr S. A. B. Black; *Vice-Presidents* Mr P. F. Howgate and Mr H. M. R. Watt; *Secretary* Mr R. C. Shirreffs; *Treasurer* Mr W. A. H. Reid; *Editor* Mr D. Hawksworth; *Librarian* Miss J. A. Callander; *Huts Custodian* Dr D. G. Hardy; *Meets Secretary* Mr G. Ewen; and *Indoor Meets Secretary* Mr J. S. Galloway.

The other main item of business was the fixing of increased subscription rates to apply from 1 October 1974. A reduced rate of annual subscription was introduced for members over 65 years of age.

At the close of the meeting the retiring President Miss Sheila Murray was thanked for all that she had done during her term of office as President.

The *Eighty-sixth* Annual General Meeting was held on 27 November 1974.

The Office-Bearers appointed at the 1973 Annual General Meeting were re-appointed without change.

The Annual General Meeting received for the first time a written Committee Report in addition to verbal reports from individual Office-Bearers.

ANNUAL DINNERS

1973 'A Geographer's View of Mountains'.
Speaker: Dr Chalmers M. Clapperton.

1974 'At Home with the Golden Eagle'.
Speaker: Mr Lea MacNally.

Both functions were held in the Northern Hotel and were well attended (160 being present at each function).

In addition, two Supper Dances were held, on 10 May 1974 and 25 April 1975.

INDOOR MEETS

1973 Nov. Members' Night.

1974 Jan. 'A Naturalist in Greenland'—Mr Ronald Summers.

Feb. 'A Closer Look at the Scottish Landscape'—on tape and slide.
Presentation by Mr Ian Strachan.

Mar. Members' Night.

Nov. 'Music and Mountains'—on tape and slide.
Presentation by Mr Donald Hawksworth.

1975 Jan. 'Australia - The Red Centre'—Dr R. E. G. Aitken.

Feb. Members' Night.

Mar. 'Highland Heritage'—Mrs A. H. Sommerville.

All Meets were held in Beechgrove Church House and again the attendances were good - there being an overall average of 44 attending.

MEETS AND EXCURSIONS 1973-75

The excursions have continued to be very well attended, with an average of forty-three persons present. The largest turnout was for the Ben Avon excursion of March 1975, while the smallest was for the Mount Keen excursion of November 1974. (Numbers attending the excursions are given in brackets after the excursion in the list at the end.) Two coaches were hired on four occasions, and on three others a minibus was required in addition. On a number of excursions some members attended by car.

A feature of the excursions for 1973 and early 1974 was that a tremendous pressure built up for seats on the bus, with as many as twenty or more on the waiting list and a very high incidence of cancellations, often at the last minute. This culminated in the situation where forty-three persons had asked to be placed on the permanent list, an impossible situation, as there are only forty-one seats available on the bus. We could perhaps have arranged a ballot for each excursion to determine which forty-one should have priority for that date. The Committee decided, however, that members should prepay for their seats instead of paying on the bus as had been the practice for many years. This decision has proved generally satisfactory.

The Easter Meet of 1974 was held at the Speanbridge Hotel, Speanbridge. The entire party was accommodated in the hotel, except for three members who were staying at a camp-site at Roybridge. For the latter this proved to be a somewhat cold experience. The weather was good and most of the Munros between Ben Nevis and Creag Meagaidh were climbed in the course of the weekend, together with some on the west side of the Great Glen.

The Easter Meet of 1975 was held at the Arrochar Hotel, Arrochar. Great difficulty had been experienced in finding a suitable venue and, in fact, arrangements were not completed in time for inclusion in the appropriate Club circular. Nevertheless, some forty-five persons attended the meet and were easily accommodated by the hotel, which is a good deal larger than those we have patronised in the past. Once again the weather was excellent with sunshine and clear summits every day. Quite a number of members completed the ascent of all six Munros in the area, with the addition of the Cobbler, while others ventured as far afield as Ben Lui and Ben More. There was more snow than in the previous year but it was in very good condition.

The 1974 overnight excursion started off in most unpromising fashion with lashing rain all the way from Aberdeen to Aultguish. The bus had an exceptionally clear run in the afternoon, as everyone else had obviously stopped to watch the World Cup tie between Scotland and Yugoslavia! Even in Inverness the streets were empty! The rain stopped somewhere around Aultguish and when we started walking it was overcast but dry. About a third of the party set off up Sgurr Ban and Mullach Coire Mhic Fhearchair, and watched the sun rise above a sea of cloud from the latter. It had been the second good overnigher in a row.

In contrast, the Ben Lawers excursion was once again marred by wet and misty weather. Everyone found their way back to the bus in reasonable time on this occasion although one member had become separated from the rest of his party near the top and they had spent a considerable time looking for him without success.

All the other long distance excursions were blessed with very good weather, except for the odd shower on the Monadhliath Mountains. The best days were on Ben Vorlich and at the Pass of Drumochter. The winters again have been surprisingly clear of snow, but those who visited Ben Avon on the recent Cockbridge to Invercauld excursion had heavy snow showers and this was on the first of June. The excursion to the Monadhliath Mountains proved to be rather long for the time available, the walk up (or down) Glen Banchor proving rather rough and time-consuming. The hills themselves provided very good walking but although no large drop separates any of them they are a good distance apart.

While friendly relations continue with most of the estates we visit, a number of problems have arisen recently. The route to Lochnagar via the Ballochbuie, which we have had the privilege of using for many years, has been closed to us without any apparent reason. At Ben More we interrupted a sheep-gather, one member getting a severe ticking-off when he made to cross a dry stone dyke. The shepherd in question claimed he had spent the whole of the previous week building it up. The moss must grow quickly in these parts! On Glas Tulaichean recently some members were surprised to stumble upon a shooting party on a Sunday in November. Here it was claimed that a party descending Glas Tulaichean had moved a wounded beast into another glen. If that were so, it was unfortunate; but we have not encountered shooters on a Sunday before.

It will not have escaped the notice of members that the cost of excursions has risen sharply. In the last seven years the cost of the bus has doubled, but hotel charges have virtually quadrupled. Alas, there seems to be no end to it.

G.E.

EXCURSIONS

1973

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1 Sept. Cairngorm Car Park to Linn of Dee (47) | 25 May Ben Vorlich and Stuc a' Chroin (42) |
| 15 Sept. Ben More and Stobinian (36) | 8 June Monadhliath Mountains (33) |
| 30 Sept. Jock's Road (49) | 22/23 June Braemore to Kinlochewe (35) |
| 13 Oct. Schiehallion (35) | 24 Aug. Linn of Dee to Glenfeshie (56) |
| 4 Nov. Lochnagar (45) | 15 Sept. Ben Lawers (38) |
| 17 Nov. Cairnwell to Inverey (38) | 29 Sept. Monega Pass (54) |
| 9 Dec. Culardoeh (62) | 13 Oct. Glen Clunie Lodge to Spital of Glenshee (39) |
| | 3 Nov. Auchallater to Spital of Glenmuick (40) |
| 1974 | 23 Nov. Mount Keen (31) |
| 13 Jan. Lochnagar (46) | 15 Dec. Ben Tirran (36) |
| 2 Feb. Glen Clunie (42) | |
| 24 Feb. Glen Clova (60) | |
| 9 Mar. Glas Tulaichean (47) | |
| 31 Mar. Beinn a' Bhuid (51) | |
| 5 May Broad Cairn (35) | |

- 1975
 11 Jan. Glen Clunie (40)
 2 Feb. Lochnagar (41)
 23 Feb. Glen Clova (40)
 15 Mar. Ben Avon (63)
 13 Apr. Auchallater (37)
 3 May Ben Chonzie (35)
 17 May Pass of Drumochter (44)

- 1 June Cockbridge to Invercauld
 (40)
 21/22 June Speanbridge to Glen
 Nevis (41)

EASTER MEETS

- 1974 Speanbridge
 1975 Arrochar

Although the Club *Journal* does not indulge in advertising, the following 'commercial' was handed in to the Editor by one of the more young in heart Club members. He was seen dancing vigorously at the most recent Supper Dance held by the Club, and perhaps he attributes his sprightliness at the age of 89 to the commodity all but named in this stanza!

'We needs must love,' the climber claims,
 'The highest when we see it;
 You think he means the summit,
 But that doesn't seem to be it,
 For having reached the lofty top
 Of Snowdon or Great Gable
 He scrambles down the other side
 As fast as he is able.
 The height of his ambition
 Is the valley where the inn is -
 Summit attempted, summit done,
 Has earned a glass of —!

Notes

MUIR OF INVEREY

Muir of Inverey has now reached its quarter century as a climbing hut, having been opened originally by the Club in 1950. Derry Lodge, now rotting, was opened a year later. The Club Huts were reviewed in 1954 (*C.C.F.*, xvii, 32) by the then Custodian, Robert Bain. Since then we have lost Derry Lodge, and vehicular access up the Derry road has not been permitted for some years. Not exactly progress.

On the credit side, 'new' Muir is now in its third year of operation since the extensive alterations of 1972, financed largely by the George Taylor bequest. Its popularity continues unabated, not least with visiting Clubs, whose organisers frequently write letters of thanks to the Custodian using such phrases as 'a very luxurious hut!'

In spite of these plaudits, there are still hazards in staying there. In the freak storm after Easter this year, two of our oldest members spent an uncomfortable night with no electricity when the power line went down at Corriemulzie, and were very nearly snowed in. With no lighting, and no means of cooking except on the fire, the two gentlemen were evacuated to Braemar by Land Rover as trees came down round about and the drifts rose. Two days later the Custodian and his two junior assistants had to dig their way in through several feet of snow at the gate - this in April!

Several other Clubs now have semi-regular meets at Muir, and at some periods the demand is such that it has been necessary to restrict these bookings in the interests of our own Members. So far as possible, a few beds are kept free for Members at all times, but at a week's notice, thus it sometimes happens that when a booking is desired only a few days in advance, there are no vacancies.

As those who have visited the area in the last few years will have seen, camping at the site near the Linn on the Mar Lodge side of the river has increased considerably. Captain Ramsay's factor discourages camping on the Muir side of the river, and in support of this the Committee has decided not to allow camping in the Muir grounds. This is undesirable in any case since the facilities at Muir are only adequate for eighteen, the full bed capacity. The no camping decision covers motor caravans as well.

There is now a handsome Muir Cottage Log Book, wherein it is hoped that details of interesting expeditions (other than to the bar at Mar Lodge) will be recorded. Items to date include an ascent of the Four Tops (Cairn Toul, Braeriach, Cairngorm and Ben Macdhui), climbs on Lochnagar and two Burns Suppers.

One problem with the log construction of the extension has been the seeping in of rain water at the West end, especially in conditions of driving rain. In spite of sealing the ends of the logs, this wetting continues, and it may be necessary to carry out more extensive protective measures on the large West wall. Work like this will diminish the surplus that the Muir account has been showing in recent years.

Another job that may need to be done fairly soon is to improve the water



Burns Nicht at Muir

supply intake, which has been silting up at the burn. In carrying out temporary repairs and modifications to that system, in clearing the septic tank inlet, and in more attractive jobs such as collecting and sawing (fallen) timber, the Custodian is indebted to a band of willing helpers. He would also be pleased to hear from Members disposing of collections of suitable magazines to while away the off-days, and to consider the occasional comfortable ancient chair that might otherwise end up on a bonfire.

DENIS HARDY

MUNRO METRICATED

Metric Munros! To be precise, *Munro's Tables and Other Tables of Lesser Heights*, first metric edition 1974, edited and revised by J. C. Donaldson. West Col Productions, £3.80.

First published by Hugh Munro (whose photograph fittingly appears at the beginning of this latest edition) in 1891, *Munro's Tables* were under constant review by their author, but their revision was incomplete when he died in 1919. Revised *Tables*, based largely upon material collected by Sir Hugh, were published in 1921, and a few further alterations, together with suggestions for future revisions, appeared in the 1933 edition.

Twenty years later a further edition was published, but the then editor, R. M. Gall Inglis, felt that 'Munro's *Tables* was too much of an Historical

document to alter drastically . . . the time was not ripe to institute a revision . . .' and so no major changes were made in 1953, nor in 1969 when the last edition to ignore the insidious metre made its appearance.

Who has failed to be fascinated by Munro's Tables? You may sneer at Munro-baggers, their ranks may include hill-walkers and Lost Leaders (see the poem on page 89 of the Metric edition) but that the Tables are an historical document is not to be denied, and the pursuit of the Tops does take one to many parts of our lovely country. Let us then be thankful that Sir Hugh preceded metrication, for what a sorry thing would 'Munro's Tables of the 1,000 Metres Mountains of Scotland' be! A mere one-thirty or so separate mountains, with only one Ben More, no Slioch, Lomond, Broad Cairn nor Inaccessible Pinnacle – even the 'easy way' Munroist has to *climb* the last! The minor bonus, to those Club members who regard it as local property, that Lochnagar would be the most easterly Metro(!) would be small reward.

Thanks to Hugh Munro then we have 3,000 feet as the mountain yardstick, and although the alien metrestick translates the qualifying height as 914, an odd sort of number, the original concept is enshrined in the Metric edition.

There are some very good things in the new Tables, not least the two new Munros Ruadh Stac Mhor and Beinn a' Chlaidheimh, and Ben Tarsuinn is now numbered officially in the ranks. Most Munroists have included Tarsuinn, one would think, making the total 277 up to now. Henceforth however, Mr Donaldson makes it clear that new graduates must pass out on the new total of 279. Not that this should in any way invalidate the status of existing Munroists – George Smith of the SMC, who died last year before completing his third round of Munros, Tops and those furth of Scotland, summed up the position in pointing out that, if you have a degree, you don't lose it when the Senate changes the Regulations for existing undergraduates! The Metric edition includes a list (p. 86) of those who qualified as Munroists under the Old Regulations.

A very welcome addition is the inclusion of map references to all Tops, certainly an improvement, and another excellent feature is the sketch maps of Munro locations within each Section, which supplement the O.S. maps. These sketch maps make fine browsing when planning expeditions. (One error of omission here, Stob Poite Coire Ardair of Meagaidh does not appear, p. 32.)

But Mr Donaldson has nodded in places, a serious matter when one is re-ordering the Munros. Due to a conversion error, Ben More (Perthshire) has been promoted above Ben Avon, whereas both are 1,171 metres (Ben Avon from the metric map, Ben More by conversion from 3,843 feet, which Donaldson wrongly makes 1,174 metres). These two hills were originally given as the same height, 3,843 feet, and there would seem to be no valid reason for reversing Munro's original order. Even where hills agree in metric height however, Donaldson has been capricious in this respect, maintaining Munro's order with Beinn Mheadhoin and Carn Eige (both 1,182 metres from the metric map) and with Sgurr na Lapaich, Cnap Coire na Spreidhe and Sgurr na Ceathreamhnan (all 1,151 metres), but reversing it with Bidean nam Bian and Ben Alder (both 1,148 metres, by conversion of 3,766 and 3,765 feet respectively) and with Stob Poite Coire Ardair, Sgurr a' Chaorachain and Toll Creagach (all 1,053 metres, the first by conversion, the other two from

the metric map). In all there are seventy-odd errors in conversion to metric heights, most of these by one metre only (but the metre is such a *large* damned measure for our hills!) The Munroist who cares about these things can do his own checking (one foot equals 0.3048 metre) until the need for conversion disappears with the advent of all the metric maps covering Scotland. This is scheduled for 1976, so may we hope for the definitive order of Metric Munros from Mr Donaldson in a few year's time, perhaps with yet more new Munros revealed by the Survey for our delight. And might that grand hill, Sgurr na Lapaich (Affric), be reinstated as a Separate Mountain? Munro downgraded it in his revision, but this seems to have been an error of judgement. No-one who has climbed Sgurr na Lapaich would imagine it to be anything less than a full-scale mountain, well separated from its nearest neighbour, Mam Sodhail. (F. F. Bonsall in the *SMC Journal*, xxx, 1974, p. 254, awards it the gold medal for the most-separated non-Munro.) Above all, let us hope that the Munro tradition, even metricated, will continue, to lead a new generation of mountaineers, walkers and climbers, Lost Leaders and all, into the Scottish hills.

DENIS HARDY

MORE MAPS OF MOUNTAINS

There is a continuing demand for maps that enable the inexperienced, touristic hill-walker to return safely from the hills. Provided the ability in the use of a compass is adequate, almost any map suffices in clear daytime conditions, but things are rather different in an emergency caused by reduced visibility arising from mist, white-out, blizzard or darkness. Then a map that provides the desired information unequivocally and without frills is needed. For this there is little to beat the standard one-inch Ordnance Survey map, and the promised 1:50,000 maps covering the highland areas are awaited with interest. The shortcomings of the present O.S. 1:63,360 Tourist Maps were pointed out in 1968 (*CCJ*, vol. 17, no. 93, pages 252 and 275) in a review of the series of tourist maps covering the Cairngorm area that started with our own Club Map in 1895.

Meantime Ordnance Survey have produced an Outdoor Leisure Map of the High Tops of the Cairngorms on a 1:25,000 scale (1974, £1.15) and University of Glasgow Press have published a Cairngorms Recreation Map on a 1:35,000 scale (1974, 50p). In both maps the heights are in metres, with contours at 10 m vertical intervals and grid lines 1 km apart. The area covered is essentially the same in each map, from Aviemore in the north-west to Derry Lodge in the south-east. The O.S. map, at roughly 2½ inches to the mile, extends far enough to cover the Geldie-Feshie path to the south and west and the Lairig an Laiogh to the east and north; it is in consequence more than twice as unwieldy. Both maps leave out the eastern high tops, Ben Avon and Beinn a' Bhuird.

Neither map can be unconditionally recommended to climbers. The O.S. map certainly does not carry the very dense hill-shading of the 1964 Tourist Map, but the markings for features such as boulders and scree make it impossible to follow the lines of individual contours on, for instance, the steep

slopes flanking the Lairig Ghru or Strath Nethy. In this respect the Recreation Map, which does not identify such features, is much more legible. But even on these increased scales neither map locates summit cairns satisfactorily. This is a fault of all recent O.S. maps, as pointed out in the 1968 article. This O.S. map at least reports where a cairn exists, but, as on Carn a' Mhaim, its precise location is often difficult to establish. In conditions of low visibility it is sometimes desirable to know exactly where one is starting from!

In both maps the boundaries of the nature reserves and forest parks have been made excessively obvious. As a result it would scarcely be possible, in that 'wet mist of a late autumn evening', to decide from the map whether or not a path ran along the boundary or to distinguish between a path and a county boundary.

Comparing the maps, there are differences of up to 3 metres (some 10 feet) between the heights of various tops, sometimes one and sometimes the other being higher. The scrambler on the north-east ridge leading to Angel's Peak will find the summit to be some 335 feet further away than he expects if he believes the Recreation Map spot-height rather than the contours.

The height and name of our highest summit still give rise to uncertainty. While the Recreation Map prefers the conventional Ben Macdhui, Ordnance Survey adhere to their Ben Macdui, but now give the alternative Beinn Macduibh in two words rather than three. Members will recall that in the 1964 Tourist Map the long-established 4,296 feet became 4,300. In the new O.S. map it is given as 1,309 m, although 4,300 feet converts, using their conversion factor of 1 m = 3.2808 feet, to 1,310.66 m and 4,296 feet to 1,309.44 m. There therefore appears to have been a return to the older height. The Recreation Map gives 1,311 m. The unsatisfactory nature of rounding-off to a unit of more than 3 feet becomes even more apparent on reconversion from metres to feet, as the respective heights then become 4,294.57 and 4,301.13 feet. A vast field for argument about relative positions in Munro's Tables is opening up.

The locations of the controversial high level bothies (Curran, El Alamein and St. Valery) are indicated on the Recreation Map but not by the O.S. map, which places considerable emphasis on the more reliable low level refuges.

The recreational and leisure facilities in the Aviemore area, around Loch Morlich and in Coire Cas are well publicised in both maps, although only the Coylumbridge Hotel is specifically named. The O.S. map identifies many of the better known gullies and ridges while the other merely indicates areas of general climbing interest.

The Recreation Map, which was produced by the Department of Geography of the University of Glasgow with the assistance of the Countryside Commission for Scotland and the Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland, reprints the Mountain Code for Scotland on its cover and, around its margin, details the simple rules of good behaviour set out in the Country Code.

These maps are obviously intended to serve the dual purpose of guiding the summer tourist to nature trails, forest walks or simple hill walking as well as the downhill skier to the ski-tows, but, as already pointed out, they should also be able to take them out of unanticipated perils, and should therefore be as foolproof as possible. The bright colours, particularly in the Recreation Map, the heavy markings and excessive emphasis of recreational features could well

be a nuisance, if nothing more, in such circumstances. There might be a market for a conservatively updated reprint of Sheet 43 of the O.S. One-Inch Popular Edition, which in 1947 sold for two shillings and threepence. The writer still has mint copies of this and Sheet 50 (Lochnagar) acquired when they were sold off cheaply in 1957 on the publication of the less conveniently sheeted Seventh Series. The hills themselves do not seem to have changed all that much, but it would be unwise for the uninitiated to use such old maps, as they do not give the up-to-date information on paths, obstructions or reliable refuges that could mean survival.

R. L. MITCHELL

IN THE HIGH TATRAS

My interest in this fascinating range of mountains began in a Prague record shop in 1969 when the Symphonic Poem of this title by Vítěslav Novák was recommended to me. For two years I enjoyed this beautiful music which conjured mental pictures of rugged peaks standing against the skyline in its majestic main theme, airs of mystery and peace, a thunderstorm, and a pervading sense of the power and eternity of Nature.

It was a warm Sunday morning in July 1971 as our overnight train arrived at Poprad in central Slovakia and my mother and I alighted with our Czech friend, a lady who knew the area well and had arranged accommodation privately for the three of us for a week. As we looked northwards, we could see for the first time what we had previously enjoyed in sound, the magnificent peaks of Slavkovsky Štit and Lomnický Štit before us. A picturesque mountain railway connected the small resorts that were dotted along the southern foothills of the range, the most central of these being Stary Smokovec, within easy walking distance of where we were staying. As the day approached noon and we went for our first short exploration of a well-used mountain track, we were greeted in earnest by Novák's thunderstorm. These storms frequently built up in the central area in the middle of the day and cleared by late afternoon.

Our three climbing days on that first visit included the Velka Studena Dolina - the Great Cold Valley - which rises to about 6,000 feet and is still surrounded by rugged peaks at the end, where there is a large chalet. One can obtain refreshments and there is seating room for well over 100 people in the event of thunder. All supplies are brought up by sturdy youths on their backs, a good eight miles' walk each way. There are passes over the peaks surrounding the Dolina for those able to do a cross-country expedition. The northerly passes go into Poland. The High Tatra range is in fact quite a small clump of mountains about 25 miles across, surrounded by plains. The easternmost part is called the Belansky Tatry and there is a splendid 6,000 foot pass between this and the main range. We crossed this pass, a walk of about 18 miles from Javorina to Talranska Lomnica on our second visit in 1973. The mountains are of granite, generally in rugged formations, the nearest comparison in Scotland perhaps being the mountains on Skye. The highest peaks rise to between 8,000 and 9,000 feet. Some of these are not accessible to the average hill walker and anyone wishing to climb them must have prior permission and go with a trained

rock climbing guide. The High Tatras are a state-owned National Park and people are expected to keep to the paths which are indicated by coloured marks. A guide map shows where each of the paths leads and there are beautifully made indicators showing in hours the times needed by an average climber to a particular objective.

Our greatest day was on our second visit in 1973, when we were staying at Nova Lesna, about a mile and a half distant from the mountain railway station. Our objective was Kriváň, a beautiful 7,000-foot peak on the western side of the range. One might call it the Lochnagar of Slovakia as songs and poems have been written about it. We were up before 6.00 am and on the little crowded train by 7.00 am. When we reached Štrbske Pleso, the western terminus, the morning mist had not yet lifted but we all felt that we were set for a really fine day. It was nearly 9.00 am by the time our friend Milada had completed preparations for the day and by the time we had completed most of the approach walk and had our breakfast, the mist had cleared and the day was warm and sunny without being oppressively hot. As we climbed, we had a fine view of the surrounding plains, all very good agricultural land, the nearer approaches being wooded, mainly with tall pines and spruce. The indicator showed Kriváň as being $2\frac{3}{4}$ hours distant, but in fact we took much longer to reach the summit. Mother needed her time and I also wanted to stop frequently for photographs. There were many people out on the climb, mostly East Germans and we found on more than one occasion that they were glad to speak to anyone from the forbidden West. The panorama of peaks viewed from the summit was impressive indeed. A certain amount of permanent snow lay in some of the gullies. We stayed up there for nearly an hour before time compelled us to pick our stony way down, and it was quite dark before we reached the lower approach track where we rested for our evening meal, only reaching Štrbske Pleso with five minutes to spare before the departure of the last train. It was a day we will never forget.

The High Tatras are part of the Carpathian range which extends into Hungary and Rumania. They display an abundance of plant life and alpine flowers, but one feature that stands in the memory as especially characteristic is the miniature pine which grows like a thick bush on the higher slopes before one reaches the levels of bare rock. Animals include the Marmot and the Chamois. We have enjoyed two separate weeks of wonderful peace in this area, which is Czechoslovakia's most famous resort. We would certainly go again and recommend the district as being most rewarding to all lovers of the mountains.

LOUIS FUSSELL

TOMINTOUL TO THE SHELTER STONE

The advent of a particularly fine and sunny weekend in mid-May tempted me this year to set out on a journey I had long wanted to make – from Tomintoul up the River Avon to its source in Loch Avon. There is something especially wild and grand about the wilderness to the north of Beinn a' Bhuid and Ben Avon. I had often looked down on this scene, but had never tramped through it, so I persuaded a friend to drive with me to the Linn of Dee, where I left

my car at about 4.0 pm on a warm Saturday afternoon. My friend then ferried me in his car to Tomintoul, where we had high tea, after which, suitably fortified, we drove a little way from the village to just beyond Delnabo. There, I shouldered my pack, said a fond farewell to my friend, and set out in the evening sun on the road by the Avon. I enjoyed the peace of the walk up the glen, and reached Inchrory while it was still light. It seems sad that what must once have been a pleasant moorland track up the Avon from here has now been turned (or churned) into another estate road. Here and there, there are traces of the original path, but now, for the most part, the walker has to trudge up a wide Land Rover track, similar to the one which has despoiled the route to Lochnagar up the Allt na Giubhsaich. However, I was relieved to find a workers' shack near Coire Grealach, and I dosed down for the hours of darkness in this primitive structure, with only a mouse for company. This creature seemed very fond of paper, and it chewed away at an old P and J during most of the night. At the first light of day, I left this hovel, and walked for a couple of hours to Faindouran Lodge, now practically derelict but for one room which has been kept in repair by the Mountain Bothies Association, and seems to be a comfortable enough shelter, complete with Visitors' Book. During my walk from my overnight resting place, a perfect day had gradually dawned, with the northern aspect of Ben Avon and Beinn a' Bhuird growing clearer and more magnificent. Just before reaching the Lodge, what might have been a vixen, or even a wild cat, crossed the track. It loped from boulder to boulder, over the heather, pausing every now and then to eye me suspiciously, before finally disappearing over the top of the ridge. I made myself some breakfast at Faindouran, and then continued up the Glen in the brilliant light of the early morning.

Soon after Faindouran, the estate road ends, and thereafter, the route lies on a narrow but well cairned mountain path – much easier on the feet. I was surprised to turn a corner and find a blue tent, out of which was emerging a young chap who was criss-crossing the Cairngorms as a camper/cyclist. Although the path at this time would have been unfit for cycling, he was heading for Inchrory, and the road from Faindouran would have been much pleasanter to cycle down than it had proved for walking. The Glen now narrowed, and the scenery became even more spectacular. Soon, I came to the summit of the Lairig an Laoigh, and looked into the mountain shelter there, before following the rough and boggy track up to Loch Avon. I walked up the northern side of the Loch, with the wonderful panorama of the Shelter Stone Crag and the whole great rocky cirque looking particularly fine. I had never before visited the Shelter Stone (Clac-Dian), and, on reaching the head of the Loch, I strolled up to the historic spot where the Cairngorm Club had been founded in 1887. I was unable to sign the Visitors' Book, as there was no pencil. After a longish rest for lunch, I set out on the well defined track to Loch Etchachan. There was a great deal of snow about, and the scene was quite Alpine. As the weather was still superb, I did not hurry, but gently strolled down into Glen Derry, past the sadly neglected Derry Lodge, and along the familiar track via the Black Bridge to the Linn of Dee, where I was quite glad to become reunited with my car, as I was beginning to feel slightly weary after my 30-mile trek through the Cairngorms.



Loch Avon, May 1975



Glen Avon, near Faindouran Lodge

[photos by D. Hawksworth]

A MOST REMARKABLE HAPPENING

All those who attended the 1975 'overnighter' share many wonderful memories of that remarkable night, memories of the delicious scent of the woodland approach, the splendour of the sunset whose orange glory never left the sky entirely but lingered eastwards towards the dawn, the moon almost full making a lunar-like landscape of the grey corries, the falling stars, the pink tinted morning snow and much more. But I have a memory of that night shared with only two others of an experience dramatic and baffling at the time and which remains very vivid in the mind.

We stood on the summit of Stob Coire Clairigh at midnight and I was looking around for the thousandth time at the wonder of the night, when an object suddenly mushroomed from the northeastern horizon, black against the orange rim of the sky, forming wings as it rose and followed closely by another, the image of itself. The pair hovered briefly as if trying out those wings, then to my amazement began to move rapidly in our direction, at great speed straight towards us, wings beating in ghost-like fashion. Were they ghosts? Were they birds? Eagles - giant owls? My impulsive mind guessed wildly. 'Nonsense', said my companions not altogether convincingly. On they came, more sinister now, silent, black nosed, wings outstretched, aeroplane-like, secret weapons maybe; do U.F.O.'s really exist? There was no doubt about their objective and judging their height at 3,863 feet (Stob Coire Clairigh 3,858 feet) I instinctively sat down, thoughts awhirl, gazing in disbelief at the fast approaching things.

Over Fort Augustus it must have been they suddenly changed their minds and dwindled, first one and then the other into nothingness like puffs of smoke.

The experience was very real; ask the President. Mention of him may lead some to suppose that there had been an untimely celebration of his hundredth Munro. Not so. That came later, on Sgurr Choinnich Mhor, very soberly in orange juice with just a dash, say 99 per cent, of clear or not so clear pure highland water.

TIBBIE FRASER

CLUB LIBRARY

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.

The Editor has also received a fascinating report to the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust by our member, Anne Cordiner, Warden of 'Rhowniar' Outward Bound Girls' School, Merioneth, on the subject of Leisure and the Natural Surroundings in Poland, Czechoslovakia and India. Anne visited these countries between August and December 1973, and the full and informative report will be of general interest to Club members, and of particular interest to any involved in Physical Education. A copy is to be found in the Club Library.

Book reviews

The Great Days. WALTER BONATTI. Gollancz, 1974. £3.80.

This second autobiographical work by the legendary Italian covers his years as a mature climber from the tragedy on the Central Pillar of Fresnay in 1961 up to his pre-meditated retiral from extreme mountaineering after the solo winter ascent of the North Face Direct on the Matterhorn in 1965.

Between the epic tales, Bonatti expounds his classic mountaineering philosophy and reflects on the controversy which surrounded his much-publicised feats during this period of his career. He also gives interesting accounts of visits to other lands. But these are interludes, to let the reader unwind after the tension of the great ascents and retreats on the north walls. Indeed, this is an autobiography akin to Hermann Buhl's where the imaginative reader may judge it best to live through a single enthralling chapter only at a sitting.

Originally published abroad in 1971, the translation is by Geoffrey Sutton.

E.F.J.

The Eiger. DOUGAL HASTON. Cassell, 1974. £3.95.

The North Face of the Eiger has exerted a fascination on European climbers for more than forty years and much has been written about the history of the many attempts, successful and otherwise, which have taken place during that time. Dougal Haston's book centres around his own successful climb of the North Face Direct in 1966 under the leadership of the American, John Harlin and in company with another American, Layton Kor. John Harlin was killed in tragic circumstances during the course of the climb and the team joined forces with a German party in order to reach the summit. This ascent provides the main interest in the book, written as it is from personal experience; the greater proportion of the book is concerned with descriptions of other attempts, notably by the Japanese by the same Direct route and also by different routes. There are also chapters on the history of earlier attempts, on filming the North Face and on rescue methods. For the more general reader, the narrative may not continue to hold the interest after the initial excitement of the Haston climb, particularly as the later attempts are narrated at third hand and lack the personal involvement of the author. However, to devotees of Alpine climbing and of the Eiger in particular, the book has an essential place on the shelf.

A.D.C.

The Drove Roads of Scotland. A. R. B. HALDANE. Edinburgh University Press, 1971. £2.25.

This book gives us many interesting glimpses of life in the Highlands from the early days of cattle droving in the sixteenth century until the coming of the railway and the cattle float. The great part played in the economy of Scotland

by the breeding of cattle and later of sheep is indicated by the frequent references to markets, trysts and court-cases.

The fascinating search for old drove roads is encouraged by the information which Dr Haldane has gleaned for us, but the difficulty is that so many routes are now untraceable. Probably for this reason the author has not compiled a list of drove roads which can still be followed; however, the index gives valuable assistance.

R.K.J.

The Snows of Yesteryear: J. Norman Collie, Mountaineer. WILLIAM C. TAYLOR. Holt, Rinehard and Winston of Canada, 1973. \$7.50.

There is an abundance both of specific *Aberdeen* and of specific *Club* interest in this book. But there is much more – because it is a definitive account of Professor J. Norman Collie's climbing career and Norman Collie (1859–1942) has fairly been described as one of the leading British climbers of his generation.

The elements of his climbing career were recorded over the years, piecemeal, in books and in sundry journal articles both by himself and by others. But what has been lacking was a connected and coherent account of his climbing achievements. William C. Taylor has marshalled the facts about Collie well and, in eminently readable form, his book contains an orderly account of Collie's climbing, much of it pioneering, exploratory and science-oriented, in Great Britain and Ireland, in the Alps, in the Himalayas, in the Canadian Rockies and on the Lofoten Islands. Collie was perhaps in danger of going down to history as a legend. It has been useful to have the prospective legend fortified by the facts.

Although the author, wisely, does not attempt a full-scale biography – which would have had to cover Collie's eminence in other fields, for instance as the discoverer of neon and as the taker of the first X-ray photograph – he includes enough background information about Collie the man to ensure that posterity has less of an enigma to grapple with than might otherwise have been the case.

The apparatus of the book includes a list of Collie's 21 first ascents in the Canadian Rockies, a chronology of his life, a bibliography but no index. The format of the book, though the North-American idiom will be unfamiliar to most British readers, is attractive and successful. The number and range of intensely interesting photographs are astonishing and they have all been reproduced in a manner that does them justice. They are of people as well as of mountains, some are action photographs of people *on* mountains. Those that feature Collie himself at various stages in his life are a wonderful record of the craggy bachelor, every inch a climber, who looked for all the world like *both* Sherlock Holmes *and* Raymond Baxter!

The author has been well served by the preparer of the series of useful maps that is included for good measure – although some mistakes in the lettering of the maps will be as disappointing to the author as the fair crop of misprints in the text.

What about the local interest? The *author* of the book, now Professor of Paediatrics at the University of Alberta, is an Aberdonian who knows the Cairngorms, Skye *and* the Rockies. He acknowledges help with the book

afforded by Club office-holders Jean Callander and Eric Johnston. The *subject* of the book, though born in England, was a member of a well-known Aberdeenshire family and there is mention of Collie homes at Morkeu, Cults and at Glassel. Norman Collie freely admitted to having acquired his love of hills from his 'first ascent of a real mountain', the Hill of Fare at the age of eight. He was Honorary President of the Club from 1922 until his death in retirement at Sligachan twenty years later. No 80 of the *Journal* contains his article on 'Independence'. His famous 1925 Club Dinner account of his brush with the Grey Man of Ben Macdhui is recorded in No 64. No 83 includes not only a reprint of his earlier *Journal* article entitled 'Dreams' but also the appreciation written after his death by his friend Hugh D. Welsh, with whom he had very special *rappport*. All are, very appropriately, drawn upon by Professor Taylor.

H.M.R.W.

Mountains. JOHN CLEARE. Macmillan, 1975. £4.95.

John Cleare is well known both as mountaineer and as photographer. His latest book is full of wonderful pictures which are of uniformly high standard. The literary content ranges from historical surveys of climbing in various parts of the world to accounts of mountain adventures in which the author was personally involved. He has climbed with some of the best known of to-day's climbers, and the book reflects his own particular predilections for certain parts of the world. He spends a lot of time and space on the mountains of Africa, and on Sea Cliff and Stack climbing in Britain. He squeezes into his last chapter, which he entitles 'And the rest . . .', the Andes, the Caucasus, and the Antarctic. So as a complete survey of the mountains of the world, the book is a little unbalanced in the way it deals with different areas. However, much of the reading is compelling, and the whole publication can be strongly recommended, in spite of some slight inaccuracies and typographical errors, as a handsome and exciting addition to the ever-increasing library of books about mountaineering.

D.H.

