

The Cairngorm Club Journal



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THE CAIRNGORM CLUB JOURNAL

Edited by Hazel A. Coubrough

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Illustrations

Ordnance Survey first edition; Piper's Wood, Glen Ey, Site Profile; Piper's Wood, Glen Ey, Habitat types and zones; Monte Cinto; The Polish Tatra; Mount Taranaki, North Island, New Zealand.

Drawings by Ian Strachan except where indicated

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THE PRESIDENT

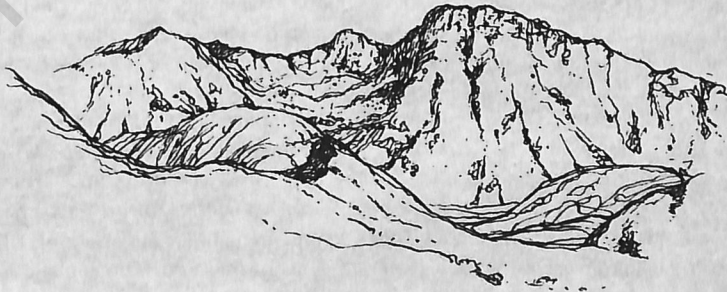
Mr E. Martin was elected President of the Club at the annual general meeting in November 1988, in succession to Miss Anne Cordiner. During his youth Eddie tramped the Yorkshire moors near home and enjoyed forays to the Lake District. In his early days with H.M. Customs he was based in the Hebrides and on the West coast of Scotland, and developed a detailed knowledge and love of the Scottish hills. He joined the Club in 1961, followed by his wife Irene and son Andy in the mid seventies. He completed his "Munros" in 1983 some two years after Andy.

Now retired, Eddie expends much time and care as custodian of Muir cottage, a responsibility he has held for eleven years. His keen interest in conservation has been crowned by his successful negotiation of the Piper's Wood regeneration scheme in Glen Ey to mark the Club's centenary.

THE PAST EDITOR

Antony Chessell vacated the editor's chair recently, having produced the last four editions of the Club Journal comprising volume 19. His love of the hills developed early and intensified during his student days when he led Holiday Fellowship groups in Scotland, Wales and the Lake District. Lured north of the border in 1970 by the proximity of mountains, he is now depute director of the Property Department of Grampian Regional Council and head of its estates section.

Antony shared some of his considerable knowledge of Club history with readers through his editor's notes at the end of many articles. These, along with Sheila Murray's splendid book 'The Cairngorm Club 1887-1987' enhanced our awareness of the development of mountaineering and hill walking in the Cairngorms and beyond.



ORDNANCE SURVEY – MAPMAKING AT ITS PEAK

WENDY FELLINGHAM

There is a basic human urge driving people onwards and upwards both metaphorically and in reality. An increasing number of people seek solace and fulfilment in the solitude, raw beauty and challenge of high places. Reaching the summit may be in no small way attributable to the information provided on an Ordnance Survey map.

This year, the nation's mapmaker is celebrating its Bicentenary, proud to have been mapping Great Britain for the past 200 years. Many people take its maps for granted but they have been described as "the best in the world" and it is interesting to cast an eye back over the busy productive years it has been in existence.

And it is to Scotland that we turn for the very beginning of it all. The Board of Ordnance – a large department of state responsible for the defence of the realm, and from which we take our name – initiated a national mapping programme in 1791. But Ordnance Survey's formation owes much to the prowess and foresight of Major General William Roy, a well known surveyor, engineer and archaeologist from Carlisle who died, sadly, before Ordnance Survey got off the ground. In his earlier career, Roy had been responsible for the production of a military map of Scotland following the Jacobite Rebellion in 1745. His beautiful hand-drawn map of the Highlands at the scale of one inch to 1,000 yards was in response to the army's highlighted need for clear, accurate mapping. The Battle of Culloden had been fought with hopelessly inadequate mapping; Roy's new map emphasised routes of communication and the lie of the land.

Roy subsequently worked on the measurement of a base line on Hounslow Heath (today the site of London's Heathrow Airport), a project sponsored by George III and the Royal Society to link up the Royal Observatories of Greenwich and Paris. Roy used a three foot theodolite for this surveying task, a wonderful piece of equipment built by Jesse Ramsden, the leading instrument maker of the day. Roy, as he established the Hounslow Base Line and went on to measure the lines and angles dependent upon it, was laying the firm foundations for the creation of the national survey of which he had long dreamt. But it was not until 1791, one year after his death, that the purchase of another Ramsden theodolite by the then Master General of the Board of Ordnance, the Third Duke of Richmond, really inaugurated the national mapping organisation that today is so pleased to be looking back over 200 years of mapmaking progress.

Based in the Tower of London for the first fifty years of its life, Ordnance Survey grew and developed in those early times. When Napoleon threatened to invade England from France, the whole mapmaking activity moved to the South Coast to ensure that the army had accurate maps of those counties thought to be most at risk. The very first Ordnance Survey map – a one inch to one mile map of Kent – was published in 1801. The threat of invasion never materialised but as

the subsequent more formally organised programme of survey and map production gathered momentum, so it became increasingly obvious that accommodation in the Tower was no longer adequate for the nation's cartographers. A severe fire in October 1841 accelerated the search for a new home and by the very end of that year Ordnance Survey had moved itself, lock, stock and theodolite, to new premises in London Road, Southampton. And Southampton has remained its home for the last 150 years. The present complex of offices was opened by The Queen in May 1969 and then, for the first time ever, all the varied processes of mapmaking were brought together on one site, practically under one roof.

So how are maps made today by the surveyors and cartographers belonging to the Government Agency with the military-sounding name?

The very same principles of mapmaking – measuring lines and angles to give every topographical feature its own related position – that Major General William Roy advocated more than 200 years ago are still very much in evidence. Accurate measurement and detailed survey are very much the order of the day, but whereas the early military surveyors trudged across marshes and up mountains with heavy theodolites, metal rods and chains – taking weeks if not months to complete their task – today the entirely civilian OS surveying fraternity can come up with instantaneous measurements and positions using satellites and high-technology electronic distance measuring equipment.

A visitor today to Ordnance Survey's Southampton headquarters would find almost 2,000 men and women engaged in the various processes of mapmaking. He or she would find teams working in the Photogrammetric Services area operating mind-boggling machinery that can convert information from pairs of overlapping aerial photographs into map detail. Ordnance Survey has nearly a quarter of a million maps in its care, some of which are at such a detailed large scale that you can see bay windows and outbuildings and new extensions on individual properties. Revising all those maps takes some doing and the most cost effective way is to send up an aeroplane. Ordnance Survey currently uses a Piper Chieftain based at Blackpool which has been converted to take in its belly a huge camera the size of a television. This camera can capture a whole predetermined sequence of black and white shots from a specific height – depending on the scale of map being revised – and once processed these nine inch square photographs prove an essential part of the revision process.

But aerial photography can't provide a complete picture. Important features may well be hidden underneath shadows, or overhanging roofs or vegetation, and remarkably few British householders paint the name or number of their properties on the roof in letters or numbers large enough to show up in an aerial photograph. The completion of the revised map is down to the surveyor "on the ground" and teams of surveyors are based in locations up and down the country for that very purpose. There are somewhere in the region of 800 field staff located in 120 offices. In Scotland there is a regional headquarters in Edinburgh, and the surveying effort itself is organised through a network of offices located in other

key sites such as Inverness and Ayr, Glenrothes and Glasgow. Altogether there are 101 staff working for Ordnance Survey north of the border. The contrasting landscapes of Scotland are reflected in and related to the personnel distribution. Fifteen of those staff are involved in the constantly changing and developing city of Glasgow. In comparison only ten are working from the Inverness office to ensure that the wildly beautiful but largely unchanging 7,500 square kilometres of the Highlands and Islands are accurately mapped.

Once the aerial photography has been taken and the surveyor has completed his or her final detail, it's over to the draughtsman back at Southampton. Years ago this was a painstaking labour of love involving fine engraving on copper plate. Nowadays at Southampton you can still find cartographers poring over a light table and scribing detail for a revised sheet in the popular Landranger Series. Plastic "scribecoats" are the media used in place of the heavy copper plates and the draughtsman uses a fine sapphire needle scribe to make an impression on the plastic surface of one of the twenty five or so different components that together form a Landranger map. A full revision of one of these maps can take upwards of a year, and almost as soon as it has been printed it may well be time to start the process all over again. The task has been likened to the painting of the Forth Bridge.

But more and more Ordnance Survey maps are now computerised and the majority of cartographers are at work "digitising" the maps of Great Britain – converting them to computer readable format. Each feature is given its uniquely related set of co-ordinates so that it can be stored in the databank and retrieved whenever revision is necessary. Customers today may not want to buy a map as such – they may want to purchase OS digital data so that they can overlay their own information (pipelines or cables, for instance, in the case of the Utilities) on top of the map detail.

Once digital data has been databanked and structured, a whole new world opens out and the applications of this data in Information Systems are many. For instance, Ordnance Survey has taken the road centreline data for all major urban areas up and down the country and incorporated it within an in-car navigation system and although Ordnance Survey's remit is the mapping of Great Britain, the fact that 1992 heralds closer ties with Europe has not been forgotten. Funded by the European Commission is an exciting project called PANDORA (Prototyping a Navigation Database of Road Network Attributes). The research team involved with PANDORA comprises Ordnance Survey, the AA (who possess a wealth of information about roads – their width, bridge heights, classification and the number of lanes) as well as Philips Consumer Electronics and Bosch Mobile Communications, both of whom will be able to road test the database on their new in-car navigation systems. The aim is that the database will have a common specification so that no matter where in Europe you travel, you will be able to rely on consistent, accurate and current information.

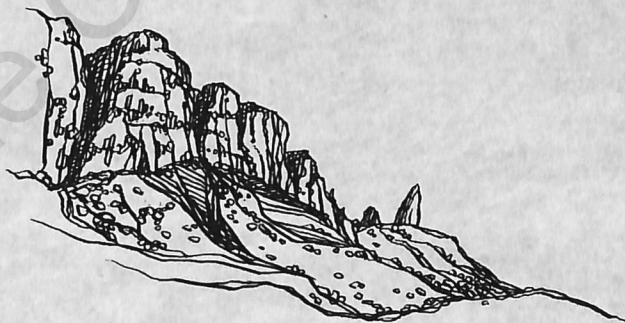
Having watched photogrammetrists and cartographers at work our visitor would also have been interested to visit the print floor to see the range of printing

presses, the largest of which is capable of turning out 8,000 small scale maps during an hour. Large scale maps are not printed in such vast quantities – they are very expensive to produce and are required by a much narrower range of customers. In some areas of the country these professional customers are able to purchase an individual plan, computerised and updated and produced to their very own specification. London-based customers for example can buy a printout of the very latest mapping information at whatever scale and covering whatever area they require. The days when you need to buy four maps because you just happen to live on the corners may well be numbered...

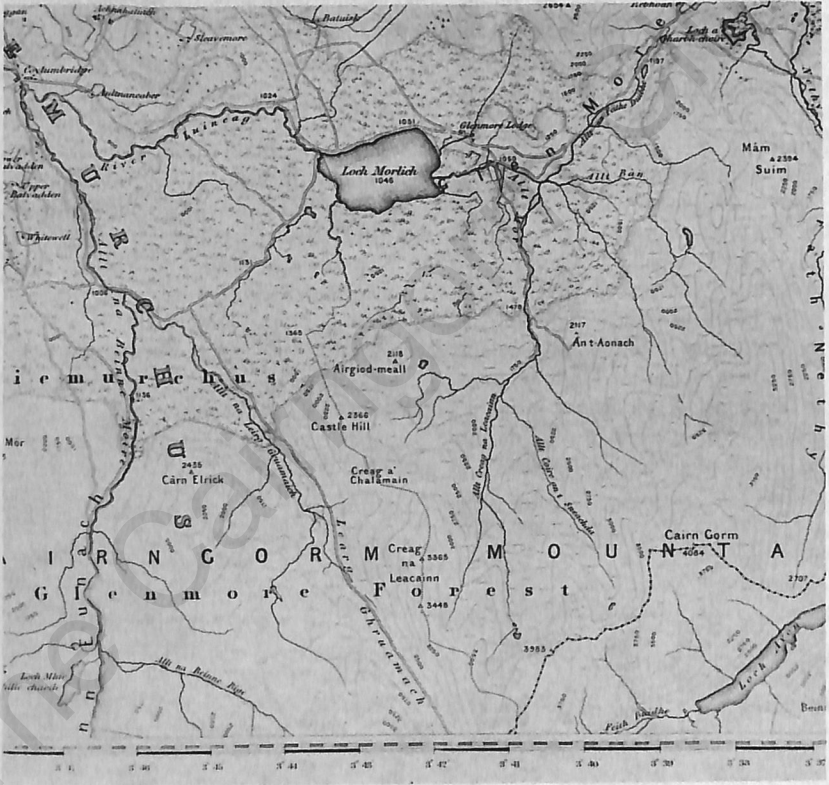
With so many different maps in its care Ordnance Survey keeps itself fairly busy. It juggles its carefully budgeted resources to try and ensure that up to date maps are the order of the day for all its customers, be they motorists or miners, archaeologists or adventurers. It produces maps for rambling, touring, education and administration and appropriately enough, in its Bicentenary year when many people want to spend time thinking about the history of the nation's mapmaker, it produces superb copies of its superseded maps. These incredible "snap shots in time" are invaluable to those researching the past and to those who want to see a location as once it was. Old hand-drawn Ordnance Survey maps provide an opportunity to wallow in nostalgia – and there are many Ordnance Survey fans who are appreciating how collectable some of the older editions of maps may be.

Peter McMaster, Glasgow-born Director General of Ordnance Survey, places a very considerable emphasis on the importance of the customer.

"We must listen to what our users say and service those needs," he says, "If they don't want our maps we can pack up and go home".



WENDY FELLINGHAM is Information and Press Officer for the Ordnance Survey



Section of the Ordnance Survey first edition one inch Grantown Sheet 74, published in 1877.

PIPER'S WOOD TREE REGENERATION PROJECT

EDDIE MARTIN

How should the Club commemorate its Centenary? Many ideas were considered by the Committee. Improvements at Muir Cottage were regarded as too inward looking. Bridge building proposals conflicted with the concept of 'keep the wilderness wild'. Replacement of the mountain top indicators erected by the Club on the summits of Lochnagar and Ben Macdui was not necessary as they were still in reasonable condition. Then, Fiona Cameron came up with the idea of a tree regeneration project and this received enthusiastic support.

The next question was 'where?' It was considered that the Braemar area was the most appropriate and the search began. Glen Ey was looked at first but was initially dismissed because of its exposure and the practical difficulty of driving posts into rocky ground. However, no other suitable site could be identified and after consulting with Drennan Watson, Mar Estate was approached and readily agreed to the enclosing of an area of Glen Ey known as Piper's Wood at map reference 098857. Robbie Middleton and family spent a happy afternoon with the President pegging out the boundary.

An anonymous donation of £1000 'for the Club Centenary' formed the basis of our funding and the Nature Conservancy Council was asked if a grant was available for such a project. The local office was very supportive and welcomed the opportunity to recommend a 50% grant towards the cost of fencing the area. An aside remark was that it made a change from duckponds! An appeal to Club members to fund a reserve for maintaining the fencing was generously supported and included a further anonymous donation of £1000.

The 537 metres of fencing, enclosing an area of 4.3 acres, was completed in May 1989. Part of the agreement with the contractor was that the posts and netting would be conveyed across the Ey to the site. Bill Lobban from the Old School House at Inverey was willing to help and also provided a tractor and trailer. It was not anticipated that the President would drive the tractor from Inverey to the site with Gill Shirreffs as a witness!

February 1990 was a coarse month with very heavy rain and unusual southerly winds. The initial assessment that the site was exposed and rocky proved to be only too true. A straining post came out and took about 50 metres of fencing with it. Continual bad weather and a marked lack of interest from the contractor resulted in the fence being down until June when he eventually came to sort it. He recommended additional posts and bracing to strengthen the fence and due to his dilatoriness we got another contractor to do this work in October 1990.

After the first heavy snowfall for two years in February 1991 it was found that a snowbank had built up at the south eastern corner allowing hares to gain access. A job for the summer will be to raise the netting at this point.

Experience has proved the importance of having a contingency fund to

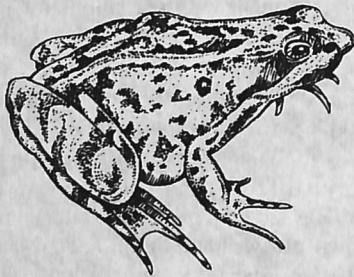
maintain the fencing which we must do for 15 years as a condition of the NCC grant.

A first visit to the Glen Ey enclosure will provoke the question 'what have we fenced'? Piper's wood is a euphemism for about 16 birch trees of great age with an estimated life of not more than six years but still producing seed. They are the remnants of an extensive birch forest which covered the area in the mid 1800's. Continuous grazing by deer and hares has inhibited natural regeneration, but there are many seedlings within the enclosed area. Dr. Heather Salzen was invited to list all the flora within the enclosure and her report forms the main part of this article.

Mrs Betty Lobban of Inverey has provided some historical detail of the area. At one time a portion of the glen beyond the Colonel's Bed contained a village and eight families lived there. Delnafae was either part of that village or very near to it and was occupied by Robert Lamont (Robbie Piper) hence the name 'Piper's Wood' for the wooded area near to the village. The extensive ruins of crofts and lime kilns are still in evidence. The crofters were cleared from the glen in the mid 1800's.

It is understood that the number of lime kilns in the locality far exceed the needs of the local crofters. A supposition is that lime was produced from the limestone schist and 'exported' to Inverey and other nearby crofting areas. A geological survey and assessment of the Piper's Wood 'village' would be welcomed for a future edition of the Journal.

Dr. Heather Salzen's botanical report now follows.



Heather has a Doctorate in Botany and was the first botanist to work with the Nature Conservancy in Scotland. She recently became Recorder for the Botanical Society of the British Isles, covering South Aberdeen (area V.C. 92) which includes Glen Ey.

PIPER'S WOOD, GLEN EY.

HEATHER SALZEN

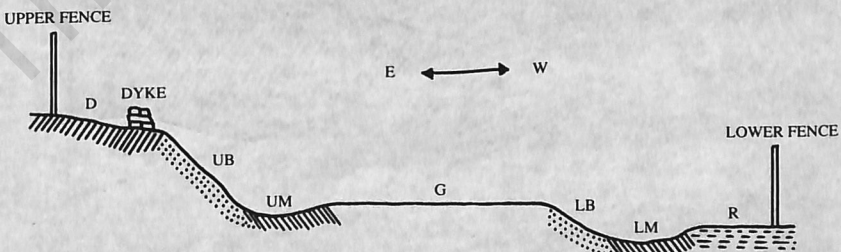
The deer fence completed in May 1989 has a perimeter of 537 metres and encloses an area of 1.47 hectares (4.33 acres). The plot includes some fixed river gravel, a wet marshy area between this and a low stony bank, a flat grassy area with the ruins of former croft houses, a steep higher bank with an old head dyke at the top and a strip of grass and heath above the dyke.

The surviving trees of Piper's Wood nearly all grow on the two banks. They are so few, scattered and in poor shape that at present the site is a wood only in name. Within the fenced plot there are 8 birches and 1 rowan on the upper bank and 8 birches on and below the lower bank. In autumn 1989 some 10 birches produced some seed, in most case only in small quantity. Birch seedlings are quite numerous, especially on heather hummocks above the dyke, on the upper bank, the lower bank and the fixed gravel beside the river. Many, if not most of these seedlings, are actually several to many years old, having been continually grazed down to ground level by deer and sheep. One of these is 20cm across and only 5cm high. With cessation of grazing small retarded birches like this one will, hopefully, grow upward and form many-stemmed bushy trees. First-year birch seedlings are very small and none were noted in 1989. If any are present they will be visible in their second year and, being ungrazed, should grow into normal straight-stemmed trees.

The ground vegetation of Piper's Wood.






The enclosed plot includes 5 distinct habitats – fixed river gravel, wet marsh, well-drained stony banks which may have been river terraces, level grassland, and mixed grass and heath above the dyke. Two of these habitats occur twice, so for convenience and extra precision in recording the plot has been divided into 7 zones as shown on the sketchmap (not to scale) and detailed as follows.

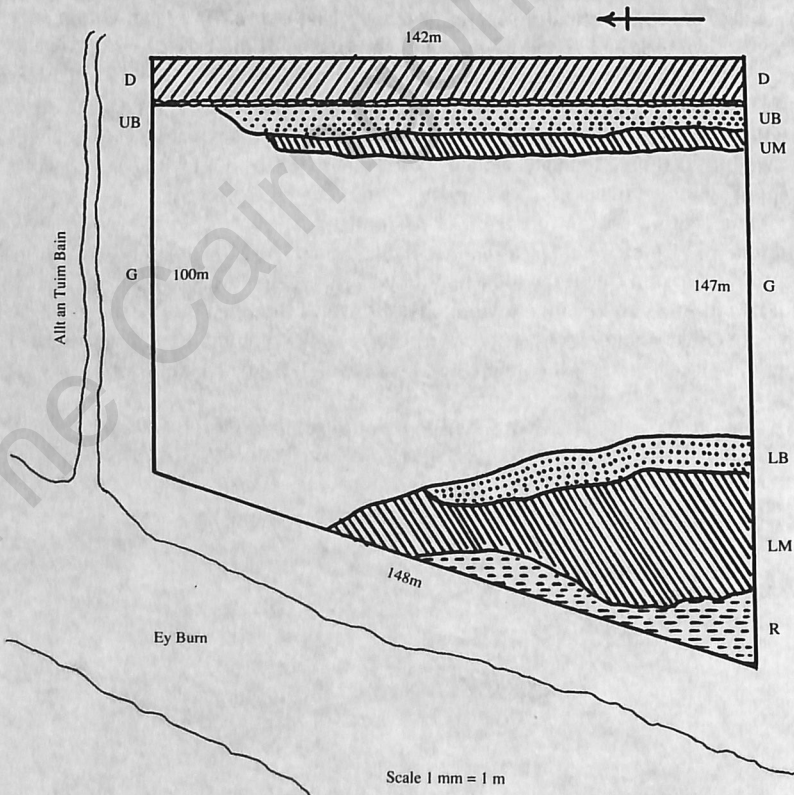
Site Profile – not to scale



The plot lies just below the 460m contour with a slight slope to the river interrupted by the upper and lower banks.

Habitat types and habitat zones – sketch map

-  Heath and Grass – Dyke and Strip Dyke/Upper Fence
-  Dry Stony Banks – Upper and Lower Banks
-  Wet Marsh – Below Upper and Lower Banks
-  Grassland
-  Fixed River Gravel



Habitat zones—

D – The dyke and the strip of grass and heather hummocks

This lies between the dyke and the upper fence. A small drainage runnel enters near the SE corner and runs through the dyke and down the upper bank ending in a small area of marsh at the bottom of the bank.

This zone is remarkably rich in species for such a small area due to having well-drained turf, dry heather hummocks, the stones of the tumbledown dyke and a tiny wet area with running water. In 1989 there were two large flowering colonies of the fragrant orchid *Gymnadenia conopsea*, one with 24 and one with over 50 flowering spikes.

A single spike of the marsh orchid, *Dactylorhiza incarnata*, a distinctive species now becoming very local, flowered where the runnel enters the dyke.

Species noted June to September 1989. For common names see "Flora of Piper's Wood"

| | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <i>Alchemilla alpina</i> | <i>Juncus squarrosus</i> |
| <i>Antennaria dioica</i> | <i>Lathyrus montanus</i> |
| <i>Anthoxanthum odoratum</i> | <i>Lotus corniculatus</i> |
| <i>Achillea millefolium</i> | <i>Luzula campestris</i> |
| <i>A. ptarmica</i> | <i>Molinia caerulea</i> |
| <i>Briza media</i> | <i>Leontodon autumnalis</i> |
| <i>Calluna vulgaris</i> | <i>Nardus stricta</i> |
| <i>Carex dioica</i> | <i>Nartheicum ossifragum</i> |
| <i>C. flava</i> | <i>Oxalis acetosella (dyke)</i> |
| <i>Cirsium heterophyllum</i> | <i>Pinguicula vulgaris</i> |
| <i>Dactylorhiza incarnata</i> | <i>Plantago lanceolata</i> |
| <i>Erica cinerea</i> | <i>Potentilla erecta</i> |
| <i>Eriophorum angustifolium</i> | <i>Prunella vulgaris</i> |
| <i>Euphrasia brevipila</i> | <i>Polygala serpyllifolia</i> |
| <i>Festuca ovina</i> | <i>Ranunculus acris</i> |
| <i>Galium boreale (dyke)</i> | <i>R. flammula</i> |
| <i>G. saxatile</i> | <i>Salix repens</i> |
| <i>G. verum</i> | <i>Senecio jacobaea</i> |
| <i>Gentianella campestris</i> | <i>Sieglingia decumbens</i> |
| <i>Helianthemum nummularium</i> | <i>Vaccinium myrtillus</i> |
| <i>Helictotrichon pratense</i> | <i>Veronica officinalis</i> |

UB – *The upper bank.*

Dry and quite steep. A colony of the moonwort *Botrychium lunaria* near the N end and in 1989 a large colony of the field gentian, *Gentianella campestris* is notable.

Specimens noted June to September 1989:

| | |
|--|-------------------------------|
| <i>Alchemilla alpina</i> | <i>Hieracium pilosella</i> |
| <i>A. glabra</i> agg. | <i>Lotus corniculatus</i> |
| <i>Anthoxanthum odoratum</i> | <i>Luzula campestris</i> |
| <i>Achillea millefolium</i> | <i>Leontodon autumnalis</i> |
| <i>Anemone nemorosa</i> | <i>Polygala serpyllifolia</i> |
| <i>Ajuga reptans</i> (S end) | <i>Linum catharticum</i> |
| <i>Bellis perennis</i> | <i>Luzula multiflora</i> |
| <i>Betula pubescens</i> (8 poor specimens) | <i>Polygonum viviparum</i> |
| <i>Botrychium lunaria</i> (near N end) | <i>Ranunculus acris</i> |
| <i>Calluna vulgaris</i> | <i>Senecio jacobaea</i> |
| <i>Carex panicea</i> | <i>Sorbus aucuparia</i> |
| <i>Campanula rotundifolia</i> | <i>Succisa pratensis</i> |
| <i>Cirsium arvense</i> | <i>Taraxacum</i> sp. |
| <i>Centaurea nigra</i> | <i>Thymus praecox</i> |
| <i>Conopodium majus</i> | <i>Trifolium repens</i> |
| <i>Geranium pratense</i> (not flowering) | <i>Trientalis europaea</i> |
| <i>Erica cinerea</i> | <i>Vaccinium myrtillus</i> |
| <i>Euphrasia</i> sp. | <i>V. vitis-idaea</i> |
| <i>Galium saxatile</i> | <i>Veronica officinalis</i> |
| <i>G. verum</i> | <i>V. chamaedrys</i> |
| <i>Gentianella campestris</i> | <i>Viola riviniana</i> |
| <i>Helianthemum nummularium</i> | |

UM – *Upper marsh.*

The narrow strip of wet ground at the base of the upper bank. At the end of May 1989 there was a small pool at the S end. By the end of a very dry June this was reduced to mud but by early September there was again some open water. The only locality within the plot where the marsh arrow-grass *Triglochin palustris* was noted in 1989.

| | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <i>Drosera rotundifolia</i> | <i>Pinguicula vulgaris</i> |
| <i>Carex dioica</i> | <i>Potamogeton</i> sp. |
| <i>Juncus bufonius</i> | <i>Triglochin palustris</i> |
| <i>J. conglomeratus</i> | <i>Selaginella selaginoides</i> |
| <i>Equisetum palustre</i> | <i>Viola palustris</i> |
| <i>Narthecium ossifragum</i> | |

G – Grassland.

The level, well-drained grassy turf, site of former habitation, inbye pasture and possibly cultivation. Notable for the presence of the spignel *Meum athamanticum* which occurs in the centre of the turf area in some numbers. Grasses remain to be identified when they come into flower with cessation of grazing.

Achillea ptarmica
A. millefolium
Conopodium majus
Calluna vulgaris
Festuca ovina

Meum athamanticum
Linum catharticum
Nardus stricta
Succisa pratensis

LB – Lower Bank.

Below the grassland and much lower than the upper bank which is eroding at the top, is very dry and has some open soil. The flora is much more limited than on the upper bank but does include the following–

Blechnum spicant
Centaurea nigra
Campanula rotundifolia

Hieracium pilosella
Gymnadenia conopsea - 1 spike only
Nardus stricta

LM – Lower Marsh.

The lower marsh occupies a level area below the lower bank and the fixed river gravel. This area is very wet most of the year especially at the S end and usually has two pools of open water. These dried out to mud in the summer of 1989.

Drosera rotundifolia on *Sphagnum*
Carex nigra
C. dioica
C. panicea
C. ovalis?
Caltha palustris
Eriophorum angustifolium

Festuca vivipara
Geum rivale
Juncus squarrosus
Molinia caerulea
Ranunculus flammula
Pedicularis palustris
Taraxacum palustre

R – River gravel.

Dry, well-drained stony area beside the river now almost completely covered with low vegetation. A very restricted flora but many birch seedlings.

Antennaria dioica
Alchemilla alpina
Calluna vulgaris
Vaccinium myrtillus
V. vitis-idaea

Genista anglica
Lotus corniculatus
Nardus stricta
Solidago virgaurea

FLORA OF PIPER'S WOOD

Order and nomenclature as in "*Excursion Flora of the British Isles*" by Clapham, Tutin & Warburg Second Edition 1973.

Recorded by H. Salzen 1989

D = Dyke and ground above dyke to upper fence

UB = Upper bank. UM = Upper marsh below upper bank.

G = Grassland. LB = Lower bank. LM = Lower marsh.

R = River gravel.

Pteridophyta

Selaginellaceae

SELAGINELLA SELAGINOIDES – Lesser clubmoss. UM, LM

Equisetaceae

EQUISETUM PALUSTRE – Marsh horsetail. UM

Filicopsida

BOTRYCHIUM LUNARIA – Moonwort. UB

BLECHNUM SPICANT – Hard fern. LB

Angiospermae – Dicotyledons

Ranunculaceae

CALTHA PALUSTRIS – Kingcup. LM

ANEMONE NEMOROSA – Wood anemone. UB

RANUNCULUS ACRIS – Buttercup. D, UB, UM, G, LM

R. FLAMMULA – Lesser spearwort. D, LM

Violaceae

VIOLA RIVINIANA – Common violet. UB, LB

V. PALUSTRIS – Marsh violet. UM, LM

Polygalaceae

POLYGALA SERPYLLIFOLIA – Milkwort. UB, D

Cistaceae

HELIANTHEMUM NUMMULARIUM – Rockrose. D, UB

Linaceae

LINUM CATHARTICUM – Purging flax. UB, G

Geraniaceae

GERANIUM PRATENSE – Meadow cranesbill. UB

Oxalidaceae

OXALIS ACETOSELLA – Wood sorrel

Leguminosae

GENISTA ANGLICA – Petty whin. R

TRIFOLIUM REPENS – Clover. UB

LOTUS CORNICULATUS – Bird's foot trefoil. D, UB, R

LATHRYUS MONTANUS – Bitter vetch. D

Rosaceae

POTENTILLA ERECTA – Tormentil. D, UB

GEUM RIVALE – Water avens. LM

ALCHEMILLA ALPINA – Alpine lady's mantle. D, UB

A. GLABRA AGG. – Lady's mantle. UB

SORBUS AUCUPARIA – Rowan. UB

Droseraceae

DROSERA ROTUNDIFOLIA – Sundew. UM, LM

Umbelliferae

CONOPODIUM MAJUS – Earthnut, pignut. UB, G

MEUM ATHAMANTICUM – Spiguel. G

Polygonaceae

POLYGONUM VIVIPARUM – Viviparous bistort. UB

Betulaceae

BETULA PUBESCENS – Birch. UB, LB, R

Salicaceae

SALIX REPENS – Creeping willow. D

Ericaceae

CALLUNA VULGARIS – Heather. D, UB, G, LB, R

ERICA CINEREA – Bell heather. D, UB, R

VACCINIUM MYRTILLUS – Blaeberry. D, UB, LB, R

V. VITIS-IDAEA – Cowberry. UB, R

Primulaceae

TRIENTALIS EUROPAEA – Chickweed wintergreen. UB

Gentianaceae

GENTIANELLA CAMPESTRIS – Field gentian. D(S), UB(S), G(NW)

Scrophulariaceae

VERONICA OFFICINALIS – Common speedwell. D, UB
 V. CHAMAEDRYS – Germander speedwell. UB
 PEDICULARIS PALUSTRIS – Marsh lousewort. LM
 EUPHRASIA MICRANTHA – Eyebright. UB, G
 E. BREVIPILA – Eyebright. D, UB, G

Lentibulariaceae

PINGUICULA VULGARIS – Butterwort. D, UM, LM

Labiatae

THYMUS PRAECOX – Thyme. UB, LB
 PRUNELLA VULGARIS – Self-heal. D, UB
 AJUGA REPTANS – Bugle. UB(S)

Plantaginaceae

PLANTAGO LANCEOLATA – Ribwort. UB

Campanulaceae

CAMPANULA ROTUNDIFOLIA – Harebell. UB, LB

Rubiaceae

GALIUM BOREALE – Northern bedstraw. D
 G. VERUM – Lady's bedstraw. D, UB
 G. SAXATILE – Heath bedstraw. D

Dipsacaceae

SUCCISA PRATENSIS – Devil's-bit scabious. UB, G

Compositae

SENECIO JACOBAEA – Ragwort. D
 ANTENNARIA DIOICA – Cat's foot. D, R
 SOLIDAGO VIRGAUREA – Golden-rod. R
 BELLIS PERENNIS – Daisy. UB
 ACHILLEA MILLEFOLIUM – Yarrow. UB, D
 A. PTARMICA – Sneezewort. D, G
 CIRSIUM PALUSTRE – Marsh thistle. LM
 C. ARVENSE – Field thistle. UB
 C. HETEROPHYLLUM – Melancholy thistle. D
 LEONTODON AUTUMNALIS – Autumnal hawkbit. D
 CENTAUREA NIGRA – Lesser knapweed, hardheads. UB, LB

HIERACIUM PILOSELLA – Mouse ear hawkweed. UB
TARAXACUM PALUSTRE – Marsh dandelion. LM

Angiospermae – Monocotyledons

Juncaginaceae

TRIGLOCHIN PALUSTRIS – Marsh Arrow-grass. UM

Potamogetonaceae

POTAMOGETON – Pondweed. UM, LM pools

Liliaceae

NARTHECIUM OSSIFRAGUM – Bog asphodel. D, UM, LM

Juncaceae

JUNCUS SQUARROSUS – Heath rush. D, G, UM, LM
J. BUFONIUS – Toad rush. G, UM, LM
J. CONGLOMERATUS – Conglomerate rush. UM, LM
LUZULA CAMPESTRIS – Field woodrush. D, UB, LB
L. MULTIFLORA – Many-headed woodrush. D, UB, LB

Orchidaceae

GYMNADENIA CONOPSEA – Fragrant orchid. D, G, LB
DACTYLORHIZA INCARNATA – Marsh orchid. D

Cyperaceae

ERIOPHORUM ANGUSTIFOLIUM – Common cotton-grass. D, LM
CAREX DIOICA – Dioecious sedge. D, UM, LM
C. FLAVA AGG.
C. PANICEA – Carnation sedge. UB
C. NIGRA – Common sedge.
C. OVALIS ? – Oval sedge. LM

Graminea

SIEGLINGIA DECUMBENS – Heath grass. D
FESTUCA OVINA – Sheep's fescue. D, UB, G
F. VIVIPARA – Viviparous fescue. LM
BRIZA MEDIA – Quaking grass. D
HELICTOTRICHON PRATENSE – Meadow oat. D
ANTHOXANTHUM ODORATUM – Sweet vernal-grass. D, UB, G
NARDUS STRICTA – Mat-grass. D, LB, R
MOLINIA CAERULEA – Purple moor-grass. D, LM

AVALANCHE

JOHN SELLAR

In early 1990 I was very privileged to be awarded a Churchill Fellowship which enabled me to spend six weeks touring Colorado, Utah, Idaho and Wyoming in the USA and Alberta and British Columbia in Canada, studying mountain and ski safety. (I understand that I am the sixth member of the Cairngorm Club to become a Churchill Fellow which must be a record for such a body!)

One area which I examined was the field of avalanche. If there was one area in the world one might wish to go to to learn about this subject, then one could not do better than the western states and provinces of North America. It is a major concern of all the various authorities in winter and whilst great advances have been made; in positive control, forecasting and public awareness, avalanches remain a killer of outdoor sportsmen/women and others in significant numbers each year.

North America suffers, where we do not, from situations where roads and highways go through canyons or over mountain passes which are highly avalanche prone and consequently all manner of people are at risk, from ordinary motorists to Highway Department personnel. Such incidents have sometimes resulted in casualty figures of horrendous proportions; in March 1910 in Washington State – 96 people killed; March 1910 in British Columbia – 62 fatalities; March 1915 in British Columbia – 57 dead; February 1926 in Utah – 40 dead; February 1965 in British Columbia – 26 killed. These are not total figures for the months in question, they are the numbers of multiple fatalities caused by individual avalanches! The 96 died in two passenger trains which were swept into a deep canyon. In other cases, whole mining towns have been wiped out with very substantial buildings reduced to rubble.

Whilst these are extreme cases, smaller avalanches regularly catch out individuals or small groups. If one looks, for example, through the statistics for 1974 one finds such cases as: January in Wyoming – 3 ski mountaineers killed; January in Washington – 2 snowshoers killed; February in Alaska – 1 snowplough driver buried alive in his cab; November in Washington – 1 climber killed; November in Colorado – ski patroller dead. These are just random selections from accident lists that make very depressing reading. There is even a recorded case of an ordinary workman, walking along the outside of the building where he was employed when snow slid off the roof, buried him, and killed him! Whilst more recent figures are slightly less depressing they still give considerable cause for concern.

In the month preceding my arrival in North America 8 people had died as a result of avalanches and all of them were outdoor sportsmen and women. What makes such figures all the more worrying is that one often finds the victims to be persons with many years of experience in their chosen recreational activity. Scottish avalanche incidents have often shown the very same to be true here.

It is generally agreed by those involved in mountain safety that there remains an impression in people's minds that avalanches are huge walls of snow that thunder downhill towards one. Such avalanches certainly do occur but they happen most commonly within 'thriller' films having been set off by a rifle shot from the 'baddie' only for our hero to ski at great speed safely out of the slide's path. Unfortunately, the reality is that most avalanches are set off by the skier or climber himself who crosses a slope of unstable snow which then breaks up around him and sweeps him downwards in an uncontrollable fashion. In North America, fatalities usually arise through suffocating burials in the avalanche debris, whilst in Scotland more deaths probably take place through the victim striking rocks on his way down or being hurled onto boulders at the base of the slope as the avalanche comes to a halt. Such victims often sustain very extensive injuries (particularly to their head) from which one would have to be very fortunate to recover.

It is this false impression amongst even apparently experienced persons that must obviously be dispelled as a priority. Scotland simply is not generally regarded as a country prone to avalanche risk in the way that people would automatically consider the Alps, for example, to be. I'm afraid you're just as dead whether you are lowered into a grave in Calgary, Denver, Salt Lake City, Chamonix, Zermatt, Aberdeen or Manchester and the sooner more people in the outdoor pursuit community appreciate this, the better. I think that, generally, people do now recognise that suitable waterproof and windproof clothing, and skills such as map reading, are vital when visiting Scottish mountain regions (winter or summer) and that people who fail to act accordingly have probably only themselves to blame. However, it does not appear that the same applies in the field of avalanche. I'm convinced that there is a real problem of genuine ignorance. Groups such as the Cairngorm Club may well be able to help tackle this problem. I am similarly convinced, especially with the ever increasing popularity of ski touring and ski mountaineering along with the already well established winter outdoor pursuits, that our death and injury statistics will only increase unless we get the message across. This is something I have tried to do, and will continue to do, in my role as Safety Officer of the Scottish National Ski Council.

North Americans have learned to live with avalanche hazard and are now well prepared to both deal with the results and also to try to avoid them by providing forecasting advice and avalanche awareness education.

One of the most impressive sights I saw during my study tour took place one afternoon when I was at the Ski Patrol Headquarters of a major resort in Utah. Whilst speaking with the Patrol Supervisor, an avalanche was reported where two persons were thought to have been buried. Patrollers were immediately directed to the scene, taking with them packs of probes and snow shovels kept in Patrol Bases in readiness for just such an event. Avalanche rescue trained ski instructors and lift attendants also made their way to the site. In the meantime, some Patrollers blocked off access to the area whilst lift attendants prevented members

of the skiing public from using tows which might have taken them towards the area. Ski Patrollers from the neighbouring resort arrived to assist. Snowmobiles and piste grooming machines were also directed to the area. In less than half an hour, upward of thirty people, assisted by search and rescue dog handlers, had established a probe line under the direction of the Patrol Supervisor. In under 40 minutes, the Life-Flight medical helicopter had arrived from Salt Lake City and was on stand-by near the site. The Salt Lake County Sheriff Department's helicopter was alongside and it had brought the Sheriff's Search and Rescue Co-ordinator to the incident. The Sheriff's Search and Rescue Team had attended and were near the scene ready to move in if the search area had to be extended. Lookouts had been posted back from the scene itself to scan the hillside above the searchers, which was just as well, for about 50 minutes into the operation a gully alongside the one which had avalanched then emptied and it was only speedy radio messages which allowed the probe line personnel to hurriedly retreat out of the path of the new slide which swept down onto the area they had been searching. Throughout all this, a Ski Patrol Foreman had kept a record of everyone entering the area at risk and ensured that all persons in the immediate area had avalanche transceivers for personal protection. Local radio and television station reporters arrived by helicopter and the authorities also had to cope with pressure from the media for details of the incident. A stock of further probes and transceivers was ready should they be needed.

Fortunately, the two persons initially thought to have been in the area when the slope avalanched were traced elsewhere and everyone was stood down in just over an hour. The Ski Patrol's Snow Safety Officer and the US Forest Service Snow Safety Officer then moved in to examine the scene and to try to discover why the potential of such a happening had not been spotted and to study the snow conditions to see why the slope had released.

Turning to the subject of avalanche forecasting and warning, again the state of Utah provides an excellent example. There is an Avalanche Forecast Centre for the state which is based within the Weather Forecast Centre at Salt Lake City airport. This gives ready access to the weather data which plays such a large role in the field. The centre is funded by the state and federal governments via the Forest Service and employs three full-time forecasters with 7 day per week, 5am to 5pm coverage from November through to April. It has an annual budget of \$55,000.

The Centre publicises its telephone advisory system where members of the public can 'phone in and hear a 2½ minute recorded message on present avalanche conditions and predicted risks. There are five different telephone numbers which relate to various areas within the state. A 5 minute recorded message gives more detailed information. Additionally, the public can choose to dial yet another number which then connects them with one of the forecasters and they can discuss avalanche conditions and perhaps their intentions with an expert. About 65,000 calls are made to these numbers each year.

The Centre plays an important educational role and each year its staff give

20-30 avalanche talks, lectures, and workshops, directly addressing some 2,000-3,000 people. They estimate that they reach some 100,000 people through local television, radio and newspaper coverage.

As well as receiving 'physical' information from Forest Service and Ski Patrol snow safety officers who will have compiled local data by digging snowpits etc., the Centre has computers linked up to remote data gathering stations. All the large ski resorts, and avalanche-prone highway areas, have had machinery installed which records temperature, wind speed, precipitation, snow depth etc. Such devices are normally sited at the base, mid-station, and summit of resorts. Their data can then be accessed remotely by computer links to the Centre's terminals. This then allows forecasters to make what are usually accurate predictions to a high standard.

The Centre also receives, wherever possible (i.e. unless a slide goes unnoticed in the back-country), information on all avalanche incidents, even where no injury or rescue has taken place. They encourage members of the recreational public to provide them with details of avalanches which may have gone unnoticed by professional outdoors people. This has allowed them to build up an important and very useful 'data-bank' which enables them, all the more accurately, to gauge the type of snow, wind and weather conditions which will make avalanches possible or prevalent. These historical records are being used to compile what they refer to as "Nearest Neighbour" data. In this way they can compare current conditions at any particular region or slopes with a view to determining if they are similar to those of the past when avalanches have occurred in the same place. Their eventual aim is to combine such a data-bank with the ongoing information from remote stations so that, ideally, their computer will be able to automatically generate warnings. For example, if the computer could register snow condition input from a slope at Snowbird ski resort, compares it against its historical avalanche incident records and finds similar conditions present or approaching, then it would alert the Centre who could warn the ski resort. If such sophistication can be achieved then the potential advantages are tremendous. I understand that the only other centre in the world which has reached such levels is in Switzerland.

I found that most western states of North America had similar centres although none were as technologically advanced as Utah's.

Scotland, too, is beginning to tackle this subject in a very positive fashion. Since 1987 the Scottish Avalanche Project, funded via the Scottish Sports Council, has established a network whereby avalanche forecasts are available for the major climbing areas in our country. In the winter 1988-1989, despite sparse snow cover in early months, the number of avalanche incidents did not decline significantly; 23 hill-goers from 13 parties were carried down by avalanches. 8 were injured, with 2 fatalities. Lochnagar, one of the Cairngorm Club's 'happy hunting grounds' features very near the top of the list of recorded avalanche incidents in Scotland.

As mentioned earlier, I feel that such bodies as the Cairngorm Club can do much to help publicise the risks, and the now existent facilities which can aid climbers and skiers to avoid entering areas of risk. As outdoor pursuit enthusiasts we can also help by equipping ourselves with a knowledge of avalanche awareness and also with personal protection in the form of avalanche transceivers, snow shovels and probes.

Avalanche Reports are available during the winter season by calling:—

Mountaincall

East; 0898 500 442

West; 0898 500 441

Climbline

East Highlands; 0898 654 668

West Highlands; 0898 654 669

The Scottish Avalanche Project would like to receive details of any avalanche incidents, whether individuals are actually involved or if they simply witnessed a slide (in order to build data). Their 24hr Ansaphone number is 0479 811323.

Anyone involved in winter pursuits is well advised to read one of the many books on the subject of avalanche. One of the best, and which is devoted to Scotland, is *"A Chance In A Million"* by Barton and Wright (Blyth Wright is now co-ordinator of the Scottish Avalanche Project).

Whilst all experienced mountaineers recognise that avalanche prediction is by no means an exact science, there remains much that we can all do to protect ourselves, whilst in no way diminishing our enjoyment from trips into the Scottish hills in winter. Scotland holds the world record for survival of an avalanche burial victim – 22 hours. I doubt whether we'll ever see anyone as lucky as that again!



John has presented a copy of his Churchill Fellowship Report 'A Study of Mountain and Ski Safety in North America 1990' to the Club library.

BATTLES FOR CAIRNGORM RIGHTS OF WAY

SANDY ANTON

Walkers today owe any practical freedom they may have to wander over the Scottish hills largely to the battles in the courts waged by the Scottish Rights of Way Society and a few public spirited individuals to stop the closure of traditional rights of way. Without those rights of way it would have been possible for landowners to police entry into our hills: with them, it is hardly practical for them to do so, however much they might want to.

The growing popularity of grouse-shooting and deer-stalking among the wealthy in the Victorian period brought substantial funds to highland landowners who became determined to protect their estates not only from furred and feathered vermin but against the intrusion of the growing band of walkers who, emulating their Queen, sought recreation in the hills. In an interesting anonymous article in an early Cairngorm Club Journal (CCJ Vol. VI, (1911), p. 300) the author records the closure of many routes around Braemar in the 1850's. "Doubtless the shutting up of the North Deeside Road west of the Invercauld Bridge of Dee, the closing of Glen Ey and the Coirenleirg route were occasioned by the then policy of endeavouring to shut out the public at all hazards from deer forests." The author referred in particular to Glen Ey where he spent his youth and explained that through this glen there was one principal cart road which divided into three lesser roads, the one leading to Glen Clunie by Corienleirig; a second to Glen Shee by Alltanodhar and Glen Tatnich; the third to Strath Ardle, Glen Fernate, etc. By 1911 all these routes had been closed. The author then records vividly the closing of Glen Lui Beg and other parts of the Mar Estates to pedestrians by the Duke of Leeds, who was then lessee of those estates.

Similar policies carried out in Glen Tilt were the occasion of the notable legal battle fought by the newly formed predecessor to the Scottish Rights of Way Society. The Lord Provost of Edinburgh, Adam Black, had called a public meeting of prominent Edinburgh men on 30th April 1845 and they agreed to form an "Association for the Protection of Public Rights of Roadway in and around Edinburgh". The second motion was "That the citizens of Edinburgh have cause to complain of various encroachments on their rights of access to many rural localities of traditional interest and picturesque aspect which afforded innocent gratification to them and proved objects of attraction to strangers". This motion was carried unanimously. The Association wasted no time in getting to work and by June of the same year it had taken up the questions of access to Hawthornden and to Corstorphine Hill, both near Edinburgh. It also soon began to look further afield. It was resolved in June 1845 that the Association should intervene in the then much discussed closing of Glen Tilt to the public.

Battle of Glen Tilt

The immediate occasion was the attempt of the Duke of Atholl in 1847 to turn back the botanist, Professor Balfour, and a party of students on a journey from Braemar to Blair Atholl. The Duke appeared "herself" – in the phrase of one of the gillies – and told the party that they were trespassers in his domain and that they had to return the long Scots miles back to Braemar. In the words of *The Times*, the intruders, in the view of the Duke, "not only trespassed in having come there, but they were trespassers where they stood – if they passed to the right or left they were trespassers still. It was trespass if they moved, trespass if they retreated, and trespass if they remained where they were". Eventually, the party escaped by climbing over a dyke, with the Duke's familiars in hot pursuit.

On learning of these events, the Association wrote to the Duke's factor, who made it clear that no public right of way was admitted. The Directors wasted no time and at the meeting at which the factor's reply was reported, two motions were passed:–

"1. That in order to protect the rights of the public, it is necessary that the Association be provided with the sinews of war, and that application be immediately made to the inhabitants of Edinburgh and other towns for subscriptions to the funds;

2. That, as soon as the Association is provided with sufficient amount to secure them in such measures as they may be advised to adopt, active steps be taken to open to the public the accesses to the glens and mountains which have been arbitrarily shut up". The Association soon received in public subscriptions and private guarantees sufficient financial backing to raise an action against the Duke.

The matter was litigated in 1849 in the case of *Torrie v. Duke of Atholl*, where evidence of the use of the route by drovers, packmen, and others was submitted. The result was a resounding victory for the Society. The Duke, however, did not take his defeat well. In subsequent years there are reports of his blocking English students travelling through the glen and it is thought that the Duke subsequently destroyed an old bridge over the river Tarff in an effort to deter walkers.

Reconstruction of the Society

During the years 1861 to 1883 the Association appears to have been rather inactive, but at a public meeting in 1883 it was decided that the Society should be reconstituted and incorporated under the Companies Acts as "The Scottish Rights of Way and Recreation Society (Limited)". Attention was drawn to the threat to some of the public routes through the Pentlands, lying as they did at Edinburgh's doorstep, and the Society gave financial support to its members in proceedings taken against them by the proprietor of Dreghorn Estate. Railways had now entered the scene and the Society did its best to ensure that their proliferation did not cause the loss of rights of way. Then there came the matter of the bridge over

the Tarff.

Bridge over the Tarff in Glen Tilt

In 1879 a young Englishman, Francis Bedford, was drowned while trying to cross the Tarff when its waters were high. A fund had been started with the object of building a stone bridge as a memorial to him, but the project fell through because only £70 had been donated. The Society took the matter up in 1885 and arranged for the erection in the following year of a wooden suspension bridge, which still stands today as the "Bedford Memorial Bridge". This bridge was overhauled by the Society in the 1930's and again in 1959. On the latter occasion Dr. George Taylor of the Cairngorm Club had reported to the Society on the condition of the bridge and on the necessary repairs. The Cairngorm Club made a donation of Five Guineas which, perhaps, did not err on the side of generosity. To compound this, the then Secretary of the Club forgot to enclose the cheque.

The Glen Doll Case

Of the Mounth tracks linking the southern glens with Deeside, one of the most attractive is the Tolmount, connecting Braemar with Glen Clova.

Viewed from the Clova side there are initially two routes. One follows the South Esk to the picturesque site of the ruined Bachnagairn Lodge, climbs past (south) Loch Esk – from which there are splendid views to the north – and eventually meets the other route near the cairn on Crow Craigies at some 3000 feet. The other route, usually called Jock's Road, skirts the Youth Hostel, the former Glen Doll House, and follows a forest track with striking views towards Craig Rennet. The track veers to the north-west, along the north side of the upper Glen Doll, winding its way among rocks and boulders until it reaches a rough shelter below Craig Lunkard. Jock's Road then moves less steeply upwards until it joins the Bachnagairn route and both pass the Tolmount on its right before descending steeply to Loch Callater.

In 1883 Duncan Macpherson, a Scot who had prospered in Australia, purchased the Glen Doll estate and decided to preserve it for deer-stalking. He began to turn away shepherds, tourists, botanists and others who wished to enter it. In the summer of 1885 two members of the Board of the Society with two friends entered Glen Doll, erected a signpost (which Macpherson later removed) and were met by the laird, his nephew and a keeper. One of the intruders was a notary public who, in the presence of all, went through the ancient legal ceremony of "taking instruments" recording the obstruction of the route. This curious ceremony so weakened the resolve of the keeper that he declined to implement his master's wishes and the party were allowed to proceed on their way.

But the systematic obstruction continued and not everyone has the prudence to have a notary public accompany him on the hills. Shortly afterwards, therefore,

the Society and various local people raised an action in the Court of Session against Duncan Macpherson and Colonel Farquharson of Invercauld, the owner of the Callater side of the Tolmount, to declare that there was a public road or right of way on foot and on horseback and for driving cattle and sheep from Auchallater in Glen Cluny through the Glen of Doll to Braedownie in Glen Clova. To his credit, Colonel Farquharson soon intimated that, so far as the road passed through his lands, he did not contest the action. Macpherson on the other hand, fought the action tooth, nail and claw, using every procedural device in the law books in an attempt to have the action dismissed. For example, contrary to the usual procedure in rights of way actions, he contended that the action should be tried without a jury, which, the laird argued, might have been prejudiced by correspondence in the Scotsman and London Standard. Macpherson won this round and the court directed that the proof of the facts should proceed before Lord Kinnear without a jury.

The 57 witnesses called by the Society no doubt sorely tried the patience of that eminent judge, but he gave judgement on the merits for the Society. He held that the earlier use of the route could not be imputed merely to the tolerance of previous proprietors and that, while the evidence of use – particularly during the winter months – was slender, it was such as might have been expected, having regard to the nature of the country and its sparse population, if the route had indeed been a right of way. The Glen Doll route was shorter than the route via Bachnagairn and was the natural and direct route from Braemar and further north to the fairs in the south. Lord Kinnear's judgement was upheld by the Court of Session on appeal in July 1887 and by the House of Lords in 1888.

The Society was awarded judicial expenses against Macpherson and the proceedings must have cost him some £5000, but the Society had to pay its own extra-judicial expenses, i.e. those not allowed by the Court. It is understood that these amounted to some £650, an enormous sum in those days, and its payment nearly bankrupted the Society. But thanks to the courage of the Society a century ago walkers of the present and future generations may freely use one of the more interesting and exhilarating of Scottish hill tracks. Indeed, once the implications of the decision were appreciated by landowners there was for long a marked hesitation on their part to contest the right of walkers to traverse old drove roads and other ways through the hills. The signpost which Macpherson had taken down in 1885 was replaced. In 1958, following the well-known disaster in which five New Year walkers of this route lost their lives, the Cairngorm Club made representations to the Society that a signpost should be erected where the track leaves Glen Callater. The Society furnished a signpost which was erected by the Club. More recently, in 1991, the Society has signposted the old right of way from Glen Doll over the Shank of Drumfallow to Glen Prosen and Glen Finlet.

The Battle of Braemar

It may be mentioned incidentally at this point that a rights of way dispute – battle would perhaps be more appropriate – occurred in Braemar in 1891. The

Society did not intervene as such, but kept an eye on the proceedings. The then Laird of Invercauld, attempted to close a track which led from the Glen Clunie road by the back of Craig Coinnich to a point on the present Braemar-Ballater road near the rocky outcrop known as 'the Lion's Face'. The track is about three-quarters of a mile long and had been in frequent use by the people of Braemar and by visitors for many years. The laird had a fence erected across it, and the local people broke it down. It was repaired and again broken down. The Factor called in the police, but the Procurator Fiscal said that it was a civil matter, and did not come within the scope of the criminal law. The laird was obstinate and had the fence restored as often as it was demolished – and in one week in August 1891 it was demolished three or four times. The skirmishes in this battle became something of an entertainment for the local summer visitors: at one stage, under the supervision of Mr Foggo, the factor, estate employees were erecting the fence at one end while it was being demolished at the other. Doggerel verses were written to commemorate the occasion:

"Crush, crush, crush,
Let's crush this Foggie man...

Eventually it became apparent to the laird and his factor that their tactics were unlikely to weaken the resolution of the people of Braemar and, resorting to legal advice, the laird ceased to obstruct the route. It is still open for a pleasant stroll today.

The Glentanar Case

A writer in the Aberdeen Free Press on 2nd September 1921, after referring to the closure of certain roads in the Braemar district, pointed to the fact that from time immemorial there had been two public roads along Tanarside, one on the south side which had recently been locked up and another on the north side which has been made "as like the private approach to a gentleman's residence as possible, with great gates which are shut at night, while further up the glen there are at least two other sets of gates. These are intended to bar the way to Mount Keen, to which the road undoubtedly leads, and, as a further excuse for closing the road, the farmers in Glen Etnach were removed and their houses were left to lapse". The writer went on to catalogue various rights of way in the estate, including the Mounth over Mount Keen, the Fir Mounth road, the route from above the Bridge of Muick via Glen Etnach to Mount Keen and the south, and several others.

The Scottish Rights of Way Society took up the cudgels and, failing to weaken the resolution of the proprietors of the estate and itself lacking the financial resources to initiate legal proceedings, eventually persuaded the Deeside Committee of Aberdeen County Council and the County Council itself to raise proceedings against, among others, the Trustees of the deceased George, Baron Glentanar. This extremely hard fought case was heard before Lord Mackay in June 1930, and the evidence throws interesting light on the use of the routes

during the preceding 40 years and more. By and large the judgement was one very favourable to the County Council, which by then had taken over the action. The Trustees lodged an appeal but later entered into negotiations for a settlement. Its terms were eventually agreed, and the Court of Session gave its authority to those terms. The details are set out in the 1931 Cairngorm Club Journal at pp.42-43. From the standpoint of members of the Club, its most important features were the declaration that the road from Bridge of Ess towards Glentinar House remains a public road for all forms of traffic, but a slight change was made in the route approaching Glentinar House. The road, which used to pass in front of the house, was diverted past the stables and ends in the parking place which was formed beside the stables. The road from this point up Glen Tanar to Corrievrach at the foot of Mount Keen was declared to be a public right of way for passengers on foot or by horse or by non-mechanically propelled cycles. It is sometimes argued that Lord Mackay's decision was tantamount to one that a pedestrian public right of way is automatically one for pedal cycles. This is doubtful. The case was settled and Lord Mackay's judgement, in consequence, can hardly be regarded as being authoritative.

The Society recently renewed the signposting of many of the rights of way in the vicinity of Glentinar. Such signposting is important, not for route-finding purposes, but as a visible assertion of the existence of the right of way.

Recent Events

In recent years the Society has tried, where at all possible, to secure the recognition of rights of way by agreement. One interesting case concerned the Forest of Birse. In recent times the Society had received persistent complaints about the intimidating signposts near the car-park at the end of the Forest of Birse road suggesting that the route past Ballochran Farm towards the Fungle was a private one. The Fungle route originally passed close to the formerly derelict Birse Castle but, with its restoration, this seemed an intrusion upon the privacy of its proprietors and an informal deviation was agreed between the estate and the Society whereby the main Fungle route from Tarffside to Aboyne was moved to the west of the policies of the Castle and the altered route was signposted. No provision was made for the signposting of the route to the Fungle from the Forest of Birse. As a result of the complaints the Society took up the matter again and the inclination of the estate at first was to deny that the route from the Forest of Birse was indeed a right of way. To establish this by court action would have been possible but quite expensive. The Society fortunately consulted Lewis MacAllan, a member of the Cairngorm Club and former County Clerk, who discovered that the route as far as the ford at Ballochran was on the Statutory List of Public Roads for the Kincardine and Deeside Division of Grampian Region. On being confronted with this surprising news and on the understanding that the Society would not object to the removal of this road from the Statutory List, the Estate agreed to a more acceptable diversion of the route and its adequate

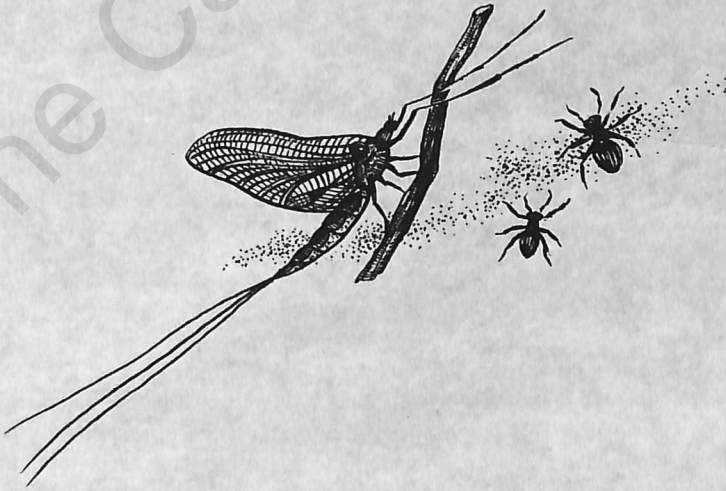
signposting as a right of way.

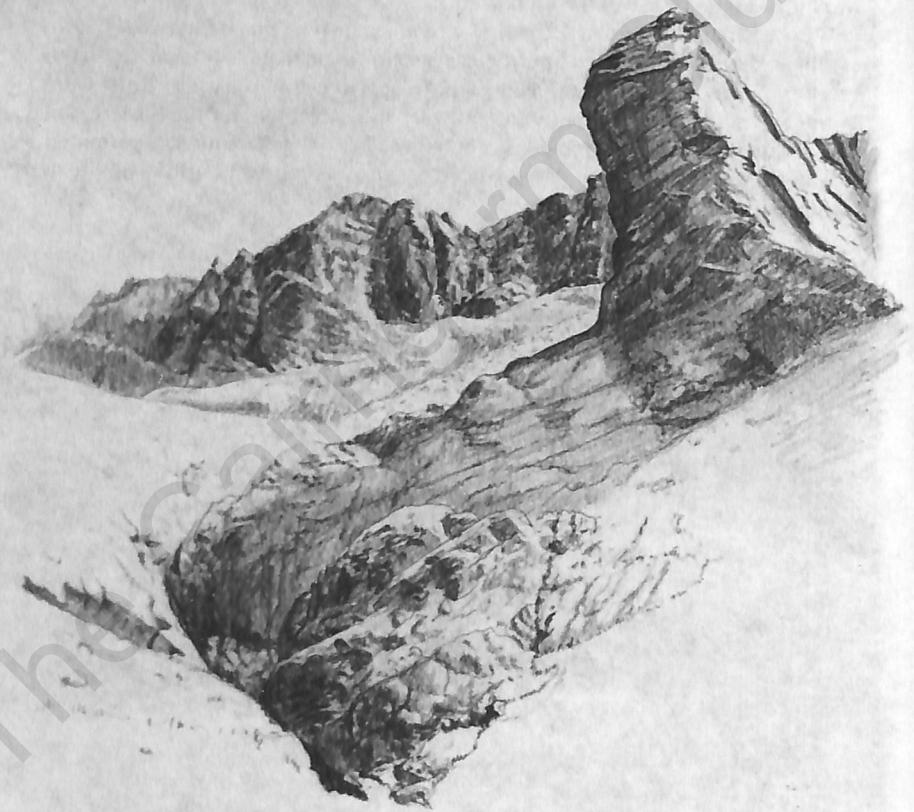
Perhaps still more important has been the reaching of an agreement with the Forestry Commission in relation to the recognition and signposting of rights of way and the retention of existing access rights – not necessarily rights of way – through its forests. On the basis of this agreement it has been possible to open up and signpost an ancient route from Loch Tummel, near the Tummel Hotel, running through the woods to Blair Atholl. The Society, on the basis of this agreement, hopes shortly to identify and signpost the Builg Mounth, the Stock Mounth and the Cryne Corse Mounth.

Sometimes, however, litigation becomes an unfortunate necessity. Two recent examples concerned the route near North Ballachulish from Callert to Lairigmor and a route near Higgs Farm off the Lanark road. Both were eventually settled, but the latter in particular was expensive for the Society. For actions of this kind the Society desperately needs funds. Without substantial assets in its treasure chest the Society can present no credible threat to landowners.

A. E. Anton

Editor's Note: *The Society welcomes applications for individual membership and the making of donations. Enquiries should be made to the Secretary, John Cotton Business Centre, 10/2 Sunnyside, Edinburgh, EH7 5RA.*





Monte Cinto seen from the approach. Michael Kent.

MONTE CINTO

MICHAEL KENT

It was not yet dawn when I left the Hotel de la Plage in Algojola on the north coast of Corsica. A two-week package holiday had given me the opportunity for some walking in the impressive mountains of that island. The much heard cliché 'Corsica: a mountain in the sea' is very apt and only on its east coast, in the alluvial plane, does it have any tendency towards the horizontal.

By using a coastal base the twin joys of the island could be exploited; the mountains and the sea. The hotel was known to us from previous visits and with its friendly atmosphere and inexpensive demi-pension it was for us a natural choice.

My objective that day was the highest peak on the island, Monte Cinto at 2706m. The early start was desired both because of the drive necessary and the anticipated long day ahead: local opinion suggested 9 hours for the ascent and descent from the nearest roadhead at Haut Asco (1422m).

The morning air was heavy with the perfume of maquis, the mixed scrub-like vegetation which covers vast areas of Corsica giving it its other epithet 'The Scented Isle'. With the sinking of the night air to the coast and valleys, the concentration of this heady exotic cocktail of vapours increases to near narcotic proportions.

It was still dark when I left the tortuous and narrow coastal corniche and headed inland towards Ponte Leccia. From there the landscape gradually became visible in the early dawn light. My speed fell as I began to climb through the precipitous Gorge de L'Asco. Here were magnificent forests of chestnut, oak and pine set in the extremely rugged landscape of the National Park which occupies half of the island. Asco was passed: a mountain village scattered around a collection of hairpin bends on a bare hillside. Then, up through the forest I drove towards Haut Asco with still nothing on the road before me except the occasional bands of wild pigs and lonely lost cattle. The latter are a problem apparently caused by poor farmers driving the beasts they can no longer afford to feed out into the wilderness to forage and survive however they can. Judging by the menus in local restaurants however, the pigs are an asset well exploited.

When I reached Haut Asco the sun was just touching the highest tops and it was 7 am: time for breakfast in what appeared to be the Corsican equivalent of the Cairnwell ski development and with all its charm. This was a generally sordid collection of huts and chairlift paraphernalia.

On leaving the car I was chilled to the bone by the coldness of the mountain air having left the coast in shorts and tee shirt. Rapidly correcting this error I hurried through an overpriced bread and coffee offering known as breakfast. Having eaten many fine breakfasts in Continental hotels it seemed an insult to call this minimum a 'continental' breakfast. Like us though, the Corsicans call the European mainland 'The Continent' so it is doubly inappropriate. Thus modestly

fortified the day proper could begin.

Using sheet 20 (Corse Nord) of the Didier et Richard 1:50,000 version of the Institut Geographique National Survey, I located the path to Monte Cinto directly opposite the small café. From there it plunged into the pinewoods and skirted the beautifully sited hut of the Club Alpin Francais. This path gradually contoured upwards through the woods, leaving below the hairpins of the access road until after about one kilometre the forest thinned and was left behind. Although Monte Cinto itself was out of sight from this point, the route ahead up towards the Cirque de Trombalacciu was clearly visible dominated by Capu Larghia, with deep and mysterious recesses and totally alpine in character. Snow beds lay in late September high in the shattered corries, and from these the meltwater continued to feed the several streams running to the Asco river.

After crossing a fairly level but lumpy area of glacially smoothed rocks the Cinto path veered suddenly upwards to the left over steep and smooth slabs. At this point a taste of the exposure to come was experienced and I felt that at last the ascent had begun. Most of the scattered vegetation amongst the boulders was unfamiliar to me. There certainly seemed to be an abundance of juniper and other low shrubs interspersed with ubiquitous heathers, but most of the landscape was seemingly arid rock.

The path climbed steeply around the shoulder of un-named peaks rising ultimately to Capu Borba at 1936 metres. Above my head an eagle circled then alighted on a rock, indifferent to my distant struggling, panting form. In places the path was very exposed with dramatic views to the right across a deep valley and up into the dark recesses of the Cinto massif. An enormous rock pillar overhung this valley, its angle seemingly defying gravity. Most undramatic of all, Monte Cinto itself seemed but the highest point on an undulating rugged ridge. The scale however was deceptive as I later found.

By about 9.30 I was approaching a col (or bocca in Corse) at 2207m, marked on the map as Bocca Borba. By then I had passed three or four girls having a coffee stop, the only other party on the hill at that time. The path at this point offered choices of route traversing up and across very loose scree. None seemed to have any particular advantage so I took the highest, reasoning that any slippage of the scree would only take me down to the lower tracks.

Once past the col, where after joining another path from lower down the Asco valley, the route lay upwards into the shadow of the mountain, I entered a cool shady area of boulders and icy pools below the precipices of Monte Cinto itself. The cliffs were plastered in acres of the most vivid yellow lichen I have ever seen. In the shade of the morning sun these encrustations seemed luminescent (and probably were).

The steepest and most arduous part of the climb then began, following wherever possible the red paint daubs of the way – marking up steep and loose rock to finally emerge at about 2600m on the ridge leading to the summit. A problem of this route finding over such loose terrain is that boulders often move considerable distances off the route under the influence of ice and gravity taking

their paint daubs with them!

Once on the ridge and heading towards the summit barely one kilometre away, the map is less than truthful in its omission of the contours along this ridge. A full hour was to pass before I finally reached the summit, an hour occupied in passing vast gendarmes both around and over. The latter exercise resulted when the path itself was lost. From the edge of a precipitous face I could see the path some 30 or 40 metres below but could find no way to reach it except back along the ridge or climbing down. Rashly perhaps, I adopted the latter approach. The final and crucial move in these unexpected rock gymnastics necessitated an irreversible jump across a crack followed by a friction controlled slide down it to more negotiable ground. 'Controlled' is probably the wrong word for it but thank heavens for lined breeks!

The final and legitimate approach to the summit was across shattered boulders and scree, to arrive exhausted after a 5 hour climb, at Monte Cinto's crowning – anticlimax; a decayed brick and concrete wartime observation post with all the grace and beauty of a bomb site. That was the immediate impression but all around was spread the rugged beauty of these mountains. Close at hand the rock, with the appearance of a clottie dumpling, so many garnets did it seem to contain, was illuminated with more of that luminous lichen. Beyond the mountains to the East and West the sea could just be seen. Closer to the North, some of the towns along the coast were easily visible. Southwards, disappearing into the haze rose chain after chain of Corsica's ribs. In perfect conditions it is said that the mountains of Sardinia may be seen. Immediately below to the South-East lay the dammed lake of Calacuccia. Lakes always appear uninteresting to me when viewed from height and this was no exception being just a featureless blob on the valley floor. Beyond it 15 or 20 miles away the magnificent peak of Monte Rotondo (2622m) also seemed just another top on a long ridge, ending with Monte Cardo (2453m) at its easterly point. The greatest impression of ruggedness and grandeur however was presented towards the western coast where the mountains rise directly from the sea. It was at that time just 2.00 pm and as on nearly every day that I have spent in Corsica, the mountains there were becoming cloud capped and I could see cumulus developing rapidly.

It seemed an appropriate moment to begin the descent. I had eaten my lunch and by then had been joined by a German couple and their dog whose combined presence threatened my solitude. Their concern for my welfare as a lone walker was appreciated but their offer of company was politely declined. I'm not overfond of dogs anyway. The route down proved almost as hard to find as the route up. Contrary to appearances on the map the path did not entirely follow the ridge and in places, because of the aforementioned obstacles, dropped 30 or 40 metres below it on the wrong side for a descent towards Haut Asco. On regaining the ridge proper and beginning the descent over familiar ground I passed again the party I had met in the morning, now descending, having been overcome by heat and exhaustion without reaching the summit. By this time Cinto itself was hidden in mist and I was thankful for my timely departure in view of the

navigational difficulties of the summit ridge. As I descended further towards the Bocca Borba the afternoon heat became intense so I stripped by a stream and lay for some peaceful rest. As the afternoon progressed the summits cleared again and I could trace by eye my route along the prickly spine of Cinto.

I abandoned my idle pleasure and continued down the valley. The afternoon sun was now shining straight down the cirques and gulleys over Cinto's flank, creating with the haze scenes of incredible beauty. Buttress upon buttress receded upwards like flat painted theatre sets placed one behind the other across the wings of a stage.

It was then 4.00 pm and to my astonishment I met a party just beginning the ascent. They asked me details of the route being amazingly mapless. Although they had no overnight equipment they seemed untroubled by the almost certain fact that they would be benighted if they pursued their objective at that time. I think I have met more madmen in the Alps and Corsica than I have ever encountered in Scotland. Despite the awesome nature of these ranges, people seem unimpressed by the threat and set forth on expeditions that we would see as folly even in lesser hills such as ours. This impression of casualness was further enhanced when half-an-hour later I met an Italian couple with no gear, no map, no food of any kind and wearing sandals and trainers. They also asked me the way to the top. I tried as subtly as possible to dissuade them and left them still weighing up the possibilities. I am no chauvinist and hide from Brits abroad, largely by keeping my mouth shut and this I did for the next party, chattering loudly in English inside their own narrow world. They also were heading upwards through the woods but apart from an excess of vocality they were well equipped and clearly well prepared for what lay ahead. They may have been doing the North-South route across Corsica that passes here or their objective may have been Monte Cinto. I didn't speak so I never found out. Their presence however brought me back to earth with an unpleasant jolt. Of all the parties of various nationalities I had met, none seemed to have dented my solitude more than these innocent compatriots with their blethering who irritated me more than any idiocy of the others.

Within a few hundred metres the job was complete. Haut Asco was full of car-borne tourists milling around, as could be found in any British beauty spot on any Bank Holiday or weekend. Apart from that last half hour of the descent, with its brutal re-introduction to the human race, I had enjoyed my day and would recommend to anyone who values unspoilt (largely) mountain scenery, to savour Corsica.

I jumped into my car and fled the crowds. It was 5.30 pm and two hours later I sat down for dinner with my wife in Algajola.

THE POLISH MEET – JULY 1989

DUNCAN MACRAE-GIBSON

How should this account start? Perhaps by introducing our leader, Peter-the-enigmatic-smile, and the members of his party, Chris-the-fore-and-aft-rucksacks, Fiona-the-sudden-husband...? No, perhaps not. But the very uncertainty goes with the uncertainty we all felt in approaching this new club venture. An expedition behind what at the time were still considerable shards of the iron curtain, to the domain of a régime in uncertain transition from an authoritarian past; what differences would that make? An expedition with a plan, once we arrived, closely organised by our hosts, the High Mountain Club of Rzeszów, with it seemed some concentration on climbing rather than walking; would those of us who go up hills without hardware find enough of our sort of ascent?

In the upshot there proved little to worry about on either score. The main visible signs of the political situation were the numbers of old election posters showing Lech Waleska with his arm round the shoulders of the local Solidarity candidate, and political graffiti on toilet doors instead of obscene ones. It clearly contributed, however, to our hosts' wish for a detailed plan, for they would plainly have been in trouble had we misbehaved, particularly by wandering across the border into Czechoslovakia, with whom relations were at that time strained. Also, as we found out, arrangements of all sorts took time to manoeuvre through the administrative system, and given the large numbers of people wanting to use a small mountain area (the Polish border with Czechoslovakia makes only a southward salient into the Tatras, and the whole Polish section forms no more than a broad strip across a 1:30,000 map sheet) arrangements are essential. On the other hand, the chances of the mountain, unrelated to politics, ensured that the careful plan couldn't in fact be followed, and the improvised rearrangements which our hosts had to spend much time in making left Peter, our main climbing member, underserved rather than the walkers.

But enough of generalities. The outward journey, thanks to Peter's efficient organisation, goes without hitch, and here is our party stacked in couchette berths on a trans-European train, passing phrase-books and cassettes to and fro, trying to acquire at least a few phrase of politeness in a language with spellings like *wchrzycz*. We reach Kraków, are greeted by our hosts waving little Rzeszów banners, and swept off to a "camping", i.e. camp-site, consisting in fact of a cluster of little A-frame chalets surrounding a central service block with a hotel part, a restaurant/coffee bar, and the plumbing. Too late by some way for a meal there, but the first appearance of what is to be a gastronomic leit-motif of the trip, a spread of open sandwiches rather elegantly created by our hosts, and tea Polish style (no milk, lots of sugar). From this beginning on our hosts took total responsibility for our costs, even to providing us with pocket money. On this basis, as a cultural exchange party, we were excused the normal requirement to change daily amounts of currency at the official rate, a great advantage since for

anything we did want to change the free market rate was many times better. Some embarrassment at accepting such largesse was assuaged by the realisation that we would be able to repay in kind on the return visit. It is very hard for Poles to acquire foreign currency.

Poles seem to be assiduous sightseers, and the first day was devoted to the sights of Kraków; the next we were to visit some nearby limestone outcrops offering short rock routes of all standards. But first we had to book our return couchettes, which it had proved impossible to do from Britain – even the outward bookings had only arrived, after much effort on Peter's part, on the very morning of our departure. To the office, then, of Orbis, the Polish tourist organisation, where a short queue led to information that five places were available in the Kraków office; the other two must be pursued to Warsaw or wherever. Information only; the actual doing of the deed was at the head of a long, long queue, estimated time three hours. Peter and Andrzej, the leader on the Polish side, had to wait, while the rest headed off for the limestone, with Fiona and Duncan to try to uphold the climbing honour of the club until Peter caught up. He never did. It was 6 p.m. before he reached the front of the queue (and triumphantly secured the seven places); meanwhile Fiona and Duncan did their best and succeeded in getting up a Grade 4 route (equivalent to V Diff), not greatly impressing Urszula, the main Rzeszów climber, who is said to lead up to Grade 7 (Hard VS?). For the walkers, just the stroll, admiring the limestone formations. The climbing is interestingly different from home granite; the footholds rounded and slippery, but lots of nicely undercut handholds where rain has dissolved tiny cavelets. Also there are firmly-lodged old pitons up the routes; chocks and nuts are not much used, it seems.

Next day the plan called for a move to a tented camp in the High Tatra. This central section is granite, Alpine in style, with lower, more rounded limestone sections to east and west. It has bears, some of whom have realised that where there are humans there is easy food. One campsite, colonised by a mother and cubs, had been closed, producing heavy pressure on the others, and no places to be had. So the first emergency change of plan; places were found in a quite different campsite, at the foot of the Western Tatras, as a base for some walking there. We installed ourselves in steadily deteriorating weather, hoped the tents wouldn't blow down in the night, and woke to steady rain and a general disposition to postpone the day. But two of our hosts were active, walked in to a refuge some way up into the hills, in the Chochołowska valley, and succeeded by this personal visit in negotiating places for us there, so still in intermittent rain we packed in. Here was where it became clear that Chris had adapted the maxim of the immortal Sam Small, and "said he'd best put on two rucksacks, he'd never get gear into one". One before and one behind, but he got on as well as any.

These refuges, set up and owned by the Tatra Society, were to be our homes for the central part of the visit. This one, uniquely, had public road access to a car-park part way up the valley, and a negotiable road, though not open to cars, for the rest of the way. Those who don't care to walk can get towed in on what is

at other times a haycart, behind a tractor, or old-style behind horses, or old-style with jam on in the form of four bored local fiddlers playing away on the cart-tail. Or for the opulent camera-bedangled tourist at a smart trot in a personally hired droshki. But most walk, and they are many. The accommodation is youth-hostel style: quite comfortable double-bunked dormitories, some provision for self-cooking or meals to be bought from the kitchen. Particularly if late down from the hill, though, one never knew what would be left; we got used to meals of unpredictable content, sometimes in unexpected order, partly for that reason but partly just because Polish practice is different. There was always plenty; our hosts had carried in various cans and jars to boost what the kitchen could supply. Try a breakfast starting with a sweetened milk soup like a thin rice pudding, followed by open sandwiches with a mixture of sardine, raw onion, and a soft cheese very like crowdie. There is no alcohol. Poles have a reputation as hard drinkers, but there is a serious problem of alcoholism which they are trying to overcome, and our trip was almost wholly teetotal, with one notable exception which we will come to.

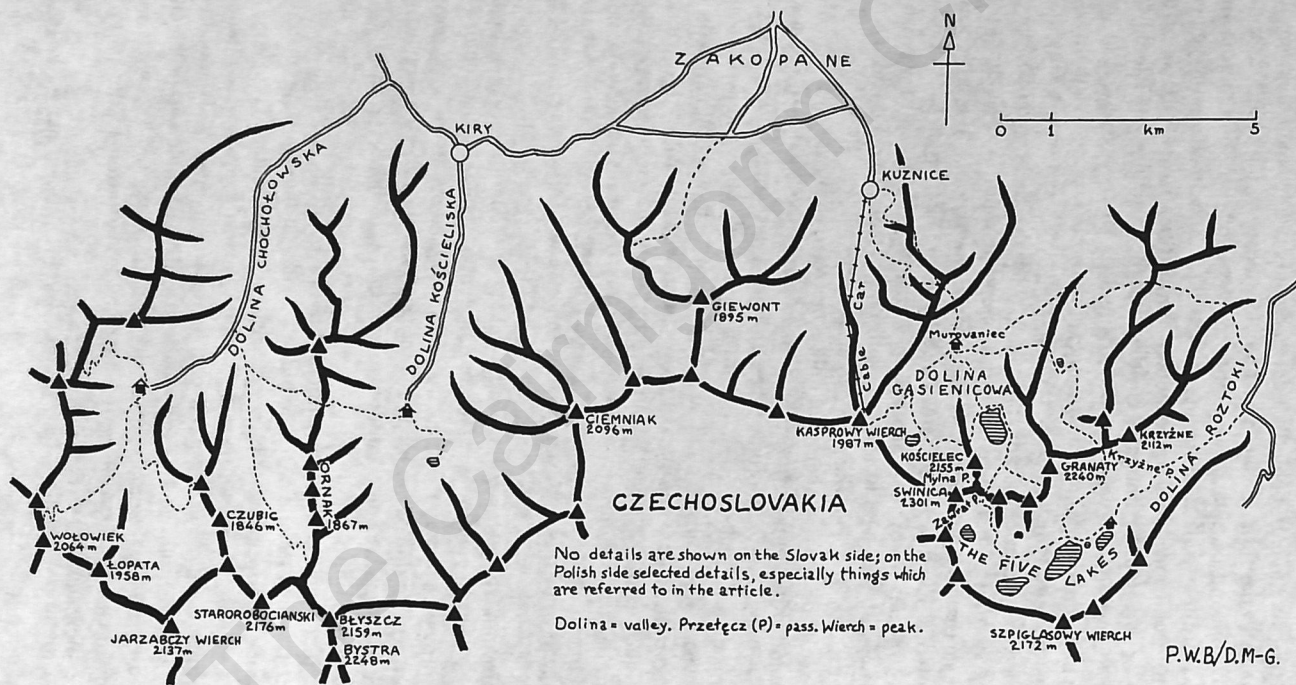
The hills here are in shape not unlike our own, rising to a few scramble bits on the main ridge, which dips up and down across the 2000 metre contour, and forms the Polish-Slovak border. Pines grow as forest trees on the lower slopes, becoming dwarf higher and finally prostrate at their upper limit of about 1600 metres. The whole Polish Tatra is a National Park, and walking is strictly limited to marked trails, with some even of these closed when necessary for regeneration, or to protect wildlife. Much labour has gone into the engineering of the trails, which in places amount to continuous stairways of heavy rock slabs, though in others the dwarf pine has encroached and made the passage a little awkward. We had three days in these Western Tatras, and some of the party walked high on each of them.

Unfortunately the main ridge-walk, taking in the border peaks of Lopata and Wolowiec, was in conditions all too reminiscent of such things at home. This was the day on which some of us, heading as Munro-baggers do for a top only a little way off the main line of the ridge, found ourselves pursued by a worried Andrzej because the top was some hundred yards into Czechoslovak territory, where border guard at times patrolled.

On other days one group climbed Starorobociański, the highest top of the Western Tatras in Poland or on the border; another group Giewont, the prominent peak above Zakopane, on which expedition, it seems, the Scottish practice of always carrying compasses proved its worth when there was some doubt which way to turn on a ridge. There was a major lower-level walk too, involving crossing a pass at almost 1500m to the next valley, with the aim in the end of an ascent of Ciemniak. The plan proved overambitious, but the Kościeliska valley is a beautiful one, and reaching it was some consolation to the party for not attaining their summit.

On the first of the three days Andrzej and his younger namesake had left us, as it emerged to try again to arrange a stay in the High Tatra, and this time with

THE POLISH TATRA



No details are shown on the Slovak side; on the Polish side selected details, especially things which are referred to in the article.

Dolina = valley. Przełęcz (P) = pass. Wierch = peak.

success, so we packed down, moved the cars some kilometres, and packed in again, a much steeper walk this time, to the Murowaniec refuge in Gasienicowa Valley, close to the originally intended camp. All such moves demonstrated just how much can be got into the ubiquitous Polski Fiat; they also allowed time for a restaurant meal and some tourist sights – museums, churches (of which Poland has many), and once a pleasant if unexpected stop to paddle and skip stones in a river. This time the result was to postpone the pack-in to the cooler early evening, which was welcome, but also raised some nervousness, for in principle booked beds are not kept after 6 p.m. We needn't have worried, though, Andrzej had succeeded in making contact by telephone (which can be a feat), and ensured that our places were held. It was as well he did, for though the policy is evidently that no benighted climber is actually turned away, that night every patch of flat corridor-space was filled with sleeping-bags. Here our party was unexpectedly increased, for who should we find waiting for us but Fiona's husband, Henry. With a few days spare because of some business change, he had flown over and, armed with our intended plan and despite the fact that we were not following it, had succeeded in tracking us down. His tale deserves a small article to itself; it included arriving late by taxi at what he hoped from the map would be the hut but proved to be the road-head below the pack-in trail, packing in in the dark to the camp where we should still have been (but never were), and there bivouacking until morning allowed him to start to search for where we might actually be.

We spent three days here too. On the first Peter was at last to get his climb, with Tomasz, who had replaced Ula (Urszula) as our hosts' lead climber, while the rest of the party took a high and rough ridge with superb views over the whole Tatra. Was to, but the weather took a hand; rain set in and made neither climbing nor the intended ridge advisable. Still, Peter and Tomasz, lowering their sights, put in a high walk, and the intending walkers made a fine trip over a high saddle, the Krzyzne Przetęcz, where the rain relented to give views almost as good as had been hoped across to the highest tops of the Tatra, all in Slovakia, with cloud washing and rolling among them. The party divided for the return, some over another high saddle, the Zawrat Przetęcz, with steep rock sections protected by fixed chains, while others preferred a lower and less precipitous route back to the Murowaniec Hut. Our hosts gallantly offered to accompany them, but it was a small Scottish party of Janet, Eilidh and Fiona, with Henry as escort, who set off, and have supplied the account that follows.

The path dropped down fairly steadily, till we hit a tarred road free of traffic; this was near the Czechoslovakian border, and the only regular motor traffic was the military, and the mountain rescue services (sadly in action that day). We walked along the road for some time, and then took a marked path, which lead up through the pine woods, past green meadows, and which our map indicated would lead to the Hut. The landscape was much more rounded than the high Tatra, and it was a pleasant area to explore, particularly appreciated by us now that the rain was, at worst, but an intermittent drizzle. We met few people, and as night descended (which it did fairly rapidly) a

degree of apprehension filled the party. Were we on the right path? Might we, in the poor light of our head-torch, miss our way? Our survival equipment was non-existent, our food supplies depleted. We struggled on, and it was reassuring, at last, to hear – faintly at first – the sound of a generator. To everyone's relief, we had arrived back – in time for a Mars bar, a quick debriefing from Peter, and so to bed.

Next day the cloud had descended, with drizzle, over the refuge, and though later it cleared somewhat this turned into virtually a rest-day, but an opportunity to hand over our gift of climbing equipment to our hosts, who promptly tried it out on the back wall of the refuge, falling off in turn on the protection of a belay with the Friend, the rope held on the sticht-plate.

That left only one mountain day to come. Would the weather be kind and let us finish on a high note? It was. Two ropes climbed Koscielec via the Mylna Przetęcz, a fairly easy line but quite long, exposed, and very enjoyable. The whole mountain resounded with the ringing of piton-hammers, according to the usual practice of climbing here, as other parties took steeper routes on both flanks of our ridge, but we think we have persuaded our hosts of the utility of Friends, if not perhaps of sticht-plates, viewed as allowing altogether too slow a management of the rope. This was granite climbing, not unlike the same in Scotland, though on the one hand there seemed to be more in the way of sharp, positive hand-holds, on the other a number of loose sections, in both cases perhaps because the granite is geologically much younger than ours. Meantime a walking party reports their day thus:

The non-climbing party, consisting of Fiona, Frances, Janet, Eilidh, Chris and Michał (as local guide) took the same route as the climbers initially and then followed a marked trail. To begin with the going was easy, then a steep snow-filled gully took us up to where chains and a fixed iron ladder led us on to the ridge. For those who could stand upright (which Eilidh failed to do) views down to the Roztoki valley and the five lakes gleaming in the sunlight were stunning. Eastwards the peaks of the Tatra continued, seemingly in unending ranks, into the far distance. Westwards we could pick out the climbing party, working its way now up the main south ridge of Kościelec. We made our way south, then west, along our ridge. Generally the path was clearly marked. In places the rock was polished smooth, for on a good day like this the path was crowded with Poles of all shapes and ages enjoying the challenge. Eventually we reached the broader shoulders of the ridge at the top of the ski complex, where we were to drop down to the hut. Here, as on our first day walking in the Tatra, we were on the Czech border, a fact brought to mind by the sudden appearance of Czech border guards from behind a boulder. Hill-walking with the risks of an international incident was a new experience!

The rest risked anti-climax. It would never have done not to have visited our hosts in their home town (which has nearby, lower, hills that we had no chance to see); it would never have done not to show us the sights. There were certain

rebellious thoughts about one more museum, but the final one was spectacular, a defensive castle at Łańcut changed over the centuries into a splendid palace, with some features, like the inlaid wood floors, as fine as could be found anywhere. We ended in the last owner's study, where following the museum's policy of having the rooms as far as might be as if still inhabited a "round of port" stood on the green baize table awaiting the "dining party" after their meal. Or so we supposed, but it was not so, for with the tour completed we were all called to take places at the table; the supposed coloured-water "port" proved to be generous portions of cherry vodka, a Polish speciality, in which we exchanged toasts and hopes for the return visit the following year. It was an unexpected and delightful conclusion, specially and enterprisingly arranged by our hosts.

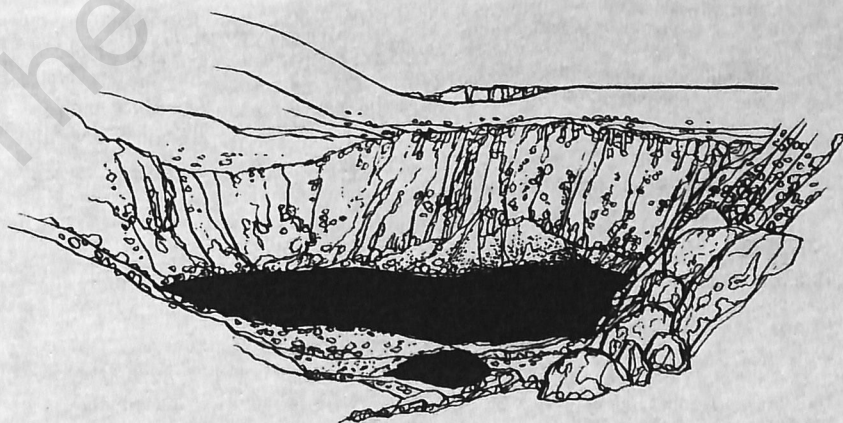
There remained only our private goodbyes and exchanges of gifts with our particular hosts in Rzeszów, and a departure at four in the morning for the long trip home, enlivened – if that is the word – by having to climb blearily out of our couchettes next night while East German border guards searched under them for illegally departing citizens. They and we would have been equally surprised had we been told how soon that would become a thing of history.

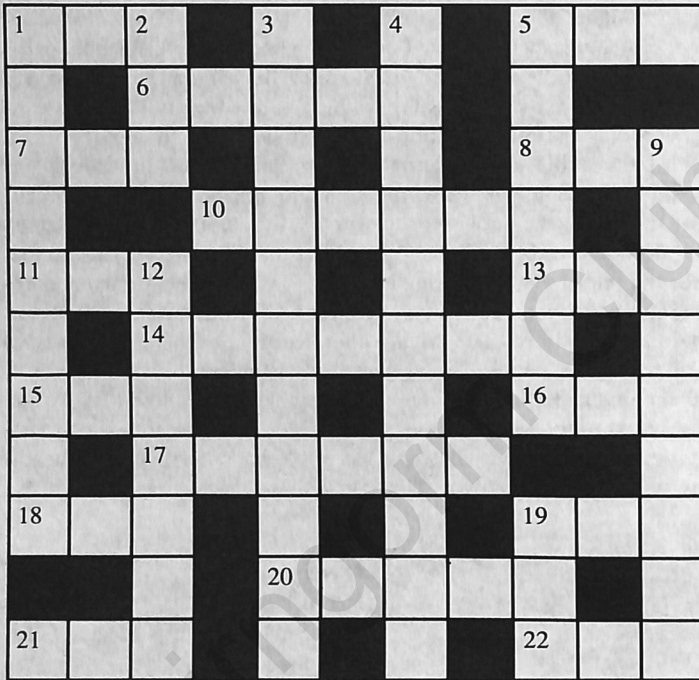
The home team

Andrzej Kuś
Andrzej Gajdek
Barbara Czekańska
Michał Chruściel
Tomasz Kubin
Urszula Madejczyk

The visitors

Peter Bellarby
Chris Howard
Duncan and Frances Macrae-Gibson
Eilidh Scobbie
Fiona Cameron
Janet Armstrong



**Across**

- The answer lies before answer (3)
- Van Winkle did rest in peace (3)
- Shell out a hundred on small church (5)
- I left the island as Edwina said it was not safe (3)
- Canisp, Alligin hold the slang mate (3)
- The heavenly dancers of old Aberdeen – aurora is on the removed to pertain to the north (6)
- Unhappy in the thought of glissading (3)
- A roman catholic part of the circumference of a circle (3)
- Flowering willow, fireweed or epilobium angustifolium (7)
- It sounds as if you will regret living near Helensburgh (3)
- Due south at mid-day (3)
- It could be a sand, a house or an eddie (6)
- It may sound funny, but actually you should spell it this way (3)
- An even smaller small Gaelic (3)
- Silver, steel, gold and nickel contain, what is said, the best view of the Cuillins (5)
- This story is filled with granite (3)
- Mother has to leave Driesh's neighbour for a seaside town (3)

Down

- He extracts teeth and subscriptions (9)
- Used in diagnosis of heart disorder, but nothing to do with Cupid (3)
- Apocryphally it's said to be deserted on a flag day (5,6)
- Avalanche leg hire, bids for a crossing west (5,6)
- Tossed parsley repeats (7)
- The steep frowning glories of dark (9)
- He is at the top of Drumochter at the end of summer playing with the pipers (7)
- Old Norse blue (3)

IN MEMORIAM

The Club records with regret the death of the following members:

Miss Constance Baxter (O 1955)
 Mr J. W. Fisher (A 1975)
 Mr Kenneth A. Gray (O 1966)
 Miss Ruth K. Jackson (OH 1928)

Mrs Elizabeth F. C. Watt (AL 1969)
 Mr Alan R. C. Watt (OH 1954)
 Mr James Will (OH 1968)

RUTH K. JACKSON

Ruth died on 21st November, 1990, after a long illness and just before her 87th birthday. She had been a member of the Cairngorm Club from 1928, joining one year later than Leslie Hay, the longest in membership. Ruth was an active member and served on the Committee from 1935 to 1937 and again from 1944 to 1946 and was then Vice-President from 1946-1949. She was elected an Honorary Member in 1986.

From her earliest days Ruth was a keen hill-walker. Few knew the hills of Northern Scotland, especially the Cairngorms, as intimately as she did, recognising near and distant summits from any angle and knowing the best routes to climb each. Until in her seventies, she seldom missed an Outdoor Meet and enjoyed the companionship of Easter Meets. Only her illness prevented her from meeting friends regularly at the Indoor Meets and Annual Dinners.

In the early thirties, Ruth introduced Lottie Wisely and Marion Hoggarth to the Club, after they climbed Lochnagar, and for years they and Lottie Esslemont, were her constant companions. She often arranged extra weekend outings with them or walks on a Saturday afternoon. Her companions on many an outing in the sixties were Jan Taggart and Daisy Cruickshanks (both of whom, sadly have died), but no matter how severe the weather, Ruth never adapted to trousers, always wearing a skirt, covered, if necessary, by a waterproof golfing skirt.

As a person, Ruth was very kind and generous, even-tempered and with a quiet sense of humour. The variety of her interests made up a very complete life. After schooling at 'The High', Miss Oliver's School (now Albyn) and Cheltenham Ladies College, she trained as an architect at Gray's College of Art, spending much of her working life in Aberdeen's Town Architect's Department. She was a keen guide and for many years was a commissioner. Her church meant much to her where she was prominent as editor of its magazine for many years and in the Linen Guild. She seldom missed an SNO concert or a Geographical lecture and the latter may have encouraged her to travel widely to many European countries, South and East Africa, Canada and USA, Australia and New Zealand, North West India and to more exotic places such as Kashmir, China, Peru and the Galapagos Islands, all of which she talked about very vividly. Until her health began to fail she played golf regularly at Balgownie and enjoyed the pleasures of gardening.

Ruth's death has saddened her many friends, within and outside the Cairngorm Club. She is sorely missed.

J.A.C.

ALAN C. R. WATT

The sudden death of Alan Watt in March 1989 came as a great shock. Alan was elected Honorary President only the previous year and had shown all his enthusiasm for the Club during this brief period and it was hoped to have the benefit of his wise counsel for many years.

Alan will always be associated in the memory of older members with the acquisition of Muir of Inverey. He was the driving force in the often difficult negotiations for its purchase during his period as President from 1967 to 1970, and willingly continued on the committee after his term of office to help in the design and adaptation of the building. Another of his services to the Club during his Presidency was to initiate the revision of the Club Constitution, a task for which he was well qualified.

Alan's interest in the hills was first shown at Aberdeen Grammar School where he was a founder member of what was then called the Rambling and Mountaineering Club. His studies at Aberdeen University were interrupted by the war when he served in the army and rose to the rank of major. He returned to take a First-Class Honours degree in History and then studied for the Law and became a partner in Gray and Kellas. In his professional capacity as a lawyer he was also appointed Town Clerk of Ballater and became a well-known figure on Deeside. Later he resigned from Gray and Kellas to take up the appointment as Chairman of Industrial Tribunals from which he retired in 1987.

The Watt family has a long association with the Club. Alan's father Theodore, and his uncle Edward were both members as was his elder brother George who was killed in the war, while his younger brother, Harold, also a Past President of the Club, is, of course, still a member. Alan's love of the hills and especially Deeside was shared with his wife Helen, indeed they joined the Club together. His friends will remember him for his many qualities, especially his unflinching good humour and warm personality.

E.F.J.



PROCEEDINGS OF THE CLUB

GENERAL MEETINGS

The One-hundredth Annual General Meeting was held on 23 November 1988. Alan Watt was appointed Honorary President, Eddie Martin became President, and Antony Chessell filled the vacant position of Vice-President. The other office-bearers re-appointed were Vice-President Gillian Shirreffs, Secretary Richard Shirreffs, Treasurer Alex Matthewson, Editor Antony Chessell, Librarian Peter Ward, Huts Custodian Eddie Martin, Meets Secretary Graham Ewen and Indoor Meets Secretary Neil Cromar. The new President paid tribute to the work done by Anne Cordiner as retiring President, in particular her work related to the Club's Centenary.

The Annual General Meeting was held on 22 November 1989. Following the untimely death of Alan Watt within six months of his being appointed Honorary President, Robert Bain was appointed to that position. Otherwise the office-bearers appointed the previous year were re-appointed except for Gillian Shirreffs having to retire by rotation and Judith Middleton being appointed to the vacant position of Vice-President.

The 1990 Annual General Meeting was held on 21 November. All of the office-bearers appointed the previous year were re-appointed.

ANNUAL DINNERS

The 1988 Annual Dinner was held at the Stakis Tree Tops Hotel, Aberdeen, and the guest speaker, George Downie, gave a talk illustrated with slides entitled "Arctic Travels".

The 1989 Annual Dinner, at the same venue, was addressed by John Cleare, whose topic was "On Ski to the Roof of China", but whose fascinating lecture also covered mountains nearer home.

The 1990 Dinner, again at the same venue, was addressed by Hamish Brown, who gave a stimulating talk entitled "The Scottish Hills".

Richard Shirreffs

MEETS AND EXCURSIONS 1988-1991

The average attendance at the excursions for the period covered by this Journal was 32, exactly the same as the previous time. (The attendance is given in brackets after each excursion in the list at the end). The best turnout was 46 for the Cairngorm traverse in 1990 and the poorest was 17 to the Drumochter Pass in 1989. It is perhaps interesting to note that all three winter outings to Lochnagar attracted 45 people.

The first excursion in this report was the 1988 overnight one from Corroul to Glen Nevis. It was a beautiful evening as the train carried the party from Bridge of Orchy to an unscheduled stop near the south end of Loch Treig. Most of the party alighted here and set out up the valley of the Abhainn Rath in order to gain access to the Mamores. The river crossing at Luibeilt proved difficult in the darkness. All the Mamores between Sgurr Eilde Mor and Am Bodach were climbed by at least one party. Unfortunately the beautiful weather which we had experienced while on the train did not last. As night fell a thick mist settled in over the hills which remained shrouded until shortly before noon the following day.

The excursion from Linn of Dee to Blair Atholl was a fine day, the entire party following the right of way route throughout. On the Cairngorm traverse it was rather misty

on the higher tops and as usual on this outing many different routes were followed across the mountains. Between Auchallater and Loch Muick on a fine day, most of the party did the traverse via Cairn Taggart and Lochnagar. The Cairnwell to Glenshee excursion started off misty with most members climbing Glas Maol and Creag Leacach and continuing over the lower hills to the south as far as Craig of Rinavey. These lower hills were clear and good views could be obtained especially towards the south. The descent took us down to the rather oddly named farm of Tomb from where it is but a short walk to Spittal of Glenshee. The Glen Dye to Tarfside excursion was a very windy day, most members travelling over Clachnaben and Mount Battock. For many this proved a longer walk than it had appeared at first sight. The following walk from Boultenstone to Corse was also a very windy but clear sunny day and there were good views over the Howe of Cromar and Deeside to the south and Donside to the north.

The winter of 1989 was remarkable for its lack of snow. On Lochnagar, in January, the only snow to be seen was a very small patch at the top of the Black Spout. There was however a very strong wind as on all the other winter excursions which followed. Many members had to move around the summit of Mount Keen on all fours such was the wind strength, although on this occasion it was a remarkably warm wind for the time of year. There was some snow on the outings to Auchallater and Cairngorm and there was some limited skiing taking place on Cairngorm.

The 1989 Easter Meet was held at Spean Bridge. On the journey over it became apparent that the shortage of snow which the Cairngorms had experienced all winter had not been repeated on the west coast. The hills were covered with snow right down to about 600 feet above sea-level. The Laggan Dam was spectacular with not only all the overflow syphons working full blast but water was actually spilling over the dam itself. Apart from the Saturday it was a rather poor weekend weatherwise but nevertheless a great variety of hills were climbed underlining just how good Spean Bridge is as a climbing centre. These included Sron A Choire Ghaibh, Meall na Teanga, Creag Meaghaidh, Aonach Mor, some of the Mamores and hills in the Glenfinnan area. About 40 people attended the meet.

We had reasonable weather on the Ben Avon meet and most of those present reached the top. The following excursion to Ben Chonzie took the form of a traverse from Hosh, ascending via Glen Turret and returning to Invergeldie in Glen Lednock. This was a very hot sunny day and some members reported having seen a small herd of llamas during the traverse. The Cairnwell to Inverey was also a very fine day with most members climbing Carn a Gheoidh and some going on to the Beinn Iutharns.

The 1989 overnight excursion proved to be a very wet affair. Some members did make a number of ascents on either side of Strath Carron, but those who attempted the ascent of Lurg Mhor and Bidein a Choire Sheasgaich were forced to give up, most finding shelter in an empty house beside Bendronaig Lodge. Thereafter it was a case of getting to Craig by the easiest route via the Beallach Bhearnais. By this time the rivers were in full spate and it was with considerable relief that a bridge (not shown on the map) was found across the Allt a Chonais.

The excursion to the Monega Pass in August was also a rather wet day but fine weather on the Cairngorm traverse with the usual wide variety of routes being followed. A rather small crowd attended the Drumochter Pass outing which was also a good day weatherwise, with most members climbing the four Munros on the west side of the main road. One party attempted to descend from Geal Charn directly to Dalwhinnie and got into difficulties with very rough ground and were rather late in reaching the hotel. The traverse from Crathie to Loch Muick had a rather windy day, but most members climbed Lochnagar. The weather on the Fungle/Fir Mounth excursion showed some early promise, but before long it had started to rain. This got heavier as the day wore on turning to snow at the summit of the Fir Mounth. One member had a rather unfortunate experience while walking through the Fungle, being bitten by a rather large dog, on the end of a lead! In contrast the excursion to the Sidlaws was a fine day. The route, starting from Lumley Den, is first

dominated by the Tealing TV mast. At the highest point, Craigowl Hill, the view over Dundee and Strathmore was rather spoiled by a low lying haar but the hills to the north were very clear.

The winter of 1990 was almost a carbon copy of that of 1989 with very little snow and strong winds on most of the excursions. The best day was on our visit to Glen Clunie. At Inverey it was very wet as well as being windy and few hills were climbed.

The Easter Meet of 1990 was again held at Spean Bridge after efforts to find a venue further south had failed. It turned out to be a rather wet weekend at sea level with plenty of snow higher up. Nevertheless a large variety of Munros were climbed and also some smaller hills. Some members travelled as far as Ardnamurchan where the weather was considerably better. The meet was attended by 50 people, probably a record.

After Easter the outing to Beinn a' Bhuid started well enough with bright sunshine all morning. However, around noon clouds began to build up and shortly afterwards a spectacular thunder and lightning storm broke out. It seemed to be confined to the high ground of Beinn a' Bhuid and Ben Avon and lasted for a long time. The thunder could still be heard at 4 p.m. by which time we were well down the Slugain Glen. This was followed by an excursion to Braeriach which took the form of a traverse from Cairngorm car park to Coylum Bridge. It was a brilliantly clear day apart from a few mist patches on the summit plateau. One party experienced some difficulty descending the path in Coire Dhondail because of old snow lying on the steepest part. The excursion to Meall Ghlas and Meall a' Churaig was one of the best attended to Perthshire in recent years. This was also a traverse starting from Auchessan in Glen Dochart and finishing at Kenknock in Glen Lochay.

The overnight excursion of 1990 was a repeat of the 1986 one with members having the choice of climbing in the Fannichs or in the Beinn Dearg group. The night started off inauspiciously. It had been raining heavily all the way from Aberdeen and still was when we left the bus. However the rain went off about an hour later and the night remained dry thereafter although the sky continued to look forbidding. At dawn the sky suddenly cleared giving way to a beautiful morning. Those who got off the hill early had to endure a plague of midges at Loch Droma until the bus arrived around 9.30 a.m.

The excursion from Auchallater to Glen Muick was a very wet misty day. Nevertheless many members went over Cairn Taggart and Lochnagar while others went over Cairn Bannoch and Broad Cairn. The traverse from Linn of Dee to Glen Feshie had better weather at least for those who chose to go by the low ground route. The hills however remained shrouded in mist all day. Those who travelled the path discovered severe water erosion on the hillsides between Creag Bheag and Creag na Gaibhre and the path was cut in several places by deep gullies. The Cairngorm traverse was attended by the party of Polish climbers which the Club were playing host to at the time. It was a disappointing day weatherwise but it was clear at the top of Cairn Gorm. The largest party went from there to the Shelter Stone from where some climbed Ben Macdhui while others took the low route. The walk from Glen Prosen to Glen Clova was accompanied by mist so thick that one could see nothing of the hill above the valley floor. Between Invermark and Spital of Glen Muick the weather was much better with mist only on the higher tops and a wide variety of routes were followed. On this occasion we had a last minute change in our meal arrangements following the serious fire at the Alexandra Hotel the previous evening. The excursion to the Sidlaw Hills started off from Collace Quarry. The route went over Dunsinane Hill, of Macbeth fame, and from there along the crest of the Sidlaws as far as Newtyle. The route is unusual for us in that in the course of it we cross two roads, one of them the main road from Coupar Angus to Dundee. This was followed by a very good meal at the Kinloch Hotel in Meigle.

1991 started off more like winter with the customary January excursion to Lochnagar. Deep soft snow was experienced almost immediately above Allt-naguibhsaich and although it was a clear sunny day a persistent wind made parts of the ascent unpleasant because of spindrift. Loch Lee at the beginning of February was frozen over. Many members climbed

Mount Keen in rather unpleasant windy and misty conditions while others visited the Falls of Unich and Damff. By the time of the Cockbridge excursion most of the snow had gone. Most of the party climbed Brown Cow Hill while others took a more leisurely walk to Inchroy. The excursion to Glas Tulaichean was accompanied by very wet weather and some difficulty was experienced in crossing the larger burns. The last bus meet in the period covered by this report was to Ben Avon. It snowed heavily all day and although it was not lying at Alltdourie there was quite deep snow higher up. Nevertheless most of the party did reach the summit of Ben Avon.

The Easter Meet of 1991 was held at the Ballachulish Hotel on the week-end after Easter. Those who attended reported that the hotel was very good, a big improvement on how it had been on our previous visits there. Unfortunately the weather conditions throughout the week-end were very bad and little climbing was done. 30 people attended. The decision to switch the Easter Meet away from the Easter week-end was made after consultation with those members who normally attend the event. It was becoming increasingly difficult to find a suitable venue at Easter at anything like a reasonable price. There are still problems however. Efforts to find a venue either in Arrochar or in the area between Connel and Tyndrum failed either because the hotels were too expensive or because they are tied up with bus parties. It is now ten years since we had an Easter Meet south of Ballachulish. Should any members know of a suitable venue in this area I would be pleased to hear from them.

Graham Ewen

EXCURSIONS

| | |
|------------|------------------------------------|
| | 1988 |
| 18/19 Jun. | Corrour to Glen Nevis (31) |
| 28 Aug. | Linn of Dee to Blair Atholl (19) |
| 10 Sep. | Cairngorm traverse (39) |
| 2 Oct. | Auchallater to Glen Muick (31) |
| 23 Oct. | Cairnwell to Glen Shee (27) |
| 12 Nov. | Glen Dye to Tarfside (21) |
| 4 Dec. | Boultenstone to Corse (24) |
| | 1989 |
| 8 Jan. | Lochnagar (45) |
| 29 Jan. | Mount Keen (44) |
| 19 Feb. | Auchallater (35) |
| 11 Mar. | Cairn Gorm (28) |
| 23 Apr. | Ben Avon (31) |
| 13 May | Ben Chonzie (30) |
| 4 Jun. | Cairnwell to Inverey (28) |
| 24/25 Jun. | Strathcarron to Achnashellach (29) |
| 27 Aug. | Monega Pass (41) |
| 9 Sep. | Cairngorm traverse (36) |
| 1 Oct. | Drumochter Pass (17) |
| 22 Oct. | Crathie to Glen Muick (32) |
| 12 Nov. | Fungle or Fir Mounth (43) |
| 3 Dec. | Sidlaw Hills (21) |
| | 1990 |
| 14 Jan. | Lochnagar (45) |
| 3 Feb. | Glen Clunie (33) |

| | |
|------------|--|
| 25 Feb. | Inverey (44) |
| 18 Mar. | Glen Clova (37) |
| 22 Apr. | Beinn a' Bhuid (33) |
| 12 May | Braeriach (30) |
| 3 Jun. | Meall Ghlas (36) |
| 23/24 Jun. | Fannichs/Beinn Dearg group (31) |
| 26 Aug. | Auchallater to Glen Muick (22) |
| 9 Sep. | Linn of Dee to Glen Feshie (22) |
| 29 Sep. | Cairngorm traverse (39) |
| 21 Oct. | Glen Prosen to Glen Clova (33) |
| 10 Nov. | Invermark to Spital of Glen Muick (38) |
| 2 Dec. | Sidlaw Hills (39) |

| | |
|---------|----------------------|
| | 1991 |
| 12 Jan. | Lochnagar (45) |
| 3 Feb. | Loch Lee (30) |
| 24 Feb. | Cockbridge (25) |
| 17 Mar. | Glas Tulaichean (27) |
| 21 Apr. | Ben Avon (34) |

EASTER MEETS

| | |
|------|--------------|
| 1989 | Spean Bridge |
| 1990 | Spean Bridge |
| 1991 | Ballachulish |

WEEKENDS, 1989-91

Since the last journal there have been seventeen weekend meets, with another six scheduled for the rest of this year. In 1990 we introduced a November meet. Knowing that the days could be short and gloomy we chose Gerry Howkins hostel at Achnasheen – a wide variety of walking within easy reach, and a cheerful log fire to return to. Eighteen members made the most of one dry and one very wild day.

Individual members will have their own list of highlights – the Whitbread wilderness from Loch a'Bhraoin, Tower Ridge from the CIC hut, Ben Hope above the clouds, and camping at Barrisdale to mention a few. Wry smiles might be provoked by the mention of 'inclement weather' at Crianlarich, stalking the stalkers in a remote glen, or the lack of company at Tomdoun!

In August a start must be made on next year's programme. An attempt will be made to bring all seven members of the 'weekends committee' together to draw up at least a preliminary programme in time for the autumn circular. Accommodation is increasingly at a premium, so initial checks on availability must be made.

All reasonable suggestions are listed and a selection evolves. Considerations include:
new suggestions

old favourites – how recently were we there?

distances from Aberdeen – long journeys are best scheduled for long weekends

ease of winter access – possible snow/ice on the roads

restrictions during the stalking season

should we avoid the midge season (if possible?)

is a variety of accommodation available?

how far ahead can/must accommodation be booked?

have we a reasonable balance of venues/accommodation/activities?

(the proposed Easter meet and overnight excursion are also considered here)

which committee member is keen to organise it?

Surprisingly a programme usually gels quite quickly. The fine tuning may take longer, and some compromises may be inevitable.

Youth Hostel bookings (except special openings) are left to individuals. Where accommodation must be booked it is less simple. If we are to be sure of securing our chosen venue at least a provisional booking must be made before we have any real idea of the number likely to come. Equally likely nowadays is to find another group has beaten us to it and we have to think again. There may be alternative accommodation, or we may have to pick a different spot for this schedule and perhaps make a provisional booking for the next year!

Weekends meets (with numbers attending to date):

| | | | |
|-----------|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| | 1989 | 1990 | 1991 |
| Feb/Mar | Glencoe (23) | Crianlarich (19) | Glen Nevis (12) |
| Apr/May | Glen Brittle (13) | Ossian (21) | Knoydart (14) |
| June | Dundonnell (21) | Tongue (13) | Ben Alder (10) |
| July | CIC hut (9) | Tomdoun (1) | Elphin (19) |
| August | Killin (5) | Glen Affric (7) | Torridon (12) |
| September | Torridon (22) | Glen Coe (22*) | Glen Brittle (26) |
| October | Loch Ard (2) | Onich (15) | Wasdale |
| November | – | Achnashellach (18) | Glen Garry |

* Including 7 Polish visitors.

ROCK AND ICE CLIMBING REPORT

Rock and ice climbing have always been important in the tradition of the Cairngorm Club. As far back as 1901, W. Garden top-roped Cairngorm Club Crack on Clachnaben, and club climbers were also active at Clashrodne, south of Cove before the Great War. Between the two wars, an active partnership between G. R. Symmers and W. A. Ewen resulted in several new routes on Lochnagar, both in summer and winter, including Parallel Gully A and Shadow Buttress A in summer, and Raeburn's Gully in winter.

After the Second World War, the climbing profile of the club dropped considerably, and has only recently seen a long overdue resurgence, spearheaded by Peter Bellarby. Initially, this was limited to unofficial weekly meets at the South Aberdeen venue of the sea cliffs at Souter Head, and the occasional venture on to mountain routes on bus meets, which frequently resulted in a missed bus at the end of the day.

It was on one such meet, to Beinn a' Bhuird, in October 1985, that my involvement with climbing in the club began. Having 'bagged' the Munro, four of us set about 'doing our climbing thing' on two separate routes up the dividing buttress. Due to lack of time, neither ascent was successful, although I managed to successfully lead my first pitch, traversing off our climb into a gully to start our race for the bus. The other pair made it, but Peter and I found ourselves stranded at Invercauld Bridge. As luck would have it, in the first car to pass were two club members who gave us a lift home.

By 1988, an official climbing sub-committee had been formed, initially comprising Peter Bellarby and Fraser Stronach, and several hundred pounds worth of climbing gear had been bought, including ropes, harnesses, helmets, ice axe and hammer set, crampons and a selection of hardware for leading purposes. This was first tested out on a well-attended weekend meet to Crianlarich in February 1988. With Glencoe a short drive up the road, many members took the opportunity to be taught elementary ice axe braking techniques before three different routes of grades I to II/III were tackled successfully. The newsletter of

March 1988 was the first to contain a section detailing 'Climbing Activities', and the weekly summer meets at the sea cliffs were officially noted.

By now, climbing meets were no longer reliant on club bus meets for transport. This primarily was replaced by participating members' cars, alleviating the problem of lack of time, especially in winter. After one or two instances of late returns of climbers on weekend meets as well, the climbing activities are generally, but not always, now kept independent from other club activities.

In September 1990, climbing was successfully linked to a weekend meet to Lagangarbh to coincide with the arrival of the visiting Polish climbers. On the Saturday, a busy day was spent on Rannoch Wall, Buachaille Etive Mor, with several routes being climbed by the three active parties, while on the wetter Sunday, a morning was spent on the indoor rockwall at Fort William Leisure Centre.

The shape of the sub-committee has changed since it was first formed. Fraser Stronach resigned, and I was co-opted in January 1990. After I was elected to the main committee and Peter stepped down (at the 1990 AGM), I replaced him as convener to the committee and Nigel Eastmond was also co-opted to the sub-committee.

Since then, we have tried to become more organised. A short winter season meant that only one winter ascent was completed, with myself and Nigel climbing Central Buttress on Lochnagar with the club's new rock and ice up-coming-star, Gary Bidwell, who even managed to lead the last two pitches on this, his first real ice climb. For a full account of the climb, see Gary's account elsewhere in this journal. From May onwards, the weekly meets at the sea cliffs have resumed, weather permitting, and these are proving to be both successful and enjoyable. Of the core of regulars, Gary Bidwell and Margaret Macrae Gibson have both begun to lead their own climbs. Several venues have been used this year to demonstrate the great variety of climbs on offer in this area, and this is also proving to be popular, although for simplicity, the rendezvous remains the same each week.

We plan to head off to the mountains this summer, and although we won't be pioneering new routes like generations before, we can be certain of experiencing the same feeling of exhilaration as we top out, having completed a perfect route on sun-warmed rock in a lonely corrie, or, as occasionally happens in Scotland, as we shiver our way up a soaking piece of rock, being buffeted by a howling gale. (In these rare cases, exhilaration might well be replaced by relief!)

Whatever the conditions, we hope to see you down at the sea cliffs next summer, for climbing, or even to see what it's all about. It is good fun: if you don't believe me, just ask Gary Bidwell!

Stuart Stronach

LIBRARIAN'S REPORT 1991

The library continues in good health, the number of books borrowed rising to 141 in 1990, compared with 116 in 1989 and 119 in 1988. Borrowing takes place mainly at indoor meets during the winter though books may be borrowed or returned at any time from the library in the basement of 24 Albyn Place. Keys giving access to the more popular books are held by the dental receptionist next door, 22 Albyn Place, and she also has a card map of the route to the library for the use of experienced navigators. A full set of keys is held by the librarian who is happy to help any member. The library location is not ideal and this has deterred some members from returning books or returning them to inappropriate places around St. John's. Duplicate full sets of keys are presently held by Eddie Martin and John Gibson who may be approached when the librarian is away.

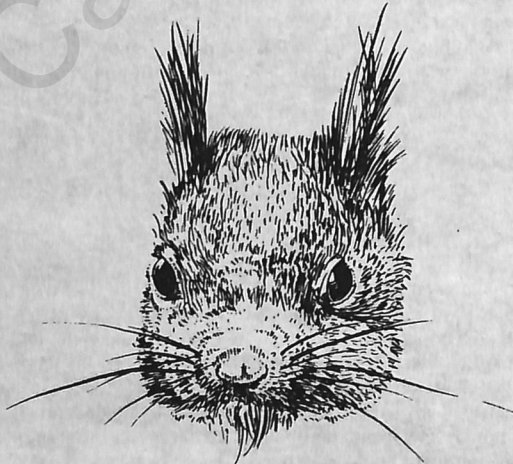
We added 12 titles to the library in 1989 and a further 12 in 1990, these being noted in

the circulars, as well as journals of kindred clubs.

We are glad to receive unwanted journals for resale to members who wish to collect back numbers. Some are presently available.

From time to time the librarian has received enquiries from authors researching for articles of books, and I have been pleased to help them whether or not they are club members.

Peter Ward



NOTES

HUTS, HOSTELS and BUNKHOUSES

A proposal was made at the 1990 Annual General Meeting that the Club should explore the possibility of acquiring a second hut 'somewhere in the west'.

After considerable deliberation, the Committee has decided not to pursue the matter further in the meantime.

Reasons for this decision included cost, usage and the logistics of servicing and maintaining a property remote from Aberdeen.

A further reason was the knowledge that there were many other Club huts, bunkhouses and Youth Hostels located on the west coast which were available for the use of our own Club members.

To bring this knowledge to the notice of all members, the Committee decided to publish the following list, which is not necessarily exhaustive, of accommodation which is available.

HUTS, BUNKHOUSES & HOSTELS

| | | |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------|
| Walk Inn | B.H. (0659) 74482 | Wanlockhead |
| The Old Stable | E. Kilbride M.C. | Arrochar |
| Glen Croe | 8 Miles High Club (0592) 714354 | Arrochar |
| Jeremy Inglis | I.H. (0631) 65065/63064 | Oban |
| Inverardran Cottage | Ochils M.C. (0259) 62793 | Crianlarich |
| Pine Trees | B.H. (08384) 243 | Tyndrum |
| The Way Inn | B.H. no S.C. (08384) 208/209 | Bridge of Orchy |
| Clashgour | Glasgow Univ. M.C. | Nr. Forest Lodge |
| MacDougall's Cottage | Clachaig M.C. (041 954) 7314 | Auch |
| Inbhirfhaolain | Grampian Club (0382) 78786 | Glen Etive |
| The Smiddy | Forventure (041 959) 9965 | Glen Etive |
| Black Rock | L.S.C.C. | Glencoe |
| Kingshouse Hotel | B.H. (08556) 259 | Glencoe |
| Lagangarbh | S.M.C. (0389) 31917 | Glencoe |
| Clachaig Inn | B.H. (08552) 252 | Glencoe |
| Kyle M.C. Memorial Hut | Kyle M.C. | Glencoe |
| Leacantuin Farm | B.H. (08552) 256 | Glencoe |
| West Highland Lodge | B.H. (08554) 471/396 | Kinlochleven |
| Alex. Macintyre Mem. Hut | (0324) 554452 | Onich |
| B.M.C./M.C. of S. | | |
| Manse Barn | Lomond M.C. (041 946) 0401 | Onich |
| Inchree Hostel | I.H. (08553) 287 | Onich |
| Steall | Lochaber J.M.C.S. (0397) 703512 | G. Nevis |
| Ben Nevis | B.H. (0397) 2240 | G. Nevis |
| Achriabhach | I.H. | G. Nevis |
| C.I.C. Hut | S.M.C. | Ben Nevis |
| Grey Corries Lodge | I.H. (03981) 236 | Roy Bridge |
| Fasgadh | I.H. | Fersit |
| Jocks Spot | Edinburgh J.M.C.S. (0383) 732232 | Laggan |

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| Raeburn Morgans Den. | S.M.C. (0505) 842004 B.H. (039785) 236 | Laggan Corrou Station |
| Batavaime Balgies Dunnoly House | Edinburgh M.C. B.H. (08876) 221 B.H. (0887) 20298 | Glen Lochay Glen Lyon Aberfeldy |
| Insh Hall Kincaraig Bunkhouse Badenoch Christian Centre Mill Cottage (Bell Mem.) Glenfeshie Milehouse Craigower Lodge | I.H. (05404) 272 (05402) 733/(05404) 207 p.m. (05404) 373 M.C. of S. (0540) 661779 I.H. (05404) 323 L.S.C.C. (031 667) 3331 O.C. (05403) 319 | Kincaraig Kincaraig Kincaraig Kincaraig Glenfeshie Feshiebridge Newtonmore |
| Badaguish Centre Old Schoolhouse Ardenbeg | (0479) 86285 O.C. (047985) 246 B.H. (0479) 2824 | Newtonmore Dulnain Bridge Grantown on Spey |
| Braemar Outdoor Centre Muir of Inverey Allt na Guibhsaich | I.H. (03397) 41242 Cairngorm Club (0224) 583830 P.E. Dept, Univ. Aberdeen | Braemar Nr. Braemar Glen Muick |
| The Round House Carn Dearg Hut Milton of Clova | I.H. no S.C. (057582) 238 Carn Dearg M.C. (05755) 222 B.H. & Bothy Ogilvy Arms Hotel (05755) 222 | Glen Isla Glen Clova Glen Clova |
| Jennys Glen Avon Hotel Ballindalloch Station Hostel | Bothy/I.H. (09756) 51446 B.H. (08074) 218 (05404) 272 | Strathdon Tomintoul Ballindalloch |
| Intl. Travellers House | (Book at Lock Inn Pub) | Fort Augustus |
| Stratherrick Hostel Inverness Student Hostel | (046375) 314 (0463) 236556 | Torness, by Dores Inverness |
| Inverie Doune Barrisdale Tomdoun Hotel Garrygualach | I.H. (0687) 2343 (GPO), 2331 (Est. Off) B.H. (0687) 2667 I.H. B.H. (08092) 218 B.H. (08092) 230 | Knoydart Knoydart Knoydart Tomdoun Tomdoun |
| Glen Lichd House Morvich Outdoor Centre | Edin. Univ. M.C. (031 667) 747 | Morvich Morvich |
| Gerry Howkins Inver Croft Ling Hut Kinlochewe | I.H. (05206) 232 Jacobites (031 650) 5270/6495 S.M.C. (0463) 791240 B.H. (044584) 253 | Achnashellach Achnasheen Achnasheen Kinlochewe |
| Sail Mhor Croft The Smiddy | I.H. (085483) 224 Edinburgh J.M.C.S. (0854) 2354 | Dundonnell Dundonnell |

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| Badachro. | B.H.(winter only) | (044583) 291 | Gairloch |
| Achiltibuie | B.H. | (085482) 215 | Achiltibuie |
| Elphin | O.C. | | |
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| Coruisk | | Glasgow J.M.C.S. (0343) 820932 | Coruisk |
| Sligachan Hotel | B.H. | (047852) 204 | Sligachan |
| Croft | B.H. | (047842) 254 | Portnalong |
| Uiginish Lodge | I.H. | (047022) 445 | Dunvegan |
| Raasay House | I.H. | (047862) 266 | Raasay |

| | | | |
|------|--------------------|------|----------------|
| B.H. | Bunkhouse | O.C. | Outdoor Centre |
| I.H. | Independent Hostel | S.C. | Self Catering |

S.Y.H.A. provide hostel accommodation in many areas; contact the district office: 11 Ashvale Place, Aberdeen. (0224) 588156.

Mountain Bothies Association maintain bothies throughout Scotland, General Secretary, Simon Strachan, 10 Clydeford Drive, Uddingston, G71 7DJ.

Club Huts – Bookings for these are often only accepted through our club secretary.

CLUB MUNROISTS

1991 marks the centenary of the publication of Munro's Tables, the list of mountains over 3000 feet in Scotland. Sir Hugh T. Munro was one of the original members of the Scottish Mountaineering Club. What would he make of today's tremendous interest in reaching the summit of each of his listed peaks? Our Club secretary knows of forty four members who have succeeded and they are listed below.

John Adams
 William Alexander
 William Barlow
 Dorothy Batchelor
 Peter W. Bellarby
 Ian D. Bryce
 Fiona Cameron
 Anne F. G. Cordiner
 G. Ray. Craig
 Neil Cromar
 Arthur C. Dickie
 Isabella Fraser
 Kenneth W. Fraser
 David F. Geddes
 John M. C. Gibson
 Peter Gray
 Donald Hawksworth
 John Hetherington
 Geraldine Howie
 Robin Y. Howie
 John E. Inglis

Anne Pinches
 Ian M. Lowit
 Ronald G. Mahaffy
 Andrew W. Martin
 Edwin Martin
 Alastair P. Matthewson
 Ian J. B. Murray
 Sheila Murray
 Gordon M. McAndrew
 Susan Mackenzie
 Margaret MacLennan
 Frances Macrae-Gibson
 Duncan Macrae-Gibson
 Ruth Payne
 Guy J. Scott
 Robert I. G. Scott
 Ian C. Spence
 Hugh E. R. Spencer
 Ian T. Stephen
 Fraser Stronach
 Kenneth J. Thomson
 Lydia Thomson
 Morag Watson

SKI MOUNTAINEERING

Just as the increased popularity of Munro-bagging resulted in this formerly "clandestine" branch of mountaineering achieving respectability with the publication of a Scottish Mountaineering Club guide, so the SMC has recognised the present status of ski mountaineering in Scotland with a comprehensive guidebook giving route descriptions for over 170 hills and mountains. As the introduction to the guide notes, in the past some mountaineers in Scotland thought the use of skis in mountaineering "a not quite respectable part of the sport ---- being associated in their minds with the less demanding pleasures of downhill skiing".

In fact, the first Scottish skiers were climbers like Naismith, the founder of the SMC, and such a notable climber as Harold Raeburn who, in describing the art of the standing glissade, concluded, "glissading naturally leads us to its highest development – skiing". Several of the early Cairngorm Club members used skis. By 1907 the Club Journal had the first of occasional "Skiing Notes" which included an account of a trip on Morven where, alas, the snow was too hard for skiing uphill so skis were carried to the cairn then the party had a "glorious run right down to the Lary burn. The run was so splendid that two of us re-ascended about 800 feet to enjoy the return flight". I. M. McLaren, who was a member of the first party to climb the six Cairngorm tops in a single day in 1908, was a pioneer skier and gives an account of an ascent of Ben Macdhuì via Carn Crom and Derry Cairngorm leaving Inverey at 6.30 a.m. and returning at 10 p.m. after "a most enjoyable tea at Derry Lodge". By 1920 Colonel H. J. Butchart, another of the six tops party, was giving Club members skiing lessons. Then, during the second world war there was the first and probably the only winter "overnighter" when a party set off from Ballochbuie at 1 a.m. by moonlight, skied round Lochnagar then planted their skis and climbed to the summit by the Black Spout before returning on ski to Braemar.

After the war, ex-army skis and ex-army ski boots became available and, probably enveloped in ex-army gas capes, some of us would climb with skis on shoulder from Derry Lodge to the likes of Beinn Bhreac and descend with many a tumble to Glen Derry. Those were the days of corrugated shoulders; skins for climbing were rarely seen, partly because of their unreliability and also the cost. Most climbers who skied were self-taught and it showed. There was no real ski instruction unless you went to the Alps and, for most climbers, that was a goal for the summer only.

Now the position is so different. The standard of downhill skiing in Scotland is high. Manufacturers have responded to the needs of the ski mountaineer with excellent equipment. Modern techniques and equipment are described with great clarity in the book "*Ski Mountaineering*" by Peter Cliff, the well-known climber and international guide from Speyside. Although much of the book deals with the greater challenges when skiing in the Alps and world-wide, there is much of interest for the Scottish tourer including an interesting piece of skiing ability versus mountaineering ability. Briefly, a good mountaineer who is a poor skier will have a much rougher time than a skier with limited climbing experience. Peter Cliff knows and describes the uncertainty and hazards of Scottish ski mountaineering. All enthusiasts have tales of battles with the wind, the problems of navigation, the whiteouts which disorientate and bring the sensation of being stationary when you are still sliding. But then, there are also those memorable days when the wind drops, the sun shines, the snow is perfect and the horizon is filled with glistening peaks and snowfields. The days when the excellent photographs in both these books were taken!

There has always been controversy on the respective merits of Alpine or Nordic equipment for ski mountaineering in Scotland, a debate which may puzzle the uninitiated. To summarise: Nordic, often called cross-country skis are longer, narrower and lighter and attach to the boot at the toe only. Alpine skis are shorter, broader and more robust. The bindings are complex and can be clipped down at the heel for the descent giving more

stability. The boots are heavier and less flexible than those used with Nordic skis but lighter than the normal downhill boot. While some long tours have been done in the Cairngorms and elsewhere in Scotland with Nordic skis, given the right conditions, and some exponents are extremely skilled, most skiers find them very difficult to control especially on ice or steep slopes. I certainly prefer Alpine equipment for the variable conditions so frequent in Scotland. Control is much greater, especially in high winds, while harscheisen (ski crampons) can be fitted on Alpine bindings for climbing steep or icy slopes. My advice to any climber taking up ski mountaineering is to first take downhill ski lessons on dry ski and snow slopes. The stage should soon be reached when you can come down an intermediate slope under control doing linked turns and can then proceed to some touring. Nordic ski technique, with its graceful telemark turn, is a refinement you may wish to take up later. But remember, if the ski bug really bites you'll end up with three sets of equipment – Alpine, Nordic and Downhill!

For those who may be tempted, I will try and give the flavour of the delights of a ski tour on a good day latish in the season. On Good Friday this year three of us set off before 8 a.m. on the Monega Pass from Glen Clunie, skis strapped to our packs. We were soon at the snow line and put on skis and skins (nowadays skins are glue backed, peel-off strips of synthetic material and very reliable). There had been a hard frost and the snow was icy so harscheisen were also required for a time. Then came one of the pleasures of the day; the steady upward plod, single file, short even steps, silence apart from the crunch on the snow – meditation time. It was now sunny with just a breeze and soon the first of the downhill skiers could be seen below Glas Maol. We carried on over the shoulder of Glas Maol to easier slopes up Cairn of Claise. Then, the reward, skins off and a glorious sweeping run on easy, firm, untouched snow in the direction of Tolmount. Skins on, up and over Tolmount with another splendid descent down to Jock's Road. A gentle climb to Fafermie where the northwards view of the main Cairngorms was magnificent, down broad slopes towards Cairn Taggart, a short climb over the bealach and down the coire towards the Feindallacher burn for a typical Scottish finish, the snow now softer, the strip we were following getting narrower, the snow bridges more frequent and frailer until at last there was nothing but heather. Skis on pack, we marched through Ballochbuie enjoying the views of Beinn a' Bhuird and Ben Avon still shimmering in the evening sun, down to Invercauld Bridge. It was almost six o'clock, a good time to finish when you've achieved "a drouth ye couldna buy". We agreed – that was a great day.

("Ski Mountaineering in Scotland": Edited by Donald Bennet and Bill Wallace: Published by the Scottish Mountaineering Trust.

"Ski Mountaineering" by Peter Cliff: Published by Unwin Hyman.)

Eric Johnston

CLUB CLIMBING EVENT

CENTRAL BUTTRESS LOCHNAGAR 13TH JANUARY 1991

To rise at 0530 hours on a Sunday morning in winter may not be everyone's idea of fun. I kept telling myself that my planned day's activities were to make the effort well worth it and so resisted the temptation to roll over and go back to sleep.

Today was my debut. I had hit the big time and was bound for Lochnagar with Stuart Stronach and Nigel Eastmond to climb the Central Buttress. I had been practising rock climbing and rope techniques over the summer months at the cliffs of Cove and on the climbing wall at the Beach Leisure Centre. I had also completed my winter skills course last winter and was anxious to put these skills to work. The conditions were right for ice

climbing and I was as ready as I would ever be.

I was fortunate in that I had two instructors. The group was to be larger but a few cancellations had left me as the sole trainee. This was a confidence boost as my instructors had a better opportunity to watch over me.

We arrived at Lochnagar car park on 0730 and began the long walk in to the corrie. It was about 0930 when we reached Central Buttress and we had time for a bite to eat before tackling the climb. As we were preparing our equipment I became aware of a few rumblings in my stomach (nervous? not me – I was probably still hungry!)

We planned to climb the Buttress in six stages (pitches). The first we climbed solo (without roping up together) as it was really not that steep. We each had two ice axes and with the aid of crampons we just walked up the ice to a position where we could rope up. I couldn't help thinking 'so far so good' as I followed my two leaders up the slope and was aware of the feeling of exhilaration as the biting wind began to freeze my beard (If my mum could see me now!).

When we were all settled at the start of the second pitch we roped ourselves together and I secured myself as a belay. Now for the tricky bit. Nigel led this pitch and as his second, I remained belayed securely to a huge boulder and watched his progress whilst Stuart was soloing the pitch nearby. My eyes were riveted on Nigel as he worked his way up the grade carefully picking his way upward among the exposed rock.

At a suitable position, Nigel attached himself securely and called for me to follow. I began my ascent slowly with some trepidation. My heart beating loudly in my chest I picked my way up the gradient looking for firm ice to drive my axes into. As the ice had begun to thaw there were many rocks exposed and getting a firm hold was not that easy. The security that the rope afforded was comforting and gave me the confidence that I needed. It was not long before I reached Nigel and we prepared for the next pitch.

The third pitch was even more difficult but by this time I was beginning to get the hang of it. The same procedure was followed and apart from one awkward section half way up it presented no problems.

The fourth pitch was to be our greatest challenge. It was not long, however near the top we had to climb around an exposed buttress. This was a bit daunting as there was no shelter from the wind and the floor of the corrie was about 700 feet below. Once again Nigel led and as he disappeared around the corner of the buttress, I began to feel very much alone with only the rope tied around me for company. After what seemed an eternity I heard Nigel shout for me to follow so I released myself from the belay and ventured forth.

As I rounded the buttress I felt the blast of the icy wind tugging at me trying to persuade me to go with it down into the corrie below. Needless to say I resisted this temptation and concentrated on the task at hand. Provided one didn't look down and pretended that the sun was out, it was a bit like one of the climbs at the cliffs of Cove. With this cheering thought I persevered until I joined my colleagues at the top of the pitch.

From here on it was not necessary to be roped together as the final two stages were not too steep. The conditions were also very good here with a hard crust of icy snow and no exposed rock. We set off side by side scaling the grade like three metallic tree frogs. On reaching the top we paused briefly to rest before tackling the final pitch.

As we neared the top of the final section, I was aware of a very stiff pair of calf muscles from remaining perched on the front points of my crampons. But the overwhelming sense of satisfaction and relief on reaching the top soon made me forget about them. After a short break for self-congratulations, we tied up our equipment and packed for the relatively easy walk down.

My first experience of ice climbing had been a success. We had climbed the left face of Central Buttress which is a height of 1,000 feet. It is a grade 2 Ice climb and not a bad one to start with. My trainers had both been very patient and helpful. It is not often that one gets the sort of personalised attention I received. I am greatly looking forward to the next opportunity to go ice climbing, but with the warmer months approaching it may be quite a

while. In the meantime, I intend to go to the cliffs at Cove over the summer to keep up my training. I can thoroughly recommend this activity to any of the club members who may be thinking of trying it. The Tuesday evenings at Cove are a pleasant way of getting some mid-week exercise as well as preparing you for bigger things in the hills.

Gary Bidwell

MOUNT TARANAKI AT EASTER

"The whole of this day we have enjoyed noble views of this splendid mountain, the monarch of Taranaki. It is about 8000 ft high, and rises at once out of the plain, without other hills to break its apparent height. Its base is surrounded by almost impassable forest..." So reads the report of Bishop Selwyn in 1842.

Long before 1842, Maori legends told the story of Taranaki, the second highest mountain in New Zealand's North Island. Once upon a time, Pihanga, a beautiful maiden in the central North Island mountain range was wooed by four warrior mountains. They decided to fight for her hand and their passion melted the rock in their bowels and smoke and steam billowed in preparation for battle. They sent forth fire and molten rock till Tongariro won Pihanga as his wife. The other mountains, unable to bear the huge mana of Tongariro, departed by night. Putauaki fled 160 km to the north and is now called Mt Edgecumbe. Tuahara dawdled painfully and sadly and by dawn had only reached the northern shore of Lake Taupo. Taranaki left gouging the trench of the Wanganui river.

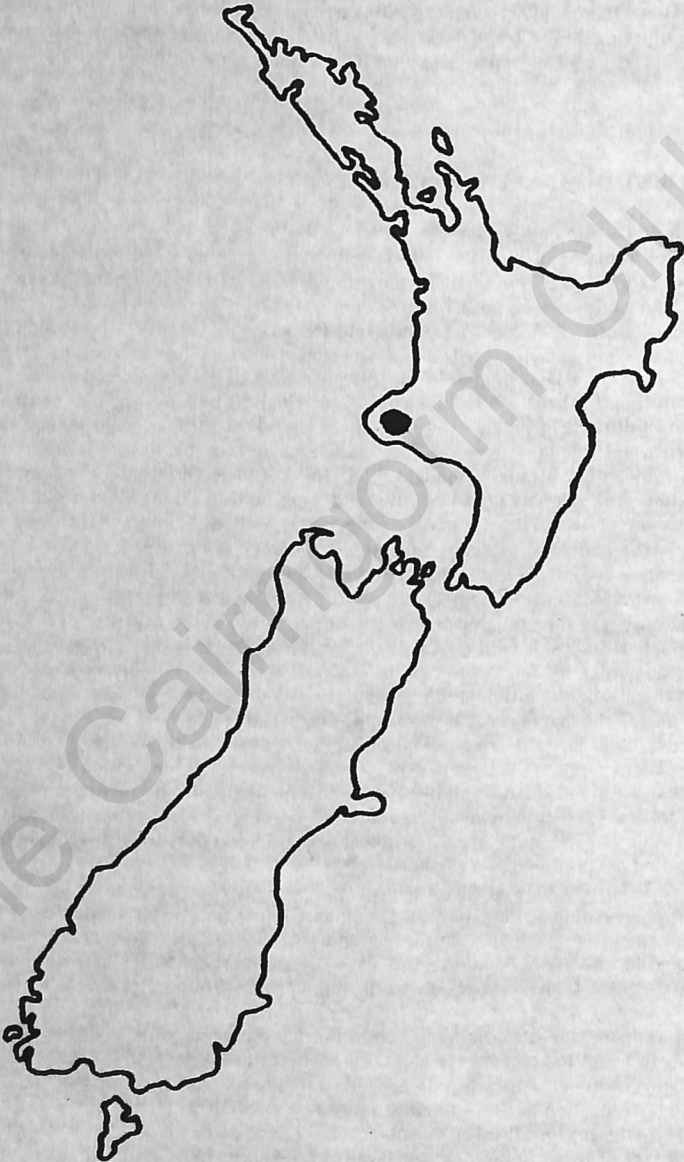
Taranaki, named Egmont by Captain Cook, stands alone, overshadowing his elderly and comparatively insignificant neighbours: Pouakai and Kaitake. Together they are a three step demonstration of earth's growth and ageing, building and erosion. Taranaki is the most recent of a series of ruptures spreading across the country and last exploded in 1755.

We left Hastings at 6am on Good Friday and travelled in the Heretaunga Tramping Club's luxury truck for 7 hours to North Egmont. The 29 strong group shattered into small groups, all with slightly different ideas, but all hoping to top the mount sometime during the long weekend. The main debate as always, was the weather!

I joined a group of twelve who decided to carry full rucksacks around to the public shelter at East Egmont. The intention was certainly to camp but my vision of a bus shelter vanished as swiftly as the mist on the mountain: a luxurious ski shelter with running water, flushing toilets, an electric light and an unlocked door. Eleven slept inside disturbed only by snores. I slept outside in the shelter of the eaves, disturbed only by a scavenging possum, until I shifted the dustbin out of earshot.

The mount was viewed each night in clear moonlight. It stood eerie but inviting. It looked less appealing at 7am when my women companions began to back out from the day's expedition; the gradient grew steeper and my 30kg rucksack grew heavier. The day's walk began to look more daunting. The alternative route taken by the majority was to the beautiful Dawson Falls and back to North Egmont through the picturesque kamahi rain forest.

Determination sent me jogging across the few hundred yards of short tussock and herbfields to begin the ascent. We had been advised to pass straight through the ski field and onto the shingle. This we did and soon found solid rock and cliffs and, again on instructions, clambered our way to the north of the "policeman" (1832m). The east ridge is famed for its bluffs for all other ascents are scree of scoria which feature imaginatively named pillars of rock. Some places were awkward to negotiate and we were forced to slither and scramble over rock faces, the ascent growing progressively steeper. At about 1900m the cloud enveloped us for the remainder of the climb. Only once were we momentarily enchanted by transient views of Fantham's Peak with the famous sight of the flat Taranaki dairy pastures below us.



Mount Taranaki, North Island, New Zealand

The Shark's Tooth – the lower edge of the crater – rose out of the mist without warning. We were so intent on looking at our feet and for the next hand hold that our eyes were not lifted until there were no more rocks to hold. The crater below us was packed with dirty ice from which we could hear distant voices. We slithered down an icy chimney, the width of which was slightly narrower than my rucksack. I was faced at the end of the tunnel with a substantial drop and a few random holds. If I did not wriggle with some energy I would remain wedged; if I struggled and shot out with more velocity than desired I might fly past the hand holds. With Richard Fisher humour someone said: "Look at Kay's face; oh look like that again while I take a photo!" The look of true fear is not able to be reproduced.

I negotiated my way to the ice field which was crowded with day trippers from North Egmont, from various clubs including our own. The picnickers on the top made careful tiptoeing a necessity. The summit in three hours forty minutes. We descended through the loose rock onto the huge scoria screes and with gathering speed were soon out of the mist. At one point I counted thirty one people in about 400 yards. Taranaki is a popular spot at Easter and NZ loses its sparsely populated image.

Not ready to return to civilization a companion and myself branched off alone to Holly Hut to the NW, skirting the impressive Humphries' Castle and the Dieffenbach's Cliffs. We joined the Round the Mountain Track, a well built path through waist high leatherwood, koromiko and mountain five finger.

Holly Hut was filled with teenage Auckland yobbos and we camped in relative peace outside, waking to the sound of falling rain once the sound of falling benches, people and bottles had ended. We were blessed with beautiful sunshine for breakfast but the rain soon returned. With little enthusiasm we walked the one hour trip to Bell's Falls. Rain frequently falls on the NZ West coast and Taranaki is no exception so there are many waterfalls surrounded by a profusion of ferns and other native plants. All was draped in a poetic mantle of mist and spray. Less natural were the hundreds of wooded steps which formed the path but the reason for this became evident later in the day.

On returning from our detour we crossed the Ahukawakawa swamp on duck boards and climbed yet more steps onto the top of the Pouakai ranges. Egmont's ascendancy over the country has effects which are not always visual. With the characteristics of an island separated by height and climate, many species of plant and insect life are not found and conversely some common forms of life are seen which are not found elsewhere in NZ. We left the bush and sub-alpine scrub and tramped across damp tussock to Tatangi and onto Henry's Peak. Sufficiently removed from the popular routes, no path preservation work had been done, with horrifying consequences.

Centuries of rain and melting snow have patterned Mount Taranaki and Pouakai with radiating furrows cut through volcanic rock. The water and the single track of boot prints through the leatherwood has resulted in a boot wide furrow of 1-2 feet in depth. We couldn't walk in it and the bush prevented us walking on either side so we staggered and hopped from side to side or astride the eroded channel. Our short ascent was consequently surprisingly long and muddy. The descent was the same back into deep bush and a forest of rimu and kamahi, totara, kaikawaka and mahoe.

At 6 pm we came to a clearing – Kaiawai hut and were confronted with the beautiful Egmont in twilight. Cameras clicked. We spent a comfortable night in the hut debating the risk of giardia in New Zealand waters. Unfortunately it is most certainly present though few people take precautions.

Easter Monday dawned a glorious pink. The debated day to climb the mountain was definitely early Monday morning. We chose a bush walk back, down the lovely Waiwhakaihō River and up the Ngatoro stream path. It was beautiful bush with cabbage trees, crown ferns and ponga. One of the tallest trees is the rimu. The rata vine starts its life as a seed lodged in the forked rimu branches. Aerial roots are sent down to the ground until eventually the rata vine grows above the rimu, robbing it of light and causing its death. Abundant rain supports the growth of the thick perching plants e.g. asplinarina and kahikahi.

There is sufficient eeriness to conjure up any number of legends about mysterious beings and the setting would suit the most grotesque goblin. Moss grows thick on twisted limbs and at our feet a solitary orchid grew amongst the fallen leaves.

We returned to civilization at midday – happy explorers, but, for myself with weary legs and glad to shed my rucksack.

Kay Ward



BOOK REVIEWS

A Century of Scottish Mountaineering, W. D. Brooker, Scottish Mountaineering Trust 1988, £15.95

This book is a collection of articles, notes, letters, poems and illustrations taken from the S.M.C. Journals from 1890 to the present. The book begins with details of the events leading up to the foundation of the S.M.C. in 1889 and the decision to start publishing a journal in 1890. The first articles describe some of the exploits of the earlier members and it is surprising at the present time to realise how little was known about the Scottish hills at that time. It was not known how many hills over 3000 feet there were, and with no guide books available the best routes to follow were not known. Access to many areas was difficult and remained so even after the advent of the motor car, a fact well illustrated by the photograph of the Glen Coe road at Achtriochtan. The earlier photographs also illustrate how differently the climbers dressed then compared with the present day. The book goes on to trace the development of mountaineering in Scotland from these early days to the present time. There are articles on all aspects of mountaineering – hill walking, rock climbing, snow and ice climbing, skiing, accidents etc. Many of the authors are very well known names in Scottish Mountaineering, W. W. Naismith, H. T. Munro, W. H. Murray, B. H. Humble, to name but a few.

G. E.

The Book of the Climbing Year, Cameron McNeish, Patrick Stephens Ltd., 1988, £14.96

What exactly does a "climber" do at the weekends? Where do "climbers" go on their holidays? What, in fact, is "climbing". Read this book and find out, if you don't already know.

I enjoyed this book, if only because it brought home the multitude of ways we can enjoy the hills and mountains of the world, throughout the year, whatever the weather. The writing is good.

Cameron McNeish, (former editor of *Climber Magazine*, now with the *Great Outdoors*) has pulled together twelve writers (including himself) some of them well known to us already, who each describe one month of their "climbing year". The range is broad. We hear adventures described from places as far removed from each other as the Nepalese Himalayas (Bill O'Connor) and the small, but justly lauded gritstone outcrops of West Yorkshire (Dennis Gray). From rock climbing in New England (Jill Lawrence) to the Cairngorms at Christmas (Hamish Brown) – this climbing game certainly is a varied experience. I won't give away all the goodies, but my favourites were Ken Crocket on a Scottish Winter Climb (poetic almost, but not cloyingly so) and Elaine Brook on the majesty of the mountains, respect for the forces of nature and harmony with the world! Jim Perrin's writing is as polished as ever, but I didn't enjoy David Craig's as much as his book '*Native Stones*'. Terry Gifford's piece, I found all a bit much.

There are some typographical errors, especially in the photo captions, which could cause confusion. The photos themselves are secondary to the writing, but mostly excellent, and relevant. To sum up, I'll quote Cameron McNeish from his introduction – "simply a celebration of the climbing year in all in guises, in all its ambiguity, in all its controversy and in all its glory."

Well worth a read.

A.P.M.

A Chance in a Million? Scottish Avalanches, Bob Barton and Blyth Wright. Scottish Mountaineering Trust 1985, £4.95

Over the last few years avalanches have been identified as a Scottish problem. It is perhaps part of a growing awareness of mountain safety fostered in part by increasing media interest in Scottish winter accidents. Barton and Wright's book is well worth reading even if only to confirm, should any remain in doubt, that the risk of avalanche is real.

The book begins and ends with the story of avalanches in Scotland – a collection of cautionary tales. Even the best prepared and most experienced can come adrift as the events of December 1976 involving two Glenmore Lodge parties make clear. Both were perhaps ironically involved in snow hole exercises, one in Garbh Uisge Beag and the other closer to home at Ciste Mhearadh. The message is plain. Everyone on the hills in winter must be aware of, and beware of, avalanche.

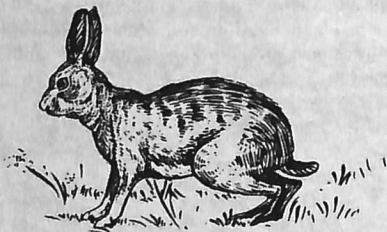
"Avalanche Anatomy" is the title of Chapter 2. It is for those genuinely interested in self preservation, the most important section of the book. It is at first sight a trifle offputting. It requires the reader to come to grips with such topics as "Equitemperature Metamorphism", "sublimation" and "MF met". In essence, however, and on closer study, it is simply a description of the various types of snowpack and the effects of different melt, freeze, snow combinations. The diagrams are informative and helpful as are the book's efforts to relate theory to matters with which the average reader will be familiar such as parts of the Cairngorm plateau, more particularly Coire an Lochain and, on another subject, a standard weather map.

"Improving the Odds" advises how you the reader can avoid the fate suffered by the book's examples. It was one I read with particular interest having come closer than I would care to becoming a statistic in recent years. The suggestions were not difficult nor time consuming, simply easy to forget in impatience to arrive at the summit or the bar. How often have you checked the weather forecast for the Saturday only ignoring the weather patterns over the last three days? The rules are few but vital. Carry the right gear – consider for example the use of avalanche cord, ensure you are aware of mountain conditions over the previous week and in particular have regard to wind conditions and weather extremes which affect critically the build up of unstable snow deposits on lee slopes and the likelihood of apparently stable snow resting on an unsafe surface. On the hill beware of the snow conditions – consider digging a snow pit to study the layers of fallen snow and to assess the stableness or otherwise of the slope on which you are, of course, by then standing! Such a pit does not take long to dig and, indeed, as a recent convert to the concept it becomes both entertaining and interesting, increasing one's knowledge of the mountain environment.

Finally of course is the question of survival. What to do if you or a member of your party is caught by an avalanche. Blyth and Barton provide much helpful information. Bear in mind on the hills their diagram as to where an avalanche victim is most likely to be found. The authors even recommend backstroke as opposed to the more traditional breast stroke as a means of self rescue for the victim. From experience I can comment that a frantic doggy paddle is your more likely response.

Seriously however this book is one which you should read. I understand that the author's next edition is to be entitled "One in Three?"

M. M. G.



The Handbook of Climbing, Allen Fyffe and Iain Peter. Pelham Books 1990, £20.00

When my dad bought me this book for Christmas, he wrote a comment inside the cover saying he hoped there was something here I didn't know. This book is such a wealth of information that, authors aside, there can be few people around who would not learn something from reading it. With both authors having worked at Glenmore Lodge, the reader can rest assured that all information has been gathered and all the methods have been tried and tested after years of experience in climbing and instruction.

The book is split into three main sections, presumably aimed to cover the likely requirements of most British mountaineers. These are: rock climbing, snow, ice and winter climbing, and alpine climbing. These are supplemented by a series of appendices covering grades, navigation, avalanche prediction, psychological skills, first aid and more. The text, all 373 pages of it, is presented in a very readable form, and is well illustrated throughout by diagrams and black and white photographs. There are also three sections of glossy colour photographs. For the Aberdeen climber, it is these photos, both colour and black and white, that help make the book that extra bit special, because many are taken at local crags such as Logie Head near Cullen, and at the Pass of Ballater, and give a distinct north east feel to it.

My criticisms are few. One or two diagrams are incorrect, and more information about the colour photos would have been nice, such as route name and grade, and the name of the climber – a minor quibble, but I'm sure I'm not the only one to flick through the pages and wonder.

On a final note, the book also carries the Full Endorsement of the BMC, and as a text guide to climbing skills, it will provide a firm foundation on which to build personal experience – an expensive but invaluable guide to a successful and safe life in the mountains.

S.S.

Climbing the Corbetts, Hamish Brown, Gollancz. 1988, £14.95.

Corbetts are Scottish peaks between 2500 feet and 3000 feet with a minimum reascent of 500 feet. Hamish describes expeditions to all 221 Corbetts, his adventures leading us from the Galloway hills to Sutherland, from Aberdeenshire to Harris.

The introduction and preamble will strike a chord in the heart of many a time-served Munroist and dare them to pit their experience and determination against the daunting task of the Corbetts. Corbetts are more widely scattered and '...independent in character and setting...' than Munros and, as Hamish often repeats, they frequently provide a more dramatic viewpoint from which to savour neighbouring peaks. No easy runs of Mamores or South Shiel Ridges here but a dogged ticking-off of never more than a handful a day and more usually only one.

When *'Climbing the Corbetts'* first appeared in 1989 we were aware that a gap in the literature had indeed existed. Since then the SMC have published *'The Corbetts'*. The two books are truly complementary. Hamish states in the introduction that his book '...is not a guidebook... It is one man yarning about his Corbetts...' Hamish is an artful teacher, he suggests, he inspires but leaves the minutiae to the student. He has a wealth of anecdotes and, for the hills, a warmth and affection which are infectious and easily become one's own in sentimental moments. In contrast, the SMC volume, to which, incidentally, Mr Brown is a contributor, is the definitive guidebook.

The Corbett areas have been revised since the book was published and I suppose that will be a mild irritation to the user as will an index which fails to indicate page numbers. I found the Renny maps useful for finding the hill on the OS Map but no help at all in

visualising the topography or the routes described. A fine volume like this deserves to have more photographs culled from Hamish's vast collection. The 15 photographs which are included are splendid and nicely cover the range of mountain situations spanned by the Corbetts. Occasionally I feel that there is too little description of the hill and its personality and perhaps rather too much emphasis on the weather and fellow walkers. But these are petty niggles and anyway this is '...not a guidebook.'

Hamish's is a voice crying in the wilderness that aspiring Munroists should not ignore adjacent Corbetts and he appends an encouraging list to that end. However it is not that Munro-baggers are more blinkered than most but just that many of us can cope with only one challenge at a time. Even I used to utter the aphorism that I was too young to do the Corbetts. Alas for many of us our salad days are past and Hamish's book appeared on the bookshelves at precisely the right time to inspire us to be reborn as Corbett-baggers.

Perhaps not a book for your rucksack but surely one for your bookcase.

D.F.G.

The Corbetts and Other Scottish Hills, S.M.C. Hillwalkers' Guide. Scottish Mountaineering Trust, 1990. £14.95

This is the younger brother of the S.M.C.'s classic guide to the Munros – five years younger to be precise. It has a similar, and largely admirable, layout. And if you don't like being spoon fed, you don't have to read it. It is first and last a guide book, concise and to the point; if you prefer your information to be interspersed with anecdote, you can read '*Climbing the Corbetts*'. Either way Hamish Brown wins.

It pays to read carefully the suggested routes, which have very up-to-date information; on at least two occasions I regretted not having done so, finding myself on the wrong side of a new deer fence.

I am not sure about the propriety of the editor's entry into the new game of Christen-the-Corbetts. Take the case of Point 2526 (S.M.C. Southern Highlands 1st ed. 1979 p76) just south of Loch Voil. This is subsequently referred to as Ceann na Baintighearna (Her Ladyship's Head), but it transpires that Her Ladyship's Head is in fact at the north end of the ridge. Presumably to avoid confusing the summit with any other part of Her Ladyship's anatomy, the editors suggest the name Stob Feartomhais (The Surveyor's Peak). How dull.

A few suggestions for the 2nd edition – Freeze the list of Corbetts – Borrow from Hamish Brown the regional maps which precede each chapter in his book – OR show all the Corbetts (not just a sprinkling) on the maps at front and back – Distinguish more clearly in the text between Corbetts and Other Hills (imagine the chagrin of a serious Corbett-er, who discovered that he had climbed Another Hill by mistake).

In all seriousness an excellent book.

J.M.C.G.

The West Highland Way, Robert Aitken, HMSO Revised 1988. £6.95

On The West Highland Way, Jimmie Macgregor, BBC 1985. £3.95

The West Highland Way, Footprint Map 1988. £2.25

West Highland Way, Long Distance Route, Countryside Commission for Scotland Free Leaflet (Annual)

One could walk the West Highland Way with only a map. To have any of these guides would ease the planning and increase the enjoyment. Robert Aitken's official guide gives plenty of information about scenery and history, is small enough to be slipped in the pocket

and comes complete with an O.S. map in a plastic case. The guide book is printed in sepia and yellow ink. I see no point in avoiding black and white for the text and the pictures would be clearer in black and white. While I am usually a devotee of O.S. maps, I did not care for the layout of this one with awkward sections and oblique grid lines, and found the footprint map, also in a plastic case, preferable. This map is derived from the O.S. but is printed clearly and folded in such a way as to expose in its clear envelope a days travel at a time. Along the margins of the route are paragraphs of useful information, altogether much handier than the HMSO combination.

Jimmie Macgregor's narrative provides an enjoyable description of the journey interspersed with fragments of verse in the characteristic style of the author. A book to be enjoyed but perhaps not included in the pack to be carried, though I had a happy evening reading it on one of the B&Bs recommended in the list issued by The Countryside Commission. If one does not fancy roughing it in bothy or tent there is a good choice of excellent B&B accommodation bookable in advance. These are listed in a brochure updated annually by The Countryside Commission for Scotland and available free from tourist information offices.

R.W.

Balmoral – Queen Victoria's Highland Home, by Ronald W. Clark, Thames and Hudson 1981. £10

Although this book was published ten years ago in America, the author is British with a wide knowledge of the Victorian era. He has a special interest in Victorian mountaineers on which subject he has written a book of that name.

Although basically a history of Balmoral, its various castles and Queen Victoria's association with Scotland, it will fascinate Club members especially those who love Lochnagar and the Braemar area.

The history tells the story of the castle site, from the 15th century, through pseudo-Gothic then mock Abbotsford to Queen Victoria's acquisition of it in 1848. It was then much changed and details of the architectural work are of interest. The book then dwells on the visits to Balmoral by Victoria and Albert, on his death, the Queen's association with John Brown, her death, then the use of the castle by George V, Edward VII, George VI and up to the present Royal Family.

There are many photographs to illustrate the book, all black and white, including early ones by George Washington Wilson, the Aberdeen photographer. One of our members, George F. Collie, contributed photographs to this edition and the Cairngorm Club Journal is mentioned in the bibliography. On page 107 there is a fine photograph of a Cairngorm Club meet to Lochnagar on the 23rd September 1889 with seventy plus walkers including many ladies – no problem filling that bus meet especially as Mr Begg of Lochnagar Distillery sent along a sample of his well known spirit.

This book, at present in the Cairngorm Club library is well recommended to all members.

A.P.M.

Avonside Explored: a guide to Tomintoul and Glenlivet, by Edward H. Peck, published by Edward H. Peck, Tomintoul, revised Ed. 1989. £3.30

This little book is exactly what its title suggests. It describes the countryside around the Banffshire Avon. This quietly beautiful area is one which most of us know very well

topographically but perhaps are less aware of some of its historical, geological and social associations.

The guide, first published in 1983 and updated to 1988, is described by its author as a "tribute to Dr Victor Gaffney (1910-1974)". It seeks to expand Gaffney's "*Tomintoul, its Glens and Its People*".

This guide is organised neatly into two main sections. The first part, after a general introduction to Avonside, describes the Avon; Tomintoul; and Inveravon to Glenlivet (from Ballindalloch to Bridgend) including Kilnmachlie, Lower Avonside and Dounan. This section contains a wealth of fascinating information, both topical and historical.

The second part of the guide offers readers eleven Driving and Walking routes, the eleventh route dealing very briefly with Inchrory, Ben Avon and Upper Glen Avon. The routes are aimed primarily at the motorist but suggestions for walks are dovetailed especially as many of the points of interest described are accessible only on foot.

The guide is most valuable for the historical details and descriptions of landmarks it contains. In this respect, it is a real gem. It supplies answers to the many questions raised on seeing curious stones, ruins and other enigmatic items of interest when one is in this area. For example, the solitary "lums" on the Grantown road; these were used by roadmen for their fires. They set up wooden shelters against the chimneys. And how many people know about the little gorge containing a linn near the Bridge of Brown? The Battle of Glenlivet in 1594 is described – noteworthy among other things for being the last time the harp was carried into battle; after that the pipes accompanied the fighting. Also mentioned is the Lecht Iron Mine which started in the 18th century. The mine closed finally in 1847 but some of its buildings can still be seen. In this same area and in more modern times, Percy Toplis, "the monocled mineur" holed up in a cottage for a short time before wounding two local policemen in making his escape.

This guide is packed full with information, historical anecdotes, useful local knowledge (not forgetting whisky associations) as well as being written with great affection for the area. There is one map which unfortunately does not show all the places mentioned although it does cover most of the area covered by the guide. A map for each route would be useful but this is a minor omission as it is suggested that the relevant O.S. maps should supplement the map in the guide.

This is a guide which considerably enhances enjoyment of this attractive landscape. There are very pleasing black and white illustrations and a brief bibliography for those who want to take their interest further.

G.C.

RHUM. The Natural History of an Island, Ed. T. H. Clutton Brock and M. E. Ball E.U.P. 1987. £7.50

Rhum is not the easiest of islands to visit, but there is much to commend it. As a change from bagging its magnificent Cuillins, slightly smaller than their brothers across the water in Skye, there is much to see and explore.

This enjoyable book is a collection of essays by experts in different fields of natural history, geology, human history, botany including woodland and forestry, invertebrates, birds, red deer, domestic and feral animals. There are useful checklists of flora and fauna which are helpful in the identification of species.

The island, an extinct volcano, has now no native population and nearly all its inhabitants are the employees and scientists of the Nature Conservancy, to which the island and castle were gifted by the last owner, Lady Bullough and from which permission to visit must be obtained. There are remnants of former inhabitants from ruined crofts and lazybeds to the magnificent Kinloch Castle with its contents, the former home of the Bulloughs, now

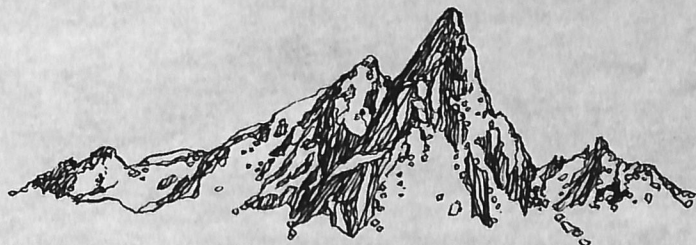
a hotel of decaying splendour.

The animals show less fear of man than those on the mainland and include feral goats, Rhum ponies, red deer and many rats (but no rabbits, frogs, toads or snakes). The vegetation includes several rarities and there is an important nesting colony of Manx shearwaters.

One very evident form of wildlife on Rhum is the notorious midge population. It is said that Sir George Bullough insisted on the builders of his castle wearing the kilt, but they were given a generous tobacco allowance to deter the midges!

This little book is small enough for the anorak pocket, and is recommended to add greatly to the enjoyment of the visitor.

P.W.



Midges in Scotland. George Hendry, Aberdeen University Press 1989. £3.95

Did you know that midges were described as early as the fourteenth century by three travelling monks from Peebles who resorted to swatting them with bundles of twigs? George Hendry gives an entertaining account of this little beast and her exploits, which cause so much grief amongst people in the Scottish hills.

Thirty four species of biting midge are known in Scotland, but one, the *Culicoides impunctatus* (Meanbh chuileag), better known as the Highland midge is responsible for most of the trouble. It is said to be fairly easy to identify with a wingspan of a mere 1.4 mm and six or seven blotches or dark spots on each membranous wing. Males feed on plant nectar and rotting plant remains but females love human blood. It's only one ten-millionth of a litre per bite, but this can cause discomfort for three to four days. Mr Hendry writes that the biting season lasts from mid June till well into August, but some of us might expand his timescale.

The highland midge doesn't like light and bites most vigorously towards twilight and in cloudy weather. The writer gives a good account of the other biting insects in Scotland including cleg, stable fly, black fly, and mosquito. It's not only us who suffer as cattle, horses, sheep, wild animals and birds can all be badly affected. Midges have been blamed for distress in cows and a decline in milk yields in particularly midgy summers. It seems that our little friends attack fiercely when you are on the move but often leave you alone when you want to enjoy the scenery. The foresters have an old saying that a midge never attacks a man standing with his hands in his pockets.

A few remedies are mentioned, one being not to wear dark clothes. The only natural repellent is an Australian concoction made from a blend of oil of citronella, pennyroyal, cajaput, lavender, bergamot and saffras. The chemical repellants such as Autan and Jungle Formula have been around for a long time, but a truly effective one has yet to be produced.

I bought this book thinking that there was a solution for the itching and scratching, but my hope was idle. I might as well pay the price for enjoying the Highlands.

K.W.



Richard Grant

The Fell and Rock Journal. No. 71 (1988) and No. 72 (1990) (Journal of The Fell and Rock Climbing Club of The English Lake District)

There is much to enjoy in these issues of the admirably produced journals of a distinguished kindred club. There are historical articles as well as climbing articles, and I especially enjoyed a collection of pieces on Brackenclouse in Wasdale (the venue of the CC weekend meet in October 1991) in the 1988 issue, and a collection of pieces on Waters Cottage, the Fell and Rock's Scottish hut, in the 1990 issue. This is relevant to the suggestion at the 1990 AGM that the Cairngorm Club acquire a further hut in Scotland.

Also in the 1990 issue is an article by June Parker, "Walking in the Winter Sun". June Parker is a former librarian of The Fell and Rock Club and her book "Walking in Mallorca" is in our library.

There are many other articles to interest members of the Cairngorm Club. The editor and contributors are to be congratulated.

P.W.

The Birds of North-East Scotland, Ed. S.T. Buckland, M. V. Bell, M. Picozzi. North East Scotland Bird Club. 1990. £19.95

"The Birds of North East Scotland is much more than a local bird atlas. Introductory chapters on geology and flora were invited to set the scene for readers unfamiliar with north east Scotland. Maps of the semi-natural vegetation communities are presented and novel analyses of the atlas data are described. The final chapter comprises articles on the special bird communities of the area, the birds of the high tops and of the ancient pinewoods, wintering wild fowl, sea birds and shore birds".

This quotation from the preface gives a good summing up of the contents of the book. By any standards it is a monumental work, with contributions from 290 collated over a period of thirteen years. For readers not particularly interested in detailed records, there is plenty of interesting text and maps, and the tables are clearly set out. The illustrations are delightfully varied. The editors are to be congratulated on producing such a fine volume.

J.A.

Moray Coast Railways, Rosemary Burgess and Robert Kinghorn, Aberdeen University Press 1990. £8.90


This is a companion volume to Speyside Railways by the same authors, published in 1988, and reviewed in the last issue (Number 101) of this Journal. The lines dealt with in this work comprise that from Cairnie Junction (south of Keith) to Banff via Tillynaught Junction and from Tillynaught to Elgin along the Banff and Moray Coast via places such as Portsoy, Cullen and Buckie, and, in addition, the branch lines from Keith Junction to Portessie. The last mentioned was part of the Highland railway system, whereas the others were for most of their life run by the Great North of Scotland Railway (later to become part of the LNER). A well-researched account is given of the building of each line. There follow detailed statements about all the stations, with various facilities such as station buildings, signal boxes and track layouts, well described as they were during the operations of these lines. In each case an indication is given as to what buildings still remain after closure of the rail services more than twenty years ago. The book is copiously illustrated by 143 photographs and 34 maps, most of them depicting things as they were when the lines were operating, but some showing surviving buildings and viaducts.

While what is written will be generally fascinating to railway enthusiasts, the general visitor to the area is not forgotten. Each town or village which had a station is described historically and in other respects, and natural features are not neglected. It is pleasing to note that favourable comment is made on hills near the Moray Coast: viz. the Knock Hill (1409 ft.) at Glenbarry and the Bin Hill of Cullen (1055 ft.).

L.McA.

CONTRIBUTIONS

All contributions will be considered for the Journal, although the editor reserves the right to edit, abridge or omit material submitted for publication. Main articles should be between 1500 and 3000 words in length. Shorter ones will be welcome for the Notes section. It would be appreciated if they could be typewritten or on computer disk, and assistance can be given in locating typing facilities. Black and white photographs need not be larger than contact prints and it is helpful if negatives are available.



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