

The Cairngorm Club Journal



Volume 21

2004

Number 107

Mountains? Molehills?

LEGAL PROBLEMS COME IN ALL SIZES

Bothies? Bungalows?

PROPERTIES LIKEWISE

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THE CAIRNGORM CLUB JOURNAL

Edited by Lydia Thomson

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The Cairngorm Club

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THE PRESIDENT

Ian Bryce was elected President of the Club at the 2003 AGM, in succession to Ken Thomson. Born in Ayrshire he developed an early interest in the hills encouraged by his parents and the 24th Glasgow Scouts. When he was 14 he visited Kandersteg with the scouts and climbed his first alpine peak, the Morgenhorn with Hans Harry, Bergführer. On subsequent visits to the Alps he climbed peaks like the Rinderhorn at Kandersteg and later, often with his brother Jim, several 4,000m peaks including the Finsteraarhorn from Fiesch. As a strong admirer of the Swiss, Austrian and French Alpine Clubs he sees great potential for the Mountaineering Council of Scotland.

During his school days he tramped the Kilpatricks, scrambled at the Whangie, visited Dumgoyne, walked on the Campsies and escaped to the Cobbler. Summer camps involved ascents like Ben Nevis and Ben Ledi. He is a member and former Vice-Chairman of the Glasgow Glenmore Club. He completed his Munros in 1983 when the number of Munroists recorded was still fewer than 300. As a civil engineer he has worked on structural, water supply and sewerage schemes in many parts of Scotland.

Before moving to Aberdeen, he had enjoyed weekends at Muir with his family and he had heard tales of the Cairngorm Club from other climbers. On moving to Aberdeen in 1988 he joined the Club without doing a 'Which' test. His first bus trip was the Cairngorm traverse. He joined the Committee in 1989, and has since frequently served as a member, and was elected a Vice-President from 2000 to 2004.

Walking in the South Atlantic - Without Getting Your Feet Wet

Brian Davey

How could I resist it! With the approach of my retirement date, the offer of a six-month posting to Ascension Island didn't need much deliberation on my part, and there were of course many good and valid reasons why I should jump at this opportunity. But the most important requirement was a pink-pass from my wife. Much to my surprise, considering how indispensable I thought I was about the house, this permission was granted without much hesitation. How would she be able to start our 27-year-old lawnmower in order to cut the grass without my help? Visions of a summer hay field wafting in the wind at Queens Den flashed through my mind. But we all know that graveyards are full of indispensable men, and women too, and I was soon on my way.

Ascension Island is situated in the middle of the South Atlantic just 8 degrees latitude south of the equator and 14 degrees longitude west, halfway between Brazil and Angola. The nearest land, 1,300km away, is that other South Atlantic Island of Saint Helena, famous for being the prison station of Napoleon Bonaparte. However for me Ascension Island could never be considered a prison. Though trapped there without leave for half a year, this interesting island had plenty to keep me captivated.

My Met. Office post entailed the management of a small team charged with the provision of flight forecasts for the eight-hour Airbridge flights between Ascension Island and the Falkland Islands and the eight-hour return flights between Ascension and the UK. Other parts of the job were the recording of weather observations for the Island, the supply of occasional flight forecasts to the African continent, and the issue of forecasts to Florida for the US Airforce, also based on Ascension.

The Island is roughly the shape of an equilateral triangle and, although only approximately 35 square miles in area, its land surface is packed with fascination. We can thank Joao de Nova Gallego, a Portuguese seafarer, for its discovery in the year 1501, and the initial name of Conception Island. It was then forgotten, to be found again two years later by Alphonse D'Albuquerque, who renamed it Ascension Island after the feast day on which it was rediscovered. At that time the island was without any kind of mammal, either human or animal. Although often visited by the ships of various nations, it never had permanent inhabitants until the British government took possession in 1815 and established a garrison lest the French use it as a base from which to rescue their Emperor imprisoned on St Helena.

Being the most isolated tropical island in the Atlantic, some of the plants, birds and marine life found here are unique, having evolved differently from their closest relatives. It is also a very young island in geological terms, constructed on the five to six million-year-old oceanic crust of the South Atlantic plate. It is surrounded by very deep seas and is built on a volcanic structure that has only the top few percent of its mass exposed above sea level. It is said that if the surrounding ocean were drained, the island would sit on top of a steep 4,000m mountain. Because the island is so young, spectacular volcanic rock debris and lava flows are relatively unspoiled by erosion. This makes for some awfully interesting walking, or should I say rock hopping, in places over razor-sharp rock.

Much of the western and northern part of the Island has very sparse or desert-like vegetation. However in the more eastern parts of the island and on Green Mountain, the highest peak at 2,817ft, rainfall is more regular and heavier, and there is a great variety of vegetation, from grasses to shrubs and trees, both tropical and non-tropical. Man has introduced many of the plant species growing above about 1,500ft in the last 150 years, some having been imported from the Royal Botanical Gardens at Kew.

The enhanced rainfall recorded on the eastern half of the Island is brought in on the moist and persistent south-east trade winds, which blow around the semi-permanent sub-tropical high pressure belt of the South Atlantic. These winds are cooled, condensed and relieved of some of their oceanic moisture as they are forced aloft over the Green Mountain. It is truly extraordinary to climb this hill and observe the change of vegetation from desert at lower levels to luxuriant jungle near the peak. It is also remarkable to pass from a climate with bright sunshine on the mountain's western slopes to cooler, overcast hill-fog conditions at the summit. Temperatures as well as rainfall figures show great variation across the island depending on height and exposure. The nice thing is that if it rains, at least it is warm rain, even at the top of Green Mountain. Rainfall amounts can also vary greatly from year to year, going from drought conditions in years such as 1857, to great deluges with roads destroyed in the rapid runoff, as happened during heavy rain in March 1984. As much as nine inches of rain were recorded in one day on the Island in 1859. However this is a very rare occurrence, as is the incidence of thunderstorms, and for much of the time the weather is dry and sunny. Afternoon maximum temperatures at the airport range from around 30°C in March and April to 27°C in September. Overnight minimum temperatures range from 25°C in March and April to around 22°C in September.

From the above you can see that the essentials for walking in Ascension, apart from a good pair of stout boots and a walking pole, are shorts, tee-shirt,



Lava Flows and Cloud on Green Mountain

hat and ample supplies of a high-factor sunscreen plus plenty of drinking water. A moderate, fairly constant, 15mph south-east breeze helps to keep you cool, but it also means that it is very easy to become dehydrated. A machete might be another useful implement for walkers to carry on Green Mountain. On mentioning this in jest to my walking companion on one expedition, I was a bit surprised when he reached into his rucksack and actually produced one! Many of the paths on this mountain are now overgrown, and with the current human population only around 900, there are insufficient walkers or tourists to trample back the encroaching vegetation. This is a great pity, since many paths and tunnels were cut into the volcanic cinder around Green Mountain in the 19th century. The most spectacular of these, Elliot's Pass, was constructed in 1840 on narrow ledges with many tunnels. It hugs the 2,400ft contour and circumnavigates the mountain, giving magnificent ever-changing vistas of the island. This path was originally built to offer a lookout from which the horizon could be scanned for approaching enemy ships, when the peak itself was obscured in cloud. The clear unpolluted atmosphere of the South Atlantic provides unlimited visibility over a vast ocean, with the distant rounded horizon disproving, once and for all, the beliefs of the Flat Earth Society.

At lower elevations Prickly Pear cactus is often encountered on the Island. It is an impressive plant that can grow to a height of 15 feet and is well avoided. Its spread has now been halted to some extent by the introduction of a cactus moth (*Cactoblastis cactorum*) which feeds on the plants and eventually kills them. Another bush or small tree, a species of acacia called Mexican Thorn, is rapidly becoming a menace to walkers. It is said to have been imported to the Island as recently as the early 1980s and is spreading rampantly. Its only enemy, apart from myself armed with my bamboo walking pole, seems to be the occasional feral donkey and the wild sheep that also roam the Island. These animals are certainly no match for its prolific growth and may even help it by spreading the seeds, enveloped in a liberal dose of manure. Such is the increase of this particular shrub in recent years that some mountains are changing colour.

All the mountains or hills on Ascension are volcanoes, though according to reports from visiting geologists they had been dormant, if not extinct, for at least a few hundred years before man appeared on the scene. At 1,792ft, Red Hill is the third highest volcano on Ascension. Though not high by Scottish standards, it is still an exciting hill to climb, being composed of bright red ash and lava. However, people revisiting this hill recently after only a few years' absence have noted that the northern slopes in particular are a lot greener than before. A small grove of eucalyptus trees has also sprouted near the summit. Should this greening effect continue, I think a name change might be on the cards.

The most spectacular increase in vegetation brought about by man's intervention must be at the Dew Pond, near the peak of Green Mountain. Here a lily pond, stocked with goldfish and frogs, was established in 1875. Around the same time a bamboo forest was planted in order to increase the water catchment for the pond. This forest, along with a luxuriant growth of wild ginger, has made a chain saw almost essential in order to reach the top of the mountain. Needless to say, this bamboo jungle obscures the magnificent views of the whole island. However, by fighting through the undergrowth and dropping down about 150 feet below the Dew Pond and the Peak, amazing views can be enjoyed of the whole south side of the Island. Clearly visible from this vantage-point is Wideawake Airport with its 10,000ft runway, built by the United States Army Engineers in 1942. Not far from the airport can be seen the white guano-covered nesting grounds of the Sooty or Wideawake tern. These birds, which are now said to number 200,000, breed in large colonies called fairs every 10 lunar months. The unusual breeding pattern is a survival tactic to outwit their predators, and the noise they create when they are in residence at the fairs has to be heard to be believed.

Much quieter creatures to be observed on Ascension are the giant green turtles, which weigh from 400 to 800 pounds when mature. These visit the Island between January and May each year, when they come onshore to lay their eggs on the Island's numerous sandy beaches. An essential magic moonlight walk is a stroll along any of these beaches at night to watch the enormous turtles struggle as far as 150 metres above high-water mark to dig a large pit about 3 metres in diameter and about 80 centimetres deep. Here they deposit some 150 eggs resembling table tennis balls, carefully burying them before returning to the sea. Other moments to be savoured are shoreline walks nine or ten weeks later, to see the baby turtles as they hatch and dig their way out of the nest pit and make a frantic dash to the sea.

Before modern communications gave us the 'miracle' of almost instant e-mail, as long ago as the 17th century outward bound ships would leave messages on the Island for the next ship to take home, an early sort of postal service. We have all heard tales about 'the message in a bottle'. In fact there is a remote headland on the east of the Island called Bottle Point, and a nearby cairn called Letterbox. Although this is a rather exposed location because of the persistent trade winds and southerly sea swell, legend has it that this is the site where the original 17th century letterbox was located, and a visit to this spot is well worth the effort.

The concept of letterboxes seems to have appealed to modern-day walkers, and the Island Heritage Society have now published a guide book with maps of 18 'Letterbox Walks' on the Island. At each letterbox a notebook and hand-stamp are provided, so that people can prove they have actually been to the place. Most of these walks are not long in distance, compared to many Munro-bagging expeditions, but given the terrain and temperature they are still quite challenging and rewarding. Each walk provides excellent views of the best of Ascension Island, lots of interest from the geology, flora and fauna and even marine life, when you encounter land crabs on mountain paths.

Perhaps the Mountaineering Council of Scotland, or the newly-formed Munro Society, will organise some sort of similar scheme for verifying the completion of Munros and Corbetts. Funding for such a vast project might be a problem, not to mention the logistics of the installation of the boxes. But if mankind can visit the moon, why not? In our Scottish winter conditions, accessibility of the letterboxes might be the greatest technical challenge. Happily this will never be a problem for walkers in the tropical heat of Ascension Island!

Some Winter Days

Rhona Fraser

All the Munros in winter, now there is a challenge!!!! Several years ago I did wonder if I might tackle it, and although recent poor snow conditions and the discovery of the delights of cross-country skiing have deflected me somewhat, I have certainly had some exciting winter days on the hill. My definition of a winter ascent is one that necessitates equipment (ice-axe or crampons) or skills only used in winter IRRESPECTIVE of the time of year. Our New Year ascent of Beinn Heasgarnich, when we had to go searching for any snow, would not qualify as a winter climb, whereas a May holiday weekend up Bruach na Frithe in thigh-deep snow would.

My first ever Munro was actually done in winter conditions with a newly acquired instrument called an ice-axe, which I had read was recommended equipment for snowy terrain. I had absolutely no idea I was climbing a Munro (the height of Broad Cairn being conveniently hidden by a map crease), even less how to use this new piece of mountaineering apparatus. The ascent was quite dignified, the descent, however, consisted of an unladylike crawl on my backside with my newly acquired metal stick flailing uselessly behind me. The next winter I went to a Glenmore winter skills course to rectify this lack of knowledge, though I do still have grave doubts as to whether I could self-arrest on steep hard snow.

My first really 'impressive' winter ascent was in April 1983, during a Galloway Mountaineering Club meet at Dundonell. We planned to do a traverse of Sgurr Fiona from north-west to south-east. None of the party had been on the mountain before, but we knew its reputation and had fortunately taken full rock-climbing / winter-mountaineering equipment. Our leader, a very capable chap, disliked early starts. This was to become our downfall, as we began the walk late at 10am, arriving at the summit of Sgurr Fiona at 3pm. As the least experienced person in the party, I was asked to decide whether we should turn back or not (!!!!!). From my now petrified point of view, there was little to choose between a very steep icy descent to Bidein a' Ghlas Thuill and a long walk back to the car, or the original plan of contouring beneath the pinnacle ridge to the cars at Corrie Hallie. I chose the latter. Slowly the weather started to deteriorate, the clouds and the steep snow slopes merging to become one white mass, with what seemed yawning blackness below. I was truly terrified, absolutely seized, breathless, mostly with fear, with each step. We continued, now roped, underneath the pinnacles, reassured somewhat by the presence of apparently fresh footsteps ahead. Just as I was starting to get used to the situation, the descent route became barred by a vertical cliff, but those footsteps

were still tantalisingly visible below us. We did not know it at the time, but we were now attempting to descend the difficult step on the Corrag Bhuidhe Buttress. The next 100 metres were to take us three hours and four belays, and we finally reached the col before Sail Liath at 7pm. The cars were at Corrie Hallie, we were on avalanche prone slopes and there was only one hour of light left! Our leader decided to descend on safer snow slopes towards Shenavall Bothy. We arrived there at 11pm, the inhabitants at first disbelieving our statement that we were not going to stay the night. The doctor (me) had a Surgery to attend in Turriff at 9am the next day!!

The walk back to the car, which we thought would be the least of our worries, was an epic in itself. It had now been gently snowing for several hours, and the path we had planned to follow soon disappeared under this new snow. We were forced to use a compass on very broken ground, our leader, a supreme navigator, announcing at one point that he had never been so lost in his whole life! We got back to the cars at 4am, I to work for 9am, some patients noting how well I looked "nice rosy cheeks, doctor", the effect of 18 hours of wind and snow. By the afternoon I was having severe difficulty producing a full sentence without slurring my words or forgetting my train of thought, and that evening fell asleep standing upright whilst talking to a neighbour!

In a similar, though less serious, vein, there was a winter walk with Peter Bellarby in the Cairngorms. Both of us are renowned for appearing at the Burns' Supper in Muir Cottage, Inverey, just as the soup is about to be served. Our companions, therefore, only started to get concerned when we failed make an appearance for desserts. Lost, perhaps? Well no - a 'controlled' detour, but never really lost. The basic problem had been a wrong forecast. Peter and I had set off for Beinn Bhreac, believing the weather would soon deteriorate. Walking across the Mòine Bhealaidh, towards Beinn a' Chaorainn, not a snowflake falling anywhere, Beinn a' Bhuid beckoned. Grey skies but not the forecast blizzard. Needless to say, the bad weather and the two of us arrived at the summit plateau of Bhuid at the same time. We decided that I would navigate by putting Peter in front and using him as an attack point for the bearing. We were aiming for the land rover track on the plateau, probably in retrospect a rather stupid thing to do, as it would have been covered with snow. The main problem, as far as I could see, was NOT to walk over any cornice that might be lingering over the east cliffs of the hill. I did not want to go into the Dubh-Ghleann either, as this would involve a long and tedious valley walk, but the overwhelming fear was not to veer too far left and in the almost white-out conditions over a cornice. Forty-five minutes later, now out off the mist, we stood at the top of a glen: the Dubh-Ghleann awaited. I had avoided the cliffs by going too far right! Until then, I had often wondered if it was an advantage to be light and small (but having less muscle strength) in soft snow. Ghleann Dubh was to leave this no longer in doubt, as poor Peter, probably cursing my

'controlled' route choice, was left floundering in banks of soft snow as I much more easily plodded on ahead.

To end this trio of epics I will describe a walk into Sheicheachan Bothy beneath Beinn Dearg, the basic idea being to do the very remote Corbett, Beinn Bhreac. Three of us set off from Old Blair in February 1986, in lovely weather conditions with clear blue skies and fresh snow lying on the tracks above 300m. We set off at 5pm, not feeling the slightest urge to push the pace. The bothy was only two to three hours away, the route clearly demarcated by a land rover track. Oh what an inexperienced view that turned out to be! What do land rover tracks become when drifted over with snow? Unfortunately darkness coincided with our arrival at such a camouflaged piece of track, but still full of misplaced optimism we plodded on in what we hoped was the right direction. Then suddenly, as happens when you are lost, 'things' started to feel wrong - the ground was going down when it should have been going up, the slope felt steep when it should have been shallow. Fearing we might miss the bothy, we veered north-east to aim for the Bruar Water. By luck, I think, more than skill, we arrived and relocated ourselves at the weir on the Bruar Water just south of the Allt a' Chaise. There was now barely a mile to the bothy, but it took us nearly two hours, the snow getting deeper and very soft. Exhausted, we awoke the next morning, our boots frozen solid, with no heart to walk the long miles to Beinn Bhreac, climbing Beinn Dearg instead.

At least I got to Beinn Dearg. Sometimes I get nowhere of great significance. I hope this will not offend (it would certainly NOT offend her) but one of my more crazy moments of winter Munroing involved the scattering of the ashes of my great-aunt Ethel. She died at the grand old age of 96, a veteran of the Moray Mountaineering Club, with fond memories of the Cairngorms before they were developed for the ski industry. A long time before her eventual death she hinted she would like somebody to scatter her ashes on a hill. At the time I had only Braeriach left to do locally on my first round and, being a true Munro-bagger, I thought this suggestion would perhaps kill two birds with one stone ... so to speak. Her eyes lit up with glee at this suggestion. "That was my first ever Cairngorm. How absolutely marvellous!!!" "OK," I replied, "but you have got to die in winter, promise!!!!" Ethel managed to live through two rounds of Munros before eventually (and with great relief) she died in late October 1996 - winter? Her ashes stayed in my house while I hoped that the weather would improve, upsetting several visitors who shared the same bedroom. Eventually nagged into submission, I decided to lay them to rest in February 1997, hopefully getting a winter Munro into the bargain! I heard the weather forecast, but persuaded myself, as one does in the circumstances, that the 70mph winds would NOT arrive till I was off the hill. I was left in no doubt as soon as I got out of the car, being blown backwards within yards of setting off. Mmmm. Ethel and I were NOT getting a winter Munro that day. I

struggled as far as I could, crawling on all fours down to the Lairig Ghru. As I staggered towards the shoulder of Sròn na Lairige, I persuaded myself this would do, as it was part of Braeriach. I have grave doubts if she as much as touched the ground, as with amazing swiftness the wind tore her ashes from the urn and sped them north. Always the optimist, I continued upwards, managing about 400 metres, before a wall of wind blasted down Coire Gorm making forward movement impossible. If walking into strong wind is difficult, walking with it behind you is unimaginable. As I retreated, limbs flayed about uncontrollably, tripping up other parts without warning, my gait emulating a puppet-on-a-string!!!.

I suffer from poor distance vision ("We'll meet at the fence, over there." "What fence?") but have on occasions found it very useful. For some peculiar reason I had suggested a winter ascent of Aonach air Chrith (on the south Cluanie ridge) by its north ridge. Peculiar, as I had taken one look at this ridge in summer and decided, being alone at the time, it was not for me. That November day the snow was down to the road, the conditions overhead ideal, but soon I had second thoughts. At first I tried the restrained "It is quite narrow at the top," but as we got progressively higher, this became "It is VERY narrow on top," trying to make myself sound concerned but knowledgeable. My companion, Roger Robb, recognised something was amiss. "You are unusually quiet today! Is something bothering you? I'm enjoying the silence. Might make you scared more often." By the time we reached the final summit slope, I had persuaded myself I was making a fuss about nothing, the north-east ridge looking broad and easy. Then suddenly the hill disappeared. Roger looked down and joined me in reflective silence. Poor eyesight helped by allowing me to concentrate on the narrow field of focused vision immediately ahead of me, so that I managed extremely well to ignore the visual fuzziness everywhere else. I have a strong memory of the ridge becoming a knife-edge at one point and going *à cheval* on the rock, a manoeuvre the horse-rider in me particularly enjoyed. However the climb down shortly after this to an acutely-sloping ice-covered slab, is not a position I would like to repeat too often. Roger muttered that he should have taken a rope, I was silence personified. The exposed ridge was short-lasting, leading almost immediately to the summit cairn. Fear became pride and delight as we looked down on a magnificent view, the black waters of Loch Quoich tinged yellow, the setting sun casting eerie shadows as it plunged behind low clouds around Sgurr Mor. We continued to Maol Chinn Dearg, the wide easy ridge contrasting well with our Alpine *arête* on Aonach.

Moments like these make winter hill walking special. In summer the light is sometimes flat, the views hazy, but in winter the short days often bring spectacular sunsets and great atmospheric clarity. Roger and I had two stunning New Year expeditions in Skye in 1997 - the year of the heavy frost. The scene had been set for these epics the year before, when we climbed Sgurr nan Eag

from the Glen Brittle Hut. In 1996 any fallen snow had been blown off the ridges to accumulate in large amounts on the lower slopes. We ascended the mountain from its southern slopes, soon finding the mixture of soft snow on top of loose scree slow and tiring. With each step you slipped twice - firstly into the snow and secondly as the stones beneath gave way. We were very aware that the forecast was for the weather to deteriorate later that day, and had promised ourselves that we must turn back if we had not reached the summit by 2pm. Exhausted by the constant slipping, we reached the top with ten minutes to spare, but with valuable experience that would stand us in good stead for the next year.

Sgurr Alasdair was our New Year's Day walk in 1997, a year when a long spell of low temperatures had frozen the ground solid. Unlike our experience on Sgurr nan Eag, the conditions were perfect for climbing a scree slope, the loose rocks being iced together, and the Stone Shoot offered a pleasant way to the top. The air was unusually still that day. No wind blew, making the sea as smooth as glass, reflective as a mirror. We watched transfixed as the spectacle of the fading day unfolded around us. At first we saw the sun above a bank of low cloud, its image mirrored as an orange ball of light on the greying sea. For several moments, the scene before us was inexplicable and odd. We saw the sun disappear suddenly below the clouds, yet its orange reflection remained etched on the darkening sea, the wedge of colour lingering on the water, prolonging the last moments of the day.

Two days later, with no knowledge of a weather forecast, we set off for my 'friend' Sgurr Dubh Mor. That term is laced with sarcasm as this particular mountain and I have a long history of trying moments together. From our expedition on Eag we realised that an early start was essential, and left the Hut at 7am, so that the walk round to Coire a' Ghrunnda was mostly in the dark, on paths hard with ice. Getting into the Coire was probably one of the most difficult parts of the climb, as we had to surmount a slab covered in thin ice. Once in the Coire, however, the snow was remarkably soft and strenuous. The sky was at first clear, but we watched horrified as thin clouds drifted in. Was the weather changing? Would we have time to climb the hill and still get back to that difficult ice-covered slab before nightfall? We arrived at Sgurr Dubh an Da Bheinn, now thick with cloud, anxiously aware we had still a lot to do before our turn-back time of 2pm. From considerable experience (none pleasant) I knew route finding is all important on Sgurr Dubh Mor - the correct way would be reasonable, the wrong almost impossible. Without clear visibility it would be pointless to continue.

Then something wonderful happened - suddenly the cloud broke to reveal the Cuillin in all its splendour in full winter coat, jagged white peaks against a pale blue sky. The Inaccessible Pinnacle, alone, was bereft of snow, its narrow grey fin clinging precariously to the white slopes of Sgurr Dearg.



Sgurr Alasdair and the Inaccessible Pinnacle from Sgurr Dubh an Da Bheinn

The descent to beneath Sgurr Dubh Mor was surprising easy on good firm snow, and we roped up to contour round the south of the pinnacles. Slightly south of the main crest, Roger started upwards. Three belays took us to the summit ridge, the most difficult obstacle being an icy, acutely-angled slab covered thinly with snow (Grade II). It was 2.15pm. Belayed from the summit cairn, brimming with new-found confidence I walked straight across the final narrow ridge, only to realise on the way back that my footprints were supported by thin air! The view was stunning. The clarity of the blue sky sharpened the snow-covered peaks of the Cuillins and deepened the blue water of Loch Scavaig. The descent was not as bad as expected, as I found it easier to lower/slide myself down that haul myself up. The sun, now to the west, reflected pink in the snow, the evening shadows exaggerating every scar on Sgurr nan Eag - an Alpenglow in Scotland!!!! As we safely descended past the difficult slab and into the darkness, the land strangely quietened by winter's frozen grip, we realised we had been privy to something very special. Winter at its very best.

An Ascent of the Bortelhorn in the Simplon Region of Switzerland

Callum Hetherington

The Bortelhorn (3,194m) lies to the south of the river Rhône, just beyond the historic town of Brig in Kanton Wallis, Switzerland. The mountain is well seen from the right hand side of the main-line trains as they sweep down from the north towards Brig on their way to Italy via the Simplon tunnel. It is a distinctive feature, with its classical conical shape and the permanent snowfield on its western face. In the period 1997-2000 I spent four summer field seasons working under its shadow in connection with a project organised by the University of Basel's Department of Mineralogy and Petrology. I resolved to attempt an ascent of the peak before I left the district for the last time in September 2000.

The mountain is in the Simplon Region and sits astride the Swiss/Italian border. In geological terms, it lies in the Berisal Complex, a Lower Penninic nappes of the so-called Lepontine dome in the central Alps. Other peaks in the area include the nearby Wasenhorn (3,245m) and Monte Leone (3,553m).

The simplest route starts from the small church in the village of Berisal (1,524m), just above the impressive new Ganterbrücke, the bridge that takes the main road across the Ganter valley on its way to Italy via the Simplon Pass. Fortunately, on the morning of my planned expedition I had already accounted for some 600m of the climbing, having stayed overnight at the Bortelhütte (2,113m). This is a splendid hut belonging to the Simplon Ski Club. It is open and wardened for the provision of food and accommodation from July until early October. Its location is not as dramatic as some of the better known alpine establishments, but it offers a spectacular view down the Rhône valley to Les Diablerets, and the Bortelkaffee with the usual choice of additives is pretty good too.

I set off from the hut at 7am in cool, clear conditions and climbed quickly to the bottom of the glacier (2,740m) where I had arranged to meet some fellow climbers who had managed to leave the hut rather earlier than I did. Like many other alpine glaciers, the Bortel glacier has receded significantly even in the four years I was working in the area. Nonetheless it still offered an ascent of some 250m over hard packed snow and ice, with a gradient that increased rapidly as we approached the cleft in the rock that gives access to the south ridge of the mountain.

After stepping onto the ridge (2,986m) I was struck by two thoughts: this ridge is at least as steep and narrow as I expected it to be; but, if the views are as good as this below the summit, we cannot give up now.



Callum on the Summit of the Bortelhorn, with the Breithorn in the Distance

It was now approaching 9.30am, and the sun was beginning to warm the rock. My companions and I remained roped as we began our scramble up the ridge. Technically it was not difficult, but the exposure was formidable and the gaping void on each side was reminder that a mistake could prove costly.

In the Alps it is possible to gain height rapidly, and within an hour we were 10m or so below the northern tip of the summit peak. With one final scramble we emerged onto a surprisingly wide area and a stroll of some 50m took us to the top where we marvelled at the fantastic Alpine scene. The Bortelhorn is a relatively isolated peak that affords magnificent views all around. In the foreground are the lush meadows of the Alpe Veglia National Park, the stunning northern approaches and glaciers of Monte Leone, and the route of the high level Saflischpass which links the lower Ganter Valley to the remote Binn Valley. Further afield to the north, the Aletschgletscher with the Eiger, Jungfrau and Mönch dominate the scene, and to the east the high glacier plateau of the Gotthard Massif is visible. The hills to the south fall away towards to the Po Plains and the road to Milan, while to the west, there are the high mountains of the Simplon, Zermatt and Saas regions.

We signed the Gipfelbuch and, after a lunch of Walliser cheese and dried meats washed down with the traditional swig of schnapps, it was soon time to retrace our steps down the ridge and over the snowfields. The snow had softened in the morning sun and proved ideal for practising our glissading

techniques. From the bottom a good track provided a simple descent to the hut.

Here I met with some old acquaintances from the world of crystal hunting, the so-called Strahlers. We enjoyed a fine Aperero, discussing the day's activities and examining their latest finds. With time ticking on I packed my bag, for I had to depart east along the Simplon Höhenweg to Rosswald, which was to be the starting point for the next day's expedition to the village of Binn via the Saflischpass. But not before an excellent dinner, a little local wine and a view of one of the most spectacular Alpine sunsets I have seen. All together it had been a grand day.

The Moonlit Mountain

A mixture of dreams, moonlight, mountains and reality

Roaming along a broken path
I might never reach its end
Astride the silvery mountain top
Where moon and mountain blend,
Shadowed only by sweeping clouds
Breaking my thoughts again.

This moonlit path across the tops
Showing straight and clear
A way for me to follow on
With stars to let me steer,
The path's an endless way it seems
And the distance bright and clear.

Oh for a life upon these tops
In a land of thoughts and dreams,
Moonlit night, and soft wind's touch
My senses sharp and keen,

They fade, I rouse, I waken up,
Beneath my nice warm down,
Ah well, get on yer breeks and polish yer sheen
It's time to go to town !

Robbie Middleton

April 2004

Carry On Up the Kingie
A Sequel to *Carry On Up the Khyber*'
Gordon Stalker

Traditional Cairngorm Club overnight meets seem to be a thing of the past, but a weekend meet was arranged by Derek Beverley for the Aberdeen Holiday weekend of the 5th - 7th July 2002 at Camban bothy, West Glen Affric. The record low attendance (I maintain that two is the minimum number for a meet, as if you turn up on your own there is nobody to meet with!) made it easy to change the venue to Kinbreack bothy in Glen Kingie. After all, there was nobody else to consult.

The drive along the Loch Arkaig switchback road on Friday evening was in glorious sunshine, which persisted during the two-hour walk in to the bothy, where we found some Paisley 'buddies' already in residence, drinking cans of Tennant's Super Lager.



Walking in to Kinbreack

Kinbreack is unusual in that the accommodation is upstairs only, above what may have been the byre. There is a fireplace and the place is light and airy due to perspex panels in the roof. The original house nearby is in ruins and there is a third small building, possibly an icehouse. The Rev A.R.G. Burn²

mentions Kinbreack in his diary on 6th January 1920: "The house was ruinous with no doors that would shut, no window frames or glass. It's a very draughty room and most uncomfy." So nothing has changed very much in the last 80 or so years!

An early start was made on Saturday 6th July by the two of us, and after fording the Kingie a pleasant ascent of Sgùrr Mor was had, on an excellent stalker's path with superb views of Sgùrr na Ciche. The good weather lasted as far as the Corbett, Sgùrr an Fhuarain, between Sgùrr Mor and Gairich, when the usual Loch Quoich squalls started. Gairich was just a blur of hairpin bends on the stalker's path, mist and rain. After a rapid descent, the Kingie was again forded and the bothy regained before the weather really deteriorated. I was glad to have a roof over my head and not be camping.

A pleasant evening ensued with our Paisley 'buddies', the conversation at one point centring on what was the most unusual item to be carried up a hill in mistake for a packed lunch. They claimed a club member who had taken a raw salmon in place of his lunch. This compares well with a senior Cairngorm Club member, who is alleged to have taken his dirty laundry up the hill!

We walked out from Kinbreack on Sunday morning and after an afternoon in the fleshpots of Spean Bridge and Fort Augustus, Derek decided to return to Aberdeen. I hung on for another day and was rewarded with a wet day on Sgurr a' Mhaoraich (Loch Quoich) but a good view of the island-studded upper reaches of Loch Hourn was seen from the summit. As usual, I had left my camera in the car, as the weather was so bad when I set out.

Such weekends in the hills leave great memories. Today's younger generation ought to tear themselves away from their computers and climbing ropes and get in some proper mountaineering for a change. Hope to see some of you in a bothy next year!

Notes

1. See the *Cairngorm Club Journal* Volume 21, Number 106, 2001, p.40.
2. Allan, E.A., *Burn on the Hill*, Bidean Books, Beaulieu, 1995.

Burns' Night at Muir **Garry Wardrope and Fiona Sutherland**

The now traditional January Weekend Burns' Night Meets at Muir are reported later in the Club's Proceedings. These pieces were part of the entertainment in 2004.

The Toast to the Lassies

Garry Wardrope

I was intrigued when Fred asked me to propose the toast to the lassies, as here am I, three years separated and wondering what cost the divorce. I would have done well to heed Burns' (possibly apocryphal? Ed.) words:

*The lover may sparkle and glow,
Approaching his bonnie bit thing:
But marriage will soon let him know
He's gotten-a buskit up naething.*

However marriage isn't a bad thing for everybody, several Club members even make a living from it. And as has been said, marriage is the number one cause of divorce; statistically 100% of all divorces started with marriage!

You might be aware that I work in IT, so I thought I'd try logging a call to the Helpdesk to see if they could offer me any assistance. This is what I told them:

I have a problem. It all started a long time ago when I upgraded to Girlfriend 1.0 from Drinking Mates 4.2, which I'd been using for years without any trouble. However, there are apparently conflicts between these two products and the only solution was to try and run Girlfriend 1.0 with the sound turned off. To make matters worse, Girlfriend 1.0 is incompatible with several other applications, such as Lads Night Out 3.1, Munroes 2.83 and Ceilidh 6.2. Successive versions of Girlfriend proved no better. A shareware program, Party Girl 2.1, which I tried, had many bugs and left a nasty virus in my system, forcing me to shut down completely for several weeks. Eventually I tried to run Girlfriend 1.2 and Girlfriend 1.0 at the same time, only to discover that when these two systems detected each other they caused severe damage to my hardware.

I then upgraded to Fiancée 1.0 only to discover that this product soon had to be upgraded further to Wife 1.0. Whilst Wife 1.0 tended to use up all my available resources, it did come bundled with FreeSex Plus and Cleanhouse2000, although these have now stopped working. Shortly after this

upgrade I found that Wife 1.0 can be very unstable and costly to run. For example, any mistakes I make are automatically stored in Wife 1.0's memory and cannot be deleted, and they then resurface months later when I have forgotten about them. Wife 1.0 also has an automatic Diary Explorer and e-mail filter, and can, without warning, launch Photo-strop and Whinge-zip! These latter products have no help files and I have to try and guess what the problem is. Additional costly problems are that Wife 1.0 needs updating regularly, requiring Shoe Shop Browser for new attachments and Hairstyle Express which needs to be reinstalled every other week. Wife 1.0 can also spawn unpredictable child processes that further drain my resources.

It also conflicted with some of the new games I wanted to try out, warning me that they were an illegal operation. I have also discovered that when Wife 1.0 attaches itself to my Audi TT hard drive it often crashes or runs the system dry. Wife 1.0 also comes with a rather annoying pop-up called Mother-In-Law, which can't be turned off.

I have recently been advised that I should uninstall Wife 1.0 but will have to be very careful as this can also delete all my money files, and will require a total rebuild of Finances3 along with replacing my systems housing. Once this has been done I can then install Wife 2.0 but am having difficulty locating the version of this product that comes bundled with NiceLooks1 and OwnHouse4. Can you help me find this?

Of course we lads do greatly appreciate you lassies, for all you do for us, and for putting up with us. It's a pleasure to be here with you. I'd like to finish with this piece that I think is appropriate for tonight by Jim Rothschl:

I've never seen a prettier sight
 Than the lassies gathered here tonight,
 Rabbie would agree I know
 And in better words would tell you so,
 If I could reach back o'er the years
 And snatch Rabbie here among my peers,
 A sweet word to each lass he'd say
 And sweep all their hearts away.

Gentlemen, be upstanding. To the Lassies!

The Reply

Fiona Sutherland

With apologies to Rabbie B,
He was a far better poet than me,
I'll attempt to read this little verse
But bear in mind it could be worse!

Well, thank you Garry for your little ditty,
But I have to say it was really quite sh... disappointing
Your comments were not quite PC,
Rabbie was much more flattering than thee.

Us lassies are not in the least bit feart,
We'll keep up with you loons, even without a beard!
We've learned to tie knots, clip in and belay,
We can even drink pints, though we'd rather not pay!

We're happy to bivvi or bothy or camp,
As long as the weather disnae get too damp!
We can be first to the top o' a mountain, you'll see,
And still be back in time to cook the tea!

We've broken fingernails and our mascara's run,
But we've never said a word to spoil the fun.
Just ask us to tie a quick figure of eight
And we wouldnae need tae hesitate.

A bowline, a fisherman's or even clove hitch,
Ach, we've learned all that on a single pitch.
With our rucksack, compass and a map
There's not one of us you could call a sap!

Us lassies have got great style and form,
But of course, we're all fae Club Cairngorm!
Garry, you simply made us all smile,
But you loons will never crampon our style.

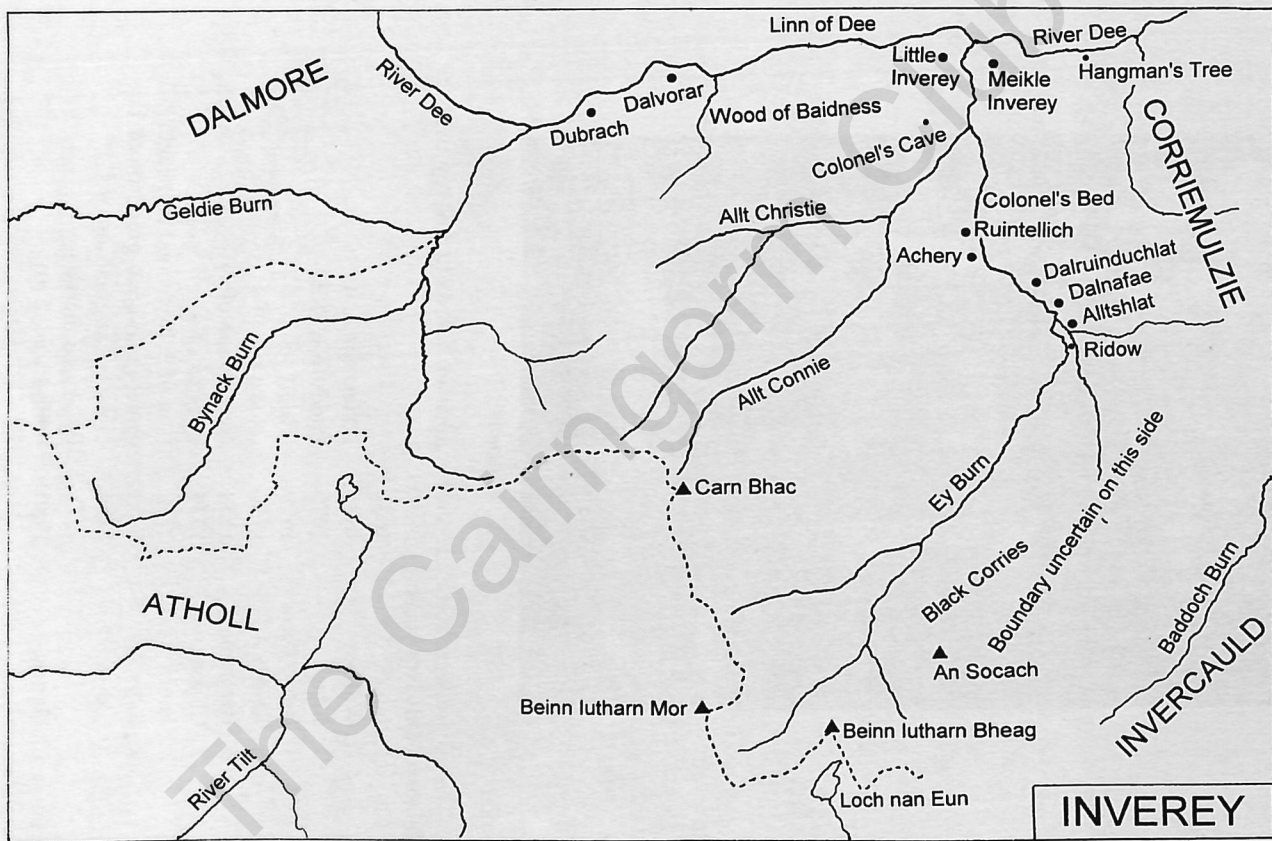
We appreciate all that you do for us,
You put up with our quirks and you never fuss,
So from all the fair lassies in the Cairngorm Club
Here's to you - now let's go doon the pub!

Inverey and the Farquharsons

Graham Ewan

The Inverey Estate was quite large. The northern boundary, as described in the Charter granted in 1707, started at the Inver or mouth of the Ey and followed the River Dee westwards as far as its junction with the Geldie. On the west the boundary followed the Geldie as far as its junction with the Bynack Burn and from there followed the watershed between the Bynack Burn and the Geldie. On the south it followed the line of the present County Boundary as far as the headwaters of the Ey. The eastern boundary is not described. It is possible that it included the whole of the Glen Ey catchment area, but the exact line is not known. There is, however, a possibility that parts of Glen Ey belonged to the neighbouring small estate of Corriemulzie and Craggan, which used to have their shieling grounds where the farms of Dalruinduchlat, Dalnafae and Alltshlat were later to be established (i.e. the area around the Piper's Wood). It is interesting to note that as late as the 1841 census these farms were listed along with Corriemulzie, while those on the west side of the Ey are listed along with Inverey. However, the charter granted to Inverey in 1707 mentions these grounds as belonging to the Inverey Estate. The water is muddied further when one reads a charter granted in 1632 to Alister Mackenzie in the estate of Corriemulzie and Craggan, where these pasturages are described as belonging to him. The tenants of Coldrach in Glen Clunie, which belonged to Invercauld, also had a right of shieling in Glen Ey in the area called the Black Corries (the west side of An Socach). In this case there seems no doubt that, despite these shieling rights, this area definitely belonged to Inverey. There is also a difficulty about the eastern boundary in the immediate area of Inverey itself. The area so far described would exclude the village of Meikle Inverey, but it must have been part of the estate. We can only assume that the boundary lay somewhat east of this at that point.

The Estate of Inverey was, at the start of its known history, in the hands of the Lamonts. Around 1620 the Lamonts, along with members of Clan Chattan, conducted a major raid down Deeside and laid waste much of Glen Gairn, Tullich and Glen Muick. Following this raid, the Farquharsons moved against Lamont, who was arrested and hanged from the so-called Hangman's Tree which still stands, although now in a decrepit state, just west of Mar Lodge Bridge. Whether anyone else has ever been hanged from this tree, I do not know. It was following this event that the first Farquharson Laird was installed in Inverey.





Hangman's Tree

There were to be eleven Farquharson Lairds in Inverey over the next hundred and sixty years:

- | | | |
|--------------------|------|----------------------------------------------------|
| 1. James | 1632 | |
| 2. William | 1635 | (eldest son of 1) |
| 3. John | 1670 | (eldest son of 2) |
| 4. Peter (Patrick) | 1699 | (eldest son of 3) |
| 5. Joseph | 1737 | (eldest son of 4) |
| 6. Benjamin | 1738 | (second son of 4) |
| 7. Charles | 1739 | (brother of 4) |
| 8. James | 1750 | (son of 3, by second marriage) |
| 9. John | 1753 | (great-great-great-grandson of 1) |
| 10. Alexander | 1754 | (great-great-grandson of 1,
by second marriage) |
| 11. James | 1780 | (eldest son of 10) |

It would seem that James, the first Laird, was first installed in Inverey in 1622 as a tenant, but did not receive the feu right until 1632. The dates of entry into the estate given above are not necessarily the dates of the death of the previous owner. Sometimes the estate was made over to the eldest son before the death of the father. James, 1st of Inverey, for example, lived until at least 1664, although he had made over the Inverey estate to his son 32 years earlier.

The Feu Superior was of course the Earl of Mar until the 1715 uprising, after which the Superiority was confiscated by the Government. Lord Erskine of Grange, the Earl of Mar's brother, and his friend Lord Erskine of Dun were later allowed to buy it back for a knock-down price, and administered it in trust for Thomas Lord Erskine (the Earl of Mar's son). However the Earl of Mar had incurred enormous debts as a result of the uprising in 1715 and these had to be repaid. In order to achieve this, the Superiorities of Inverey and most of the other Upper Deeside estates were sold to Lord Braco (later the Earl of Fife) in 1735. While the Farquharsons had most of the privileges of owning the estate for a yearly payment of £25 Scots, they also had to perform various services for the Superior. These included attendance at any district courts that the Superior might arrange, personal attendance with dogs and hounds at all huntings, and military service if required. The naturally growing fir woods and the deer and roe remained the property of the Superior. The Farquharsons and their tenants nevertheless had the right to a certain amount of servitude timber from the fir woods, such as they required for their buildings. The tenants had to apply for this through their Laird.

The old Charters laid down that the succession in the Estate was to be strictly to the nearest male heir. In the early years it would appear that the Farquharsons of Inverey prospered. As the years went by, other estates were acquired: Tullich in 1638, Balmoral in 1642 and Corriemulzie in 1660. They also had interests in Easter Micras and elsewhere. All these acquisitions passed on from father to son as planned until 1738 when Peter's eldest son Joseph died unmarried and so the estate passed to his brother Benjamin, who died the following year, also unmarried. The estate then passed on to Charles, Peter's brother, who had already acquired in 1731 the Barony of Auchlossan.

When Charles died in 1750, also unmarried, the estate passed to his half-brother James. However, in 1753 the two daughters of Peter, Emilia and Margaret, mounted a legal challenge to his right to the estate. During the process both sisters died, shortly followed by James himself. The case was carried on by Patrick Mearns and Charles Grant, sons of the deceased sisters, but in the end their claim was rejected by the Lords of Session of Scotland on 11th February 1756. The estate had meantime passed to John, James's second-cousin-once-removed, but he died a short time thereafter, without having had time to make up his titles, and the estate passed on to Alexander Farquharson of Auchindryne, a great-grandson of James (1st Laird) by his second marriage.

Unlike all the previous Lairds, Alexander was a catholic, and although he styled himself 'of Inverey' he lived most of his time in Balmoral until the estate passed on to his eldest son James in 1780.

The Farquharsons of Inverey, although protestant, were always staunchly Jacobite and took an active part in all the main uprisings. A brief summary of their activities follows.

Colonel William Farquharson of Inverey took part in the campaigns of Montrose in 1645, participating in the Battle of Alford on the 2nd of July and the Battle of Kilsyth on 15th of August. It is likely that Inverey commanded the main rebel battle-group on both these occasions. He was in action again in April 1646, when along with Alexander Irvine of Drum they beat up some government quarters at Murtle. He also took part in the storming of Aberdeen the following month. In May 1664, along with others from Upper Deeside and Donside (under the Earl of Mar), he took part in a raid on Aberdeen to demolish the cruives which had been erected across the River Don, injuring the fishing in the upper part of the river. It is said that 2,500 men took part. In the court hearing which followed, it being shown that the construction of the cruives had contravened several Acts of Parliament, the Lords took the view that Mar and his associates had acted with some justification and so absolved them.

His son, John, perhaps better known as the 'Black Colonel', took part in Dundee's insurrection in 1689. He was probably not present at the Battle of Killiecrankie, but prior to that a party of Farquharsons led by him burned down Braemar Castle to prevent its use by Government troops. He in turn had his own castle in Inverey burned down after the rebellion failed, but escaped capture by hiding in the gorge of Glen Ey at the spot now known as the Colonel's Bed. High up on Creag a Chait, on the Ordnance Survey Pathfinder series, you will find the words Colonel's Cave. A detailed search of the crags in this area failed to find any trace of a cave, but there may have been one in past times. It is said that from this spot the Black Colonel watched while his castle burned.

In 1715, Peter Farquharson, the Black Colonel's son, was a colonel in the Earl of Mar's Regiment. He was presumably present at the Battle of Sherriffmuir and afterwards fled to France where he remained until the Act of Indemnity was passed. He narrowly escaped having his estate forfeited, because his name had been wrongly inserted in the Act of Attainder as Alexander Farquharson of Inverey.

Charles Farquharson, 7th Laird and brother of Peter above, did not take part in the 1745 uprising (although he had accompanied his brother in 1715), but there is no doubt that a number of his tenants did, joining up with Farquharson of Monaltrie's regiment. The most famous of these was Peter Grant of Dubrach, who was promoted to sergeant following the Battle of Prestonpans. He was captured after the Battle of Culloden and taken prisoner

to Carlisle. He managed to make his escape from there and returned to the Braemar area, where he died in 1824 at the age of 110. He is buried in Braemar churchyard next to the Farquharson mausoleum.

Ironically, Dubrach was taken over as an outpost for government troops who were stationed there for some years thereafter. Dubrach, of course, is strategically situated at the junction of the routes north through the Lairig Ghru, south and west to Glen Tilt and Glenfeshie, and east along the Dee valley. The detachment consisted of a sergeant, a corporal and twelve men. Their duties were to patrol north as far as Glen Geusachan, east as far as Glen Lui, west along Glen Geldie, and south along Glen Tilt. At fixed points along these routes they would meet up with patrols from military outposts elsewhere.

The Farquharsons in Inverey became involved in a number of no doubt expensive court cases to settle arguments with neighbouring estate owners. The first such was in 1723 when Kenneth Mackenzie of Dalmore took action against Peter Farquharson of Inverey. There were various points at issue, but the main ones were concerned with the new ploughed lands in Glen Ey, which had once been the shieling ground of the tenants of Corriemulzie. Kenneth Mackenzie claimed that the tenants there should be thirled to his mill at Dalmore in the same way as Inverey's tenants in Corriemulzie were. He also claimed that "his tenants in Craggan were in use to pasture their cattle in Rieluchlat and Altalat" i.e. where the new ploughed lands were. I do not know the outcome of the case.

A further case took place in 1743 between Charles Farquharson and Lord Braco in which there were two main points at issue. The first concerned a bulwark that Lord Braco had erected in the Dee at the west end of the Haugh of Dalmore, which Farquharson claimed was diverting the river on to his land to its injury. The second was an argument about rights of way in the vicinity of Dalmore House (Mar Lodge). It appears that the main route eastward from Inverey at that time had been to cross the Dee by a ford called the Puintoul and go eastwards from there past the front door of Dalmore House. Lord Braco, in an effort to provide some privacy around the House had blocked off the entrance to the ford. He wanted people to use a road down the south side of the Dee, but most of the witnesses stated that this was an exceedingly bad road and not nearly as good as the one on the north side of the water. During the case it was claimed that Lord Braco had actually removed the bulwark, but witnesses for the Inverey side said that the foundations remained and were causing just as much damage as the bulwark itself. Again it is not clear what the outcome of this case was.

In both of the above cases there was a further argument concerning the location of the buildings of Inverey's tenants in Drumcraggan, which were probably built on land belonging to Dalmore. This really is part of Corriemulzie, not Inverey, but of course the Farquharsons were the owners of Corriemulzie as well by this time. In this case we know that the outcome must

have been favourable to Inverey, as the matter was not finally settled until 1778.

There is little information about the tenants on the estate during the time of the Farquharsons. They lived in fire houses, which were small buildings with low dry-stone walls and a thatched roof. There was no fireplace, the fire being in the middle of the floor, and the smoke simply escaping through a hole in the roof. There is no doubt that they were all subsistence farmers keeping cattle and growing oats, bere and kale on small patches of arable land. Some sheep and goats were also kept. They worked the land on the old run-rig system, whereby each tenant had narrow strips of land scattered about over a wide area. The kale was grown in kale-yards, which were usually small in area surrounded by a dry-stone dyke. These were the only enclosures. The cattle wandered about the available pasture accompanied by a herd, usually a young boy, whose job it was to make sure they did not stray on to prohibited areas. The cattle were taken to summer shielings in the Glens of Connie and Christie during the summer months. It is perhaps likely that when the Farquharsons first took over Inverey the only settlement on the estate was in the immediate area around Inverey itself. As the years went by, population pressure led to the expansion up Glen Dee to Dalvorar and Dubrach and into Glen Ey, first to Ruintellich and Achery and later to Dalruinduchlat, Dalnafae and Alltshlat. There is evidence of this in the charter granted to Peter Farquharson in 1707, where reference is made to the town and lands of Achery, while Dalruinduchlat and Dalnafae are still referred to as shieling grounds, although they had almost certainly become permanent settlements by that time.

The 1692 Poll Book records eight families living in Glen Ey, eight in Meikle Inverey and thirteen in Little Inverey, a total of twenty-nine in all. There is no mention of Dalvorar and Dubrach, but it is possible that they were linked in with Little Inverey. Dubrach is certainly mentioned in the same memo to the Earl of Mar complaining about encroachments on to the shielings, as were the new ploughed lands of Dalruinduchlat, Dalnafae and Alltshlat.

Father Charles Farquharson (brother of Alexander Farquharson, 10th Laird) conducted a survey of the population in the parish. Unfortunately the exact date is not known, but it must have been some time in the mid-1700s. He lists seven families in Glen Ey, twelve in Inverey and five in Glen Dee, a total of twenty-four. Of these, twenty were catholic and only four were protestant.

The earliest Rental List to have survived is that of 1785, the date of the purchase of the estate by the Earl of Fife. Here there are seven tenants listed in Glen Ey, twelve in Meikle Inverey, eight in Little Inverey and two in Glen Dee, a total of twenty-nine.

It seems strange that there should only have been twelve families living in Inverey at the time of Father Farquharson's survey, when there were twenty-one in 1692 and twenty in 1785. In his lists he gives the name of the head of the family if they were catholic, but only gives the number of protestant families

at the end of each list as a footnote. In the case of Inverey the footnote reads: "Only one whole protestant familie." I suspect that he has missed out some families who were partly protestant and partly catholic.

On 21st August 1725 all the heritors in the Lordship of Mar were summoned to a court convened by Lords Grange and Dun and held at Castletoun of Braemar. At this court an Act for the Preservation of the Fir Woods was made and enacted. Its main points were that no-one was to be allowed to cut and carry away any timber, except servitude timber, which could only be cut in June in the presence of the baillie or forester expressly appointed to oversee this. There were also severe restrictions in the use of servitude timber. It could only be used in the construction of buildings, and its use for fencing or any other purpose was expressly forbidden. Any muirburn was to take place between Michaelmas and the end of March, and there was to be no muirburn within 300 Scotch ells of any old or young fir trees. When Lord Braco bought the Superiority of the Estate in 1735, he lost no time in trying to enforce the terms of the above Act to stop what he called the gross abuses that were taking place in his fir woods. The people of Inverey had been in the habit of digging up the roots of old trees and using them as firewood. Even this apparently harmless activity was to be stopped. And of course there was to be no hunting of deer or roe. Proclamations to this effect were made from time to time at the church doors of Kindrochit and Crathie immediately after the dismissing of the congregation.

There was one substantial fir wood on the Inverey Estate. It covered the face of the hill opposite Little Inverey and extended westwards to beyond the Linn of Dee, and was called the Wood of Baidness. As was the case in neighbouring estates, Lord Braco was keen to exploit his fir woods for his own profit. Some of the wood was cut on his own account and manufactured in his sawmill at Delnabord, which was just across the river from Muir. Some of the trees were sold to wood merchants: for example in 1753 six hundred trees in Baidness were sold to a merchant called John Farquhar. Two letters survive from tenants of Inverey who had been caught cutting wood in Baidness by Lord Braco's forester. They agreed to his Lordship's terms that they would each pay the forester six pence for the return of their axes, and being bound not to be found in the like transgression, under the penalty on one pound sterling.

In 1778 Alexander Farquharson agreed to lease the hill opposite to Mar Lodge to the Earl of Fife, who wanted to plant trees there to embellish the view from Mar Lodge. An interesting clause in the agreement required the Earl to enclose the area with a sufficient stone dyke six quarters high. There was to be no poinding of any cattle belonging to Inverey's tenants, which might happen to stray into the area. The road from Corriemulzie to Inverey was to remain open and not to be altered in any way. For this the Earl was to pay £35 grassum entry money and 10/- per year rent. Any birch trees growing within the enclosed area

were to become the property of the Earl. Another part of the agreement was that Alexander Farquharson would renounce his right and that of his tenants to servitude timber from the Earl of Fife's fir woods in Inverey. In return the Earl disposed to him the fir woods on the estate of Balmoral and also the right to hunt deer and roe on Balmoral.

Long before the estate passed to James, 11th Laird, in 1780, the Farquharsons were having serious financial difficulties. The burdens passed on by previous military adventures and a number of very expensive court cases had taken their toll. In fact in 1775 a John Mackenzie of Delvin acquired temporary right over Inverey and Corriemulzie, but this was restored to Alexander Farquharson in 1777. The Earl of Fife had long wanted to purchase the Inverey Estate, probably to give him more control over the tenants thereof, whom he frequently accused of poaching and other abuses. That this was still a problem in the 1780s is illustrated by the two events described below.

On 17th July 1781 a court was held at Mill of Lawsie in an attempt to find out who had started a fire in the wood of Baidness in June 1780. This fire burned some birch wood belonging to Inverey and some fir wood belonging to the Earl of Fife. Finlay McIntosh, a tenant in Inverey, described the area where the fire took place as part of the outshot and daily pasturage of his possession. John Grant, another tenant, described it as part of the common pasturage. All the tenants of Little Inverey were summoned to give evidence, but none had any to offer save the fact that some had heard that a Donald Grant alias Keir was responsible. Nevertheless, on the strength of this a warrant was issued for the arrest of the said Donald Grant.

On the 28th Day of October 1782, Peter Downie in Inverey and James Fraser also in Inverey were seen in the Forest of Derrerray (in Glen Lui), shooting with guns and slaying deer and roe. On the 9th December 1783, Alexander Stuart Esq. of Edinglassie, Justice of the Peace in the County of Aberdeen, granted a warrant for the arrest of the two people so accused, with the recommendation that the constable executing the said warrant should be accompanied by a corporal and four soldiers from the Braemar Barracks.

In 1785 a further attempt was made by the Earl of Fife to put an end to these practices. The tenants of Inverey were summoned to take an oath to obey the game laws and the laws for the preservation of woods. These seem to have been extended since previous attempts. For example there was to be no cutting of birchwood, alder, thorns or holly, when previously only fir wood was mentioned. The people of Inverey were prohibited from carrying guns, and no dogs were to be allowed within the confines of the forest. Hares, partridges, heath fowl and black game were added to prohibited list for hunting. The tenants also had to obey the laws for shieling and must go to their shielings no later than 26th May and remain there until the 26th August.

When James inherited in 1780 and faced the prospect that he would have

to sell the estate, he was determined that it would not be to the Earl of Fife. He was well aware of the fact that the Earl was interested in buying it, but relations between the two families had seldom been easy. However the Earl of Fife eventually accomplished the purchase in 1786 by using an intermediary to buy the estate and then sell it on to him. This was a George Robinson, described as a Writer to the Signet in Edinburgh, who paid the sum of £8,400 sterling with interest thereof from the term of Whitsunday 1785. The eventual total came to £8,820 but these figures include not only the sale of the Inverey Estate but the Estates of Corriemulzie and Auchindryne also. With this event ends the history of the Farquharsons of Inverey, at least as far as Inverey Estate is concerned.

Most of the information on which this article is based derives from the Duff House Papers, which are held in the Special Libraries and Archives of the University of Aberdeen, and also from some private Mar Estate Papers kindly lent to me by Captain Nicolson

Sue's Poem

This is a strange little poem written in ten minutes thirty years ago while crossing an ocean. As I reach my 60th birthday, I find it more than a little poignant. Sue was an assistant cook on board our ship. She was a nice person with a very simple outlook and it was her 21st birthday. There was no chance for any of us to go shopping for presents and I asked her what she would like for her birthday. She smiled and asked me to write a poem about an old man sitting beside a stream thinking about his life. I have no idea from whence in Sue's soul came this request, and I have no idea where it popped out from in mine ! Anyway, she liked it.

I dreamt I was a lonely man
beside a rushing stream
below a hill beneath the sky
to sit and think and dream,
to dream of youth as it ran away
on a path as long as endless day
a part of life's long scheme

I was young with health and love
the world to share my life in,
to find the one to share it with
was all of my ambition.

I looked, I found in every way
the love that I was seeking
in people, places, flowers and faces
in every heart that's broken,

A wing of hope comes forward then
to carry the world along
to fill the hearts and dry the tears
caused by love that's gone,
and now I'm old and memories fade
and all that stays is that I long
for youth to turn to me again
and sing its own sweet song.

Robbie Middleton

September 1974

Far Away and Long Ago

Lydia Thomson

This is the diary of a visit to the Drakensberg Mountains in southern Africa in 1981. The Drakensberg, or in their Zulu name Quathlamba, Barrier of Spears, lie on the boundary between the South African state of Natal, and the tiny independent country of Lesotho. In the most spectacular central section, a sixty-mile escarpment facing north-east rises steeply from the plains of Natal (at 4,000ft) to jagged peaks of around 11,500ft. The escarpment is backed by a high grassland plateau at around 10,000ft, sloping gently to the south-west, and often snow-covered in the southern winter. Anyone interested in learning more about mountaineering in the region should seek out the classic *Barrier of Spears* by R. O. Pearse. On this five-day trip in December more than twenty years ago, my husband Ken and I joined two South African friends, Paul and Janet Fatti. Paul is a distinguished climber and mountaineer, who some years later became President of the Mountain Club of South Africa.

Day 1 December 27th 1981

We left Johannesburg on the night train, gazing enviously at the lamp-lit windows of the luxurious Blue Train parked beside us, before retiring to our more basic couchettes. I woke with a jolt at 4.30am to find we had stopped at an exceedingly anonymous station. Was it Estcourt? Eventually a dour railwayman divulged that it was Ladysmith. Twenty minutes later, just on time, we steamed into another station and were about to leap out, only to discover that the train was late, and we still weren't there yet. Finally at about 5.30 we made it to the arms of the welcoming Fattis and tea and rusks in their car as we drove off to the mountains. There was lowish cloud and drizzle (just like Scotland!) as we set off, first over metalled roads, then on red damp tracks.

After some inspired navigation we reached Isandlwana police station at about 7.00am. There was no sign of life, save a few Africans waiting patiently under the dripping hedge, and so we drove a little further until we were faced by a semi-impassable section of road. The caravan unloaded by the trackside, gourmet meals were divided out, and the three of us set off while Paul took the car back to the police station. At first we took tracks past little groups of inkpot huts standing on the bluffs above a wide valley - all neatly thatched, and a few bothy-shaped. All disgorged smiling children, asking for sweets. We passed the last shop, a corrugated iron shack, and dropped down to cross the Thonyeland river, knee-deep, following two African ladies with sundry cauldrons, packs of potatoes etc. on their heads. They were concerned to help us, but found it difficult to understand why Ken carried my pack across! Paul's giant pack

finally hove into sight, as we enjoyed the long slow walk following paths along the Mnweni river, past spectacular pink candelabra flowers, and wild arum lilies, moving a hundred feet or so above the river as it got gorgey. At one time we were overtaken by a running African - these valleys had a reputation for feuding tribesmen, linked to the problems reported around Durban.

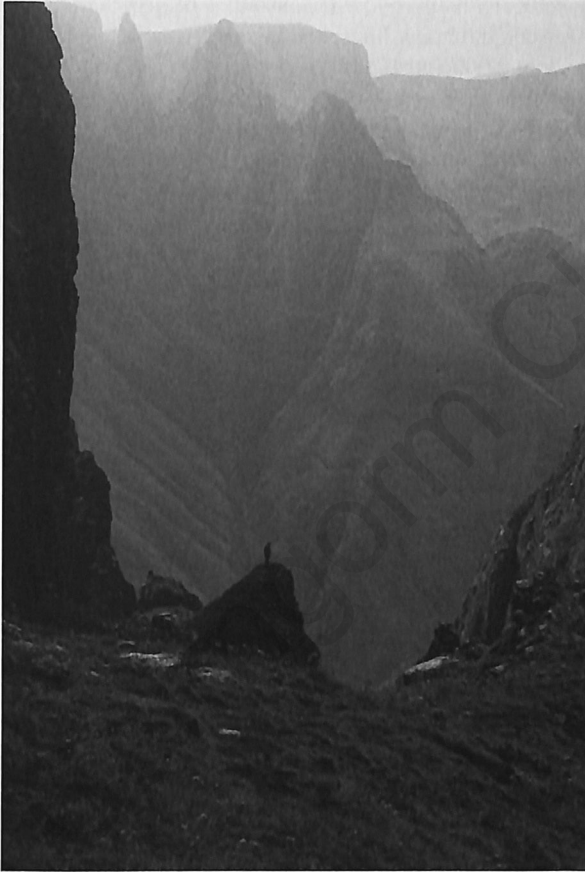
Everywhere there were little groups of huts, six or so, some decorated with black and white spears forming a sort of stockade. Where there were some small flat plots beside the river, maize was being grown - at this season only tiny seedlings. Lunch by the river - fresh tomatoes and cucumber, though the avocado pears remained stubbornly hard. Then on along the stream, past the last kraal, the valley sides steepening and the path quite high up. Cuckoos were calling, and African ladies with piles of fire wood on their heads were going home on the other side of the valley. The little footpaths of beaten earth - like ones through English fields - are through trading-routes, and continue for miles. As we rose higher, the grassland flowers became more spectacular - orchids, hellebores and lots of others that I couldn't even guess the families. Finally we dropped down through shrubby thickets and boulder hopped across the still quite large river, walking upstream on shingle and boulders a little, to camp on a grassy river-bank by large rocky pools, at approximately 4,900ft. While we cooked our fresh steaks, the mist drifted lower and lower, and we retired to the tents in a steady drizzle, with cicadas going off like burglar alarms all around.

Day 2 December 28th

We woke to blue skies, and the mist replaced by towering yellow rock walls cutting off the head of the valley, with complex valley systems wriggling steeply up between them! After porridge for breakfast, and swims for some, we rediscovered the path on verdant slopes dotted with trees - just like an orchard - and progressed further up the Mnweni, passing the junction of the Setene, where we saw our first cycad, and a little further along, Shepherds' Cave. The Drakensberg caves seem to be mainly rock overhangs, with a breastwork of stone wall built against them, straw-covered floors and, at the lower levels, are often used by herdsmen.

After about two and a half hours we crossed the river and for once the footpaths led us the wrong way. Only a bit of nifty map and compass work got us back into the correct main valley. The spurs between valleys are so steep that mistakes are not easily rectified. We found the main path again, marked by an inconspicuous cairn, and continued up the true right bank of the river, now mainly through scrub and razor sharp grass, that together with sunburn reduced winter-white thighs to raw red lumps. Progress through the thickets was scratchy, sweaty work.

We were climbing all the time, and Janet became overcome with exhaustion. Paul administered water and glucose, while Ken and I reconnoitred



On the Ascent

the path, up a steep gully and then round the shoulder of the last ridge, where it launched out in lovely zig-zags up the spur, leading 2,500 feet higher onto the top of the escarpment. Janet made a miraculous recovery, helped by a lunch stop on a tiny saddle, with the path to the heights on one side, and the depths of the valley below on the other. There is no glaciation here, so the erosion causes extremely steep V-sided valleys. We progressed up and up on the clearly defined path, past spectacular crumbling pinnacles, the other side of the valley, also pinnacle decorated, seeming only a stone's throw away. In the last hour or so it rained, and a little thunder rumbled back and forwards among the towers.

What a contrast when we reached the escarpment - rolling grassy hills with a few rocky outcrops, quite reminiscent of the Cairngorms, except for the

flora. There were fields of yellow iris, swathes of grey and yellow bachelor's button type flowers, little pink lilies, and big green and white lilies. The plateau lies between about 9,000 and 10,000ft, dropping very quickly at the escarpment to 6,000ft, and then more gradually. (We had started at the police station at 4,000ft.) The cap of the massif is of basalt, and this is what forms the amazing vertical walls, towers, pinnacles and needles. Below this lies a sandstone layer, and lower ridges of this run out forming the 'Little Berg'. While there was little water on the steep climb as we were high above the baby Mnweni, once on the plateau there are many little streams, draining south and west with the tilt of the land. We camped beside one - the source of the Orange River - on a grassy sward, and went to bed early to keep warm in the thin, chilly air, lulled by the frogs, which didn't croak, but tinkled like gently running water. One monster frog lived in a pool nearby, and many of the little pools had tadpoles.

Day 3 December 29th

There were herds of cattle and wild horses grazing on the plateau, and a lone horseman, wrapped in a blanket, passed during breakfast, and a second with his dog was striding out to the head of the pass and the long descent to the valley. We set off about 9.00 - lovely open walking across to the head of Rockeries Pass, bordered on one side by a fantastic jumble of towers, neatly sliced off across the top. While Janet painted, we made a detour to see the Mpungwan cave, spectacularly sited just over the lip of the escarpment on a little apron of grass before the plunge to the valley below. From it there was a spectacular view over the iThonvela valley to the Mnweni and out to the plains beyond, and close at hand the magnificent Mpungwan tower, which stands detached by a deep cleft just in front of the cave. We continued along the edge of the escarpment, past a spectacular little cut-back, that most definitely was not a pass, as the walls fell sheer for an amazing distance. Then we crossed the plateau, climbing to 10,100 feet and then dropping down to the Nguzi Pass, which lies to the west of the spectacular North Peak of the Saddle, and then to the river, finding an idyllic spot, with small cascades, smooth flat rocks, and crystal waters for sweaty feet. We were joined for lunch by a trio of Basuto herdsmen, dressed in blankets, underpants and wellingtons, and aged from about 10 to 16, and their dogs. Big grins, finer featured faces than Zulus, and no English. Bigger grins when presented with cheese and Provita, and when posed for their photographs.

Then there was a long haul up the river, past bulls, horses and foals, and very hot, up to the Saddle, probably the highest point of the trip at 10,200ft. We followed the ridge down, past a couple of little rock steps, to the plain at the head of the iThoyelana pass, arriving about 5.30 with big blue thunder clouds piling up behind us. We christened this campsite the Elysian Fields, from the beautiful turf, with its carpet of little white and pink flowers (later identified as

the alpine *Rhodohypoxis*) amongst the streamlets. An idyllic evening - the clouds drifted away, and we admired the sunset and ate our supper. The stars come out, slowly at first, Venus brilliant and a crescent moon, and then millions and millions, the Magellanic clouds, Orion upside down, balmy crisp air, and far below the lights of the little villages on the distant plains.

Day 4 December 30th

A very different day, and difficult to write about. Everything started well, though the weather was obviously no longer set-fair, as clouds started to build up early. We were up at 5.30, and off by 7.00, climbing diagonally up, past the two square-tops, to the pass at the neck of the long spur which stretches out from the escarpment to Cathedral Peak, over the Twins, the Mitre, the Chessmen, the Inner and Outer Horns, and the Bell. The plan was that Janet and I would spend the day at Twins' Cave, while Paul and Ken traversed the ridge, climbed the Bell and traversed back again.

We dropped down a steep grassy gully, along 100 yards, and then slipped back left through a cleft in the ridge and round the corner to the cave, a massive high overhang, with shelters huddled along the wall at its base. After a quick snack and repack (not a very effective one, as we turned out to have the compass and both the maps), Ken and Paul set off at 8.30, leaving Janet and me to pass the day until their expected return about 6pm. We pottered around, moving round the corner of the ridge to a second spectacular cleft separating the Mitre from the Twins, just in time to see our men scrambling over the skyline. There were spectacular views to both sides, north to the Amphitheatre and Devil's Tooth, south to Cathkin peak. We were looking right along the line of the escarpment, with layer upon layer of subsidiary peaks running to the skyline. But mist was beginning to build up and stream up the gully.

While Janet painted, I went back to the cave to discover that the crows, who had been craftily perching on a high rock watching us leave, had raided the rucksacks. They had pecked mine open, dragged out the revolting bag of semi-solid margarine, wrecked the rubbish bag and scattered debris far and wide. They had also investigated Janet's pastel box so there was chalk everywhere. When I went back to the gap after clearing up the mess, I was just in time to see the view before the mist swallowed it up, and a little later we ran back through a short sharp thunderstorm. The camp was now enveloped in swirling mist, though it soon cleared.

The day wore on, reading, lazing, and a group of four scouts plus leader arrived and pitched their tents further along. After several cups of tea, the clouds piling up along the escarpment suddenly descended, and we could see very little. As far as we could judge it was now about 5.30 (we had no watches) so it seemed likely that we would all spend the night at the cave. We squeezed the tents up under the overhang, having been warned of rapacious mice, and

Janet decided to cook supper. I made a couple of trips to the cleft, which was quite difficult to find through the mist, but there was no sign of the others. It became darker, and then began to rain. Just before it got completely dark, the weather cleared for about a quarter of an hour, and I could see the Mitre from the cleft, and signalled with the torch, but there was still no sign.

By now both Janet and I were pretty depressed - the rain was getting stronger and the mist thicker. We retreated to bed as the only sensible thing to do, rather panicky and disorganised, and after a frustrating search for the candles. By now there was thunder and lightning. We lit the candle and lay and talked, about how Janet had met Paul, and how I had met Ken, about how Janet feels when Paul is on expeditions, about how she has learnt to suffer in silence when he returns very much overdue, with the innocent Fatti smile, wondering what all the fuss is about. As the rain and wind got heavier I broke down and wept, so we held each other for comfort. Eventually we decided that we might have to cope with a worse situation in the morning, and so we should try to sleep. So we both lay there, listening to the drips from the overhang, and the snuffling mice. I was feeling pretty emotionally drained, and heavy headed, but shivery and tense, running through my mind what we should do in the morning, and picturing bleak futures without Ken. Every now and then there were noises as the group in the next door tents turned over and snored, just enough to keep me alert and listening.

Eventually I did fall asleep, though I don't think for very long, and woke up with a sickening jolt to the continuing nightmare over which we had so little control. I don't think Janet had slept at all, and finally we lit the candle and talked on. By now it had almost stopped raining, and the clouds cleared and the stars came out. Gradually it got light, until we could see the hillside from the tent door, and it was clear, although there was a cloud layer below in the valley. Just as hope was returning that those benighted would be able to set out, a wisp of cloud blew past, and in a few minutes the mist was as thick as ever. Deeply depressed we discussed whether we should send a message down to Cathedral Hotel at the foot of the escarpment, with the scout group. The timing was difficult as they were planning to leave at 8.00 and we didn't want to raise a false alarm, nor to be left at the cave with no means of communication with the valley far below. If anything had gone wrong, to organise a rescue would take time, and they had already had one night out, no bivvy sack, light clothing, no map or compass, not much food, no water.

Janet got up to check that we did in fact have both maps, and to talk to the scouts, and I said I would get up and make coffee. Suddenly I had a strong feeling that I should go to the cleft and check again, so dragged on boots and clothes and set off. It was still misty, though not quite so thick, but there was no view of the Mitre when I reached the corner. Feeling pretty hopeless, I called out "Paul," and a yodel came back through the mist. I felt I must be dreaming

it, but called again, and Ken replied and there were other voices saying they were alright and were coming to the cave. I started to run back to tell Janet, but pretty soon could hardly breathe - running in boots at 10,000ft is surprisingly hard. I staggered back to the cave and fetched her out to the cleft. She called - no reply, and I began to feel I must have imagined everything, but the strong wind beginning to blow up the cleft and to clear the cloud must have carried her voice away. I moved to the left and called again and this time there was a reply. We were so pleased we were grinning all over our faces. I rushed back again to the cave, put on a billy of water and collected some warm clothes. Then back to the cleft, while Janet went back to supervise the billy and get some more water.

So I sat on the rock with the little cairn on it, and watched the mist gradually being torn away until the Mitre was clear, and I could see figures, still high up, and coming down very slowly, but coming down, two red ones, Ken and Paul, and three others. Ken, of course, was carrying someone else's pack. I sat on my rock in the sun, with a sea of cloud below me, and to the right and left the fantastic peaks of the escarpment floating above it, and experienced one of those moments of pure bliss, so intense that you burst outside yourself, and I could see myself sitting on my rock in my blue and green anorak and rucksack. Janet came back just as they disappeared from sight in a gully, and we hugged each other with happiness.

After that a there was a slight anti-climax, as we lost sight of their route, and rushed all over the place trying to anticipate their reappearance, so that Ken actually got back to the cave before me. It must have been about 7.15 - anyhow late enough to move on to:

Day 5 December 31st

There followed much brewing of tea, cooking of stew and porridge, and eager discussion. Paul and Ken had climbed the Bell successfully, but Ken had lost his glasses on the climb, and this had slowed them down. Route finding had been difficult when the mist came down, and they had spent the night under an overhang, miraculously with a sleeping bag that they had discovered dropped in a gully. This turned out to belong to the other party of three, also benighted, though in a tent pitched on some precipitous slope. They had met up, and rounded the corner of the Mitre about ten minutes before I called out. Ken looked a bit grey, but Paul seemed as bouncy as ever - of course Janet wouldn't have been worried!

Gradually things simmered down, and we began to pack up for the march out. We left the cave at about 9.00, on a glorious morning, and climbed up the gully, still with magical views of peaks above the sea of cloud, then dropped down to the Elysian Fields, where we stopped for a brew-up. Then, with the cloud drifting up to the lip of the escarpment, we slipped down over the



Ken on the Summit of the Bell

edge into the iThoyelana pass, a steep, stream-fed defile with a zig-zag path, and a hanging garden of alpine flowers, spectacularly beautiful. Lower down the path turned to the left to contour the hillside, and we passed a caravan of mules grazing before the last pull-up, and two horses, one being re-shod.

The good path wriggled along the hillside, over little passes, by one of which Ken saw a Berg adder and Paul finally used his telephoto lens, painfully carried so far, to photograph a spectacular gladioli growing out of the rocks. We then dropped down a long ridge into the valley, most of the way in thin mist, but towards the bottom we began to see the ridge from Cathedral Peak to the Twins, high above us. At the first river crossing we had a marvellous naked swim, and lunch with the much-travelled avocados, finally ripe enough to eat. It was amazing how heavy and sticky the valley air seemed after the high plateau.

Estimates from the map showed eight to twelve miles still to go and so we set out at 2.30 on what was to turn into an interminable slog. As we trudged along the river bank, Ken turned his ankle, and was in some pain. Eventually we reached the junction of the path leading up to Rockeries Pass, crossed the river and after a brief stop started on the last lap, up round the slopes of Scramble Kopje. We were high above the main valley, and could see how well

settled and prosperous it was, and could look back at the Saddle, the Mnweni Needles and Mopungwana, and watch the afternoon thunder clouds play among the peaks. At last at 7.30, in the gloaming, we reached the road, and Paul gallantly went the final mile to the police station to fetch the car. The air was blue, the clouds had gone, the incredible escarpment was pasted a deeper blue along the horizon, from the Saddle all the way along to the Devil's Tooth. We were very tired, but very happy.

The Cairngorm Club

Buttermilking

Stuart Stronach

Tell someone you're a climber and they tend to automatically picture you clinging by your fingernails to a cliff face with 100 feet of air beneath you. However, one of the biggest developments in the sport of climbing in recent years has been a boom in popularity of what's called 'bouldering'.

Bouldering is climbing in its purest form. With no ropes, no harnesses and no hardware, the climber stays close to the ground, and the emphasis is purely on difficulty, on making hard individual moves between holds.

Bouldering is also a very sociable sub-sport. Boulderers tend to travel in groups, taking turns practising hard problems until someone (or everyone) succeeds. Safety is provided for through the use of portable crash-mats (dismissively referred to as 'cushions' by non-bouldering climbers), and attentive friends (called 'spotters') on the ground below, waiting to field the climber in the event of a fall.

And fall they will. By staying close to the ground, the fear of falling is removed. As the boulderer pushes towards their physical limits, falls happen frequently, until the problem is completed. Success on the first attempt is rare, and usually means that the climber is on something too easy!

Anyway, enough introduction. April 2003 saw me realise a long-standing goal by making a trip to Bishop, California. In the east of the state, Bishop is one of the bouldering Meccas of the world, nestling at an altitude of 4,000 feet at the head of the Owen's River Valley, which, with 14,000ft mountains on either side, is the deepest in the USA. The scenery is jaw-droppingly spectacular, with the flat desert of the valley floor contrasting with the pine-clad lower hillsides and snow-capped peaks.

Flying in to San Francisco, the next leg of the trip involved a three-hour drive through the vineyards and orchards of the San Joaquin valley and into the foothills of the Sierra Nevada mountains. In mid-April, although the coast was bathed in warm spring sunshine, the road led upwards over a succession of 8,000ft passes, and walls of snow were piled higher than the car on either side. On the east side of the Sierras, I picked up the I395 highway which leads south from Reno, via Bishop, to Los Angeles, and a further three hours saw me arrive in Bishop.

For the next ten days, I was bouldering nearly every day. There are several areas scattered around the town, including the Happy Boulders, the Sads, the Buttermilks, the Druid Stones and Little Egypt. Despite the length of time, I hardly scratched the surface of what was available, but did have some very memorable days out with some amazing people.



Stuart on the Crux of Heavenly Path (VI)

One day was spent in the company of Dean Fidelman. Hardly any non-climbers know of him, and even amongst climbers his name is probably unfamiliar until you tell them: "He's the guy who takes the Stone Nudes photographs!" Stone Nudes is a company run by Dean which sells posters and calendars of black and white photographs of nude climbers (male and female) bouldering - all in the name of art, of course! Check out the website (www.stonenudes.com) if you want a better idea of what he does. Anyway, my companion for the trip, Anni, had volunteered to be a model, so we spent an afternoon at the Buttermilks searching for a suitable problem to climb, and waiting for the right evening light. The results of that day will be available in next year's calendar, but I was left full of respect for Dean's professionalism and Anni's bravery on a chilly and rather busy day!

Another couple of days were spent under the guidance of ex-pat Yorkshireman, Mick Ryan. Mick is a local climbing guru, having been responsible for many of the guidebooks to the area through his company, Rockfax. He was able to take us on tours of the climbing areas, always pointing us at the best, most spectacular problems, and spotting us carefully when things got tricky. He also makes a mean curry!

One day's bouldering was finished off with a game of soccer (call it 'football' in the States and people look at you funny!) in the local park, involving Mick, myself, Dean, Kevin Thaw (another ex-pat Brit) and 'Jeff from San Diego', as well as Mick's son and friends. It soon showed that no matter how fit you think you are from all the climbing, 15 minutes charging about a field like an idiot will soon suggest that you've been enjoying the beer and Mexican food a little too much!

One thing I quickly realised is that bouldering in Bishop requires a rather different mental approach to bouldering in the UK. In America, they say that everything is bigger, and that goes for their boulders as well. Whereas it's unusual in the UK to find many boulders bigger than four or five metres in height, in Bishop eight to ten metre problems were commonplace! Suddenly, the crashmat started looking very small and a long way down! The boulder problems were graded using the American 'V' system, going from V0 to V15. The tendency was to think of V0s and V1s as warm-ups, until you realised that on the bigger boulders, a V1 could easily be the equivalent of an E1 5b in the UK!

A rest day from all the climbing was taken to fit in a day's skiing at Mammoth Mountain. We were lucky in that an unusual late-season storm was dumping a load of fresh powder on the mountain, so that although conditions overhead were very similar to those I'm used to from the Scottish ski centres, the snow conditions underfoot were fantastic. The unbroken fields of knee-deep powder offered skiing unlike anything I've ever found before. My guides for the day were a couple of locals, Ray and Lesley (Anni's cousin and his wife), both superb skiers. I found myself following them with trepidation down runs such as the 'Avalanche Chutes', on slopes which, were they in Scotland, would be steep enough to warrant being graded as a technical winter climb. But I loved it! Skiing off-piste through trees, learning how to cope with this unfamiliar powder, surviving the day with only one fall - although it was intended as a climbing trip, that day's skiing has given me some of the best memories of the holiday.

Much of the land north of Bishop is owned by the City of Los Angeles, who purchased it in order to obtain the rights to the river water, which is now carried by pipeline and aqueduct to provide the population of Los Angeles with their water supply. Unfortunately, the loss of the river water was responsible for turning much of the lower Owen's Valley from fertile farmland to a parched

desert, with the dried-up bed of Owen's Lake providing the source material for fierce dust storms. The situation has become so bad that the locals are forcing Los Angeles to return some of the water to continually damp down the lake-bed.

On the plus side, roads built to provide access to the Owen's River Gorge north of Bishop, where much of the water is originally siphoned off, are now used by climbers to gain access to the steep sides of the gorge, where over 700 climbs have been documented. Just to prove we could still remember how to put on a harness and tie a knot in a rope, we had another break from the bouldering to climb in the gorge for a morning. Routes up to 25 metres in length on vertical sun-kissed rock provided a sublime contrast to the brutal thuggery of the bouldering, with stamina counting more towards success than brute strength, and fixed bolts providing permanent anchors and a safe environment in which to climb.

The final day's climbing was spent back up at the Buttermilks. A late-season winter storm was shrouding the Sierras in cloud, and though it was mild at lower altitudes, snow flurries were occasionally blown off the hills onto us, while coyotes howled somewhere off in the distance.

Eventually, all good things have to end, and the drive was made back west to spend a little time with friends in San José (yes, I knew the way...). From there, a day trip to Santa Cruz saw me finish the trip paddling in the Pacific, watching the pelicans fly past, skimming the waves.

Twenty Years of Thursday Walking

Ian Bryce and Gill Shirreffs

Ian begins:

It was December when I first went on a Thursday walk. About twenty of us met at 9.30 in the car park at Banchory, where John Gibson was dispensing mulled cider from thermos flasks. "I'm on to a good thing here," I thought, "better than a day in the office." And I was, a crisp walk through interesting country on a bright frosty day, plenty of claik in congenial company, and local history as a bonus. So I learnt for instance about the search tower in the cemetery at Banchory which dates to the times of body snatching and Burke and Hare.

Although I have been on only a handful of these walks, that one seems typical, and it is easy to see why they are increasingly popular, and such an important part of the Cairngorm Club's activities. Have you been to Carnferg to see the memorial to Heavens Above? Or Byron's mother's castle on the Braes of Gight? And then there are the seals and puffins and primroses of coastal walks, forests and fields, moor and sky. And no rising in the dark to catch the bus from Golden Square.

Although the Thursday walks go back around twenty years, like all successful organisms, they have continually undergone a process of evolution, and so over to Gill for some memories of the early days.

Gill: Thursday walks - the start

As so many things do, the idea of Thursday walks started not in a formal committee meeting, but either at the school gates or after a PTA meeting in about 1984. Jeanette (Illingworth) and I were keen to keep fit and have a day a week when we went walking in a more exciting venue than Hazelhead golf course. Our constraints were simple: to be back for the girls getting out of school at 3.15. I was on the Club committee at that time, I think as Vice-President, and Graham was already expressing concerns about falling numbers on the bus meets. As Jeanette and I walked and chatted, an idea grew. Many Club members worked shifts, or off-shore, and there was quite a group of us with children of about the same age. Perhaps we could offer an open invitation to members to join us.

Judy Middleton came along, as did Hazel MacKenzie and Eva Deregowski, and latterly Bill Alexander joined us too, though generally in those early days it was often just the two of us. We went out every Thursday, exploring the lower hills and glens of Deeside, Donside and occasionally further afield, especially as the girls became older. The walks kept us fit, and we loved exploring hills we had often driven past in our haste to get to 'bigger things'. We unwound and let off steam, and most of all we enjoyed ourselves.

We had a whole mix of experiences - you can have adventures just as well on little hills as on big ones! Perhaps the most embarrassing was the traverse of the Hill of Fare, with Bill and Judy and a few others. The day was misty but this wouldn't be problem, we always carried our maps and compasses. Or thought we did! To my horror I realised as we hit the mist that I had my map but my compass was in my other jacket. Did Bill have his? No. Judy hers? No. So here were the President, Vice-President and a senior member of the Club all minus the essential piece of equipment. This would make interesting reading in the P&J! But we kept the sloping ground always to left and right, and imagine our relief as we emerged from the mist at the other end, exactly where we were meant to be. The one mystery that has stayed with me from that walk was the castellated tower that seemed to appear at intervals. Any answers?

On another occasion, Jeanette and I decided we would head to Cock Bridge, aiming to do Brown Cow Hill. Although it had been a night of gales, they seemed to have subsided to something manageable, or so we thought, but by Candacraig there were chunks of tree on the road. We managed to get round these, but the grand plan was shelved and we decided on Corndavon and beyond. However, the 'walk' was more a battle into the teeth of a gale. We sheltered by the building, had a rapid bite to eat, fought a little further, then accepted a mighty push down the glen back to the car. My birthday was celebrated one year in similar conditions, on the Broad Hill, supping wine suitably chilled as we sheltered in the stone cairn from the hail pinging down.

Not all our trips were wild and wintry. One summer we had a glorious walk taking a very different route to the Coyles of Muick from the south Deeside road. In the same area we did those hills you drive past but never seem to get round to climb, such as Craig nam Ban and Craig Ghuibais. We did get to the top, but the heather was something else, with Jeanette reminding me yet again she only had 'little legs' compared to my long ones. At the end of the day Judy did her usual trick of running down a hillside. Begging for broken ankles, we thought, as we took it much more sedately. On another summer walk I remember having a bit of a shock as I made my way up the heather-covered slope of Pannanich Hill to find, making its way down at a rate of knots, an adder! I don't know who was more surprised. Jeanette heard my squawk and was not a bit amused when I told her what had just passed me. Quite took the edge off her day, I suspect. But it was a beautiful day nevertheless.

These walks continued over a period of ten years or so with the numbers of members joining us growing slowly, but for Jeanette and me returning to work put paid to our Thursdays. However, Bill Alexander had started coming out with us regularly and was willing to take over the organisation of the walks, with help from his sister Jean. They planned the walks carefully and seemed to find some really interesting places to go. We had been positively *ad hoc* in comparison. And now the walks have gone from strength to strength. As with

so many things, they have met a need, though not quite as we had originally intended.

Ian continues:

As Gill has explained, for seven years or so Bill Alexander organised all the Thursday walks himself, researching the literature on the area meticulously, and walking the route in advance so that he could make it as interesting as possible. In 1999, after sterling service leading around seventy walks, Bill decided that it was time to pass on the baton, and a new format evolved.

The current arrangements are that Jack Connell calls a meeting once a year when 12 walks are agreed for the next year. Different people define and lead the walks, which take place on the last Thursday of every month. There is a great variety: some walks take in historical sites, others are just mountainous, some take in flora and fauna; some are circular, while for others a car-shuttle is arranged so that they can be A to B. The present guidelines for organising these trips are:

1. Transport is by car and sharing transport is encouraged;
2. The start and finish of the walks should be within 1¼ hour's drive of Aberdeen;
3. The walking time should be limited to about five hours;
4. Easier, low-level walks should be chosen for late autumn, winter and early spring.

Over the years, the participants on the walks have changed. Working mums no longer have time for days in the hills, and their places have been taken by the growing numbers of members who are enjoying active retirement. Of course, everyone is still welcome, and participants include people with time off from work and even children on holiday. Often there are as many as 25 members and guests taking part.

Jack has produced the impressive list of 111 Thursday walks that have taken place since 1994, appended to this article. Although I do not believe that Jack wants them to be known as Connells or Alexanders, why not think of ticking off some of these - it's not just Munros, Corbetts, Grahams or Marilyn's that can keep some members busy! Join one of the monthly Thursday groups if you can; details of meeting places and contacts are always given in the current Newsletters. Or you could do some of them on your own when you have a short day available.

We should remember that in his classic book *A Progress in Mountaineering* J. H. B. Bell extols the virtues of starting on small hills, cutting one's teeth in hillcraft, navigation, scrambling and route finding, before working up to the big hills and the Alps. (And, tell it not in Gath, the then-President, a Vice-President and others once got quite lost in the Kirkhill Forest on one

January Thursday walk!) So whether your mountaineering career is on the way up, winding down gracefully, or somewhere in between, a local hill or a local walk can be very enjoyable, not to say educational, and the Aberdeenshire countryside has much to offer. The Cairngorm Club is not just about the Cairngorms, and its strength lies in its members and their love of the hills whether big or small. Over the years, the Thursday walks have become an integral and important part of the Club's activities, thanks to the efforts of all involved. Long may they continue!

The Cairngorm Club

Thursday Walks: January 1994 to March 2004

AB = A to B; C = Circular. The number in parentheses is the relevant OS Landranger map. The walks are arranged chronologically. Four early walks are omitted because of current inadequate car parking.

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|-----|---------------|---------|----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. | Hill of Fare | (37/38) | C | Round estate roads |
| 2. | Clachnaben | (45) | AB | 649868 - Miller's Bog - Clachnaben - N to estate track - 650892 |
| 3. | Tyrebagger | (38) | C | Kirkhill Forest - Tappie - stone circle - Chapel of Stoneywood |
| 4. | Correen Hills | (37) | C | 547231 - Mire of Midgates - Edenbanchory Hill - Lord Arthur's Hill |
| 5. | Aboyne | (37) | AB | Aboyne - Mortlich - Corse Hill - 561067 |
| 6. | Bennachie | (37/38) | C | Pond Croft - W tops - Pond Croft |
| 7. | Morven | (37) | AB | 413040 - SW ridge - E ridge - 412043 |
| 8. | Kerloch | (45) | C | 699917 - Kerloch - Hare Hill- Pitreadie |
| 9. | Scolty | (45) | C | 633944 - Scolty - River Dee |
| 10. | Dinnet | (37) | C | Dinnet - Cambus - upper Burn o' Vat - Lochs Davan & Kinord |
| 11. | Birse | (44) | C | 533906 - Firmouth - Gannock - down estate track |
| 12. | Gairnshiel | (37) | C | Gairnshiel Lodge - Tom a Catha - Cannock Hill - Cam a Bhacain - Shenval |
| 13. | Slains | (38) | AB | 005270 - Old Slains Castle - 043286 |
| 14. | Glen Tanar | (37) | C | Braeloine - round Baudy Meg - Braeloine |
| 15. | Ballater | (44) | AB | Ballater - Etnach - Tombae |
| 16. | The Buck | (37) | C | 422252 - The Buck - Clova Hill - 422252 |
| 17. | Tyrebagger | (38) | C | Tyrebagger Sculpture Trail - Brimmond Hill |
| 18. | Catherthuns | (44) | C | Catherthuns - move cars to Edzell - Rocks of Solitude |
| 19. | Carnferg | (44) | C | 533906 - Fungle track - Carnferg - Glencat |
| 20. | Ballater | (37) | AB | Cambus Suspension Bridge - Ballater - Craigendarroch - 7 brigs |
| 21. | Cairn o'Mount | (45) | AB | Clatterin' Brig - Deer Dyke - Hound Hillock - Charr - Spital Cottage |

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|-----|---------------|---------|----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 22. | Glenbuchat | (37) | AB | 400150 - Little Firbriggs Hill- Creag an Eunan - Creag na Gamhna - Newseat |
| 23. | Wirran | (44) | C | Cornescorn - Hill of Wirran - East Wirran |
| 24. | Mona Gowan | (37) | C | 312026 - Scraulac - Cairnagour - Mona Gowan - Morven Lodge |
| 25. | Collieston | (30/38) | AB | Collieston - coastal path - Whinnyfold |
| 26. | Corse Hill | (37) | AB | 561067 - Corse Hill - Mortlich - Aboyne |
| 27. | Brown Cow | (36/37) | C | Cockbridge - Inchmore - Brown Cow - NE to Cockbridge |
| 28. | Cairn o'Mount | (45) | C | Bridge of Dye - Heathery Hill - Hill of Gothie |
| 29. | Crathes | (48) | C | Banchory - Crathes - Banchory (railway track) |
| 30. | The Gramps | (38) | C | Bridge of Dee - Loirston Country Park - Baron's Cairn - Greg Ness - Torry Battery |

January 1997

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|-----|---------------|---------|----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 31. | Kemnay | (38) | C | Cottown Wood - Fetternear - Leschangie Quarries |
| 32. | Cairn William | (37/38) | AB | Tillyfourie - Green Hill - Cairn William - Pitfichie Hill - Pitfichie |
| 33. | Drumcholzie | (44) | C | 326885 - Drumcholzie - Hunt Hill - Cairns of Cul nan Gad |
| 34. | Cruden Bay | (30) | AB | Cruden Bay - S of Boddam - 124407 |
| 35. | The Socach | (37) | C | Edinglassie - Relanquhein - The Socach - Ernan Water - Edinglassie |
| 36. | Am Mullach | (44) | C | Ballater - Lach na Gualainn - Am Mullach - Cairn Leuchan |
| 37. | Bennachie | (38) | C | Hermit Seat - Watch Craig - Oxen Craig |
| 38. | Rocking Stone | (44) | C | 439969 - Slai na Gour - Craigrae Beg - Rocking Stone - Tombae |
| 39. | Strathfinella | (45) | C | Glen of Drumtochty - circuit of Strathfinella Hill |
| 40. | Baudy Meg | (37) | AB | Aboyne - Baudy Meg - Old Glentanar School |
| 41. | Inverurie | (38) | C | 749207 - Aquhorthies stone circle - River Don - Urie circuit |

January 1998

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|-----|-----------|------|---|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| 42. | River Don | (38) | C | Persley CP - E down River Don - Beach Ballroom and return |
|-----|-----------|------|---|-----------------------------------------------------------|

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|---------------------|-----------------|---------|----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 43. | Ythsie | (30/38) | AB | Prop of Ythsie and stone circle - Tarves - Udney Green |
| 44. | Slug Road | (45) | C | Carn-mon-Earn - Mongour Hill |
| 45. | Coyles of Muick | (44) | C | 341951 - Creag Liath - Meall Dubh - Coyles - Glen Girnock |
| 46. | Findlater | (29) | AB | Portsoy - Findlater Castle - Cullen |
| 47. | Auchtavan | (43/44) | C | Keiloch - Bealach Dearg path - E at 178963 - SE at 191972 - Auchtavan - Felagie |
| 48. | Burnt Hill | (44) | C | Invermark - Loch Lee - Burnt Hill - Gleneffoch |
| 49. | Bennachie | (38) | C | Essons - Gordon Way - Oxen Craig - Craigshannoch |
| 50. | Drinnie's | (30) | C | 974506 - White Cow Hill - Loudon Wood - Drinnie's Observatory |
| 51. | Goyle Hill | (45) | C | 696799 - Goyle Hill and return |
| 52. | Bin Forest | (29) | C | 531408 - River path W - Cleanbrae - round Bin Forest - Castle Hotel |
| 53. | Lumphanan | (37) | C | Lumphanan - Newton - Kincardine O'Neil - return |
| January 1999 | | | | |
| 54. | Benholm | (45) | C | 807690 - old railway - Johnshaven - coast path - Gourdon - Inverbervie - Benholm |
| 55. | Liddell's | (38) | AB | 887139 - River Don - Liddell's Monument - A947 - old railway - Newmachar |
| 56. | Shillofad | (45) | AB | 724912 - round Mulloch Hill - Nine Stanes - Garrol Hill - W side of Shillofad - NE to 761915 |
| 57. | Fourman Hill | (29) | C | 547485 - 585465 - Fourman Hill - Redhill - Milltown of Rothiemay |
| 58. | Pennan | (30) | C | 886646 - coast path - Pennan Head - 855653 - East Mains and return |
| 59. | Mount Battock | (44) | C | Millden - Burn of Turret - Hill of Saughs - Mount Battock - 541836 - Millden |
| 60. | Glen Tanar | (44) | C | Tombae - Glen Tanar - Bridge of Muick |
| 61. | Geallaig | (37) | C | 280000 - Geallaig - 267987 - Blairglass - 262009 and return |
| 62. | Millstone Hill | (38) | AB | 672190 - round Scare Hill - Millstone Hill - 665200 - Birk's Track - Essons |

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|-----|---------------|------|---|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 63. | Banff | (29) | C | Banff to Bridge of Alva and circuit of old town |
| 64. | N of Ballater | (44) | C | Ballater - cinder path - 379985 - 364993 - Pass of Ballater - old railway line |
| 65. | Tyrebagger | (38) | C | Kirkhill Forest - Tappie - stone circle - Chapel of Stoneywood |

January 2000

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|-----|--------------|------|----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 66. | Dunnottar | (45) | C | Stonehaven - Dunnottar Woods - Dunnottar Castle - coast path - Cowie Church - Stonehaven |
| 67. | Huntly | (29) | C | 537394 - Battle Hill - Kinnoir Wood - railway - car park - A96 - 548387 - Caimhill - 542375 |
| 68. | Craiglich | (37) | AB | 526063 - Craiglich - Wartle - Tulloch - Lumphanan |
| 69. | Clachnaben | (45) | AB | Three Stane Hill - Mount Shade - Clachnaben |
| 70. | Cross path | (44) | C | Spital of Glenmuick - Glas Allt - 267835 - cross path - 274862 |
| 71. | Lazy Well | (37) | C | 425110 - E of Gallows Hill - Lazy Well - Broomhill - Badronach |
| 72. | Gartley Moor | (29) | C | Gartley Moor - Hill of Corsbie - move cars - Dunnideer |
| 73. | Morven | (37) | C | Lary - 341023 - W ridge and return |
| 74. | Fetteresso | (45) | C | 853862 - Cheyne Hill - Burn of Day |
| 75. | Arbroath | (54) | AB | Arbroath - Auchmithie |
| 76. | Scolty | (45) | C | 633944 - Scolty - River Dee |

January 2001

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|-----|------------|------|---|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 77. | Forvie | (38) | C | 005270 - 023279 - Collieston - coastal path |
| 78. | The Gramps | (38) | C | Bridge of Dee - Loirston Country Park - Baron's Cairn - Greg Ness - Torry Battery |
| 79. | St Cyrus | (45) | C | Coast walk N of St Cyrus |
| 80. | Dinnet | (37) | C | Dinnet - Cambus - upper Burn o' Vat - Lochs Davan & Kinord |

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|---------------------|-----------------|------|---|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 81. | Correen Hills | (37) | C | 547231 - Mire of Midgates - Edenbanchory Hill - Lord Arthur's Hill |
| 82. | Shielin of Mark | (44) | C | Spittal of Glenmuick - Allt Darrarie - Shielin of Mark - Black Hill - Capel Mounth |
| 83. | Bennachie | (38) | C | Back of Bennachie - Oxen Craig - Mither Tap - Nursery Cottage |
| 84. | Mormond Hill | (30) | C | Mormond Hill - White Horse - Strichen stone circle |
| 85. | Durris | (38) | C | 774916 - Cairn mon Earn - 780910 |
| January 2002 | | | | |
| 86. | Tyrebagger | (38) | C | Sculpture Walk - Brimmond - Elrick |
| 87. | Potarch | (37) | C | Potarch car park - W along forest track - 584972 - Balnacraig - river - Boat Cottage |
| 88. | Builg Mounth | (45) | C | 647854 - Garlot Hill - the Builg Mounth - Heatherhaugh |
| 89. | Corrichie | (38) | C | 773037 - 732036 - 735041 Meikle Tap - 715027 - Corrichie - ruined cottage - 700033 |
| 90. | Cults/Culter | (38) | C | Den of Cults - river bank - St Peter's churchyard - return by old railway |
| 91. | Allan's Hut | (44) | C | Spittal of Glenmuick - Black Burn - zig-zag - Allan's Hut - Corrie Chash - return |
| 92. | Pressendye | (37) | C | 475076 - Glasschill Burn - Pressendye - Broom Hill - Lazy Well - E Davoch |
| 93. | Kerloch | (45) | C | Pitreadie - Little Kerloch - Kerloch |
| 94. | Mount Een | (44) | C | Millden - Blackcraigs - Mount Een - Bennycraig - 541836 |
| 95. | Clachnaben | (45) | C | Millers Bog - Clachnaben - Mount Shade |
| 96. | Glen Gelder | (44) | C | Easter Balmoral - Glen Gelder - Little Conachcraig - Gelder Shiel |
| 97. | Crathes | (38) | C | Crathes Castle trails |

January 2003

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|------|---------------|---------|----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 98. | Tyrebagger | (38) | C | Sculpture Walk - Brimmond -Elrick |
| 99. | Cryne's Corse | (45) | C | 868038 - 765902 - S along pylons - Cowie Water - Bread and Cheese House - return same way |
| 100. | Pitfichie | (37/38) | AB | Pitfichie - Green Hill - Cairn William - Monymusk |
| 101. | St Cyrus | (45) | AB | St Cyrus - Coast path - Inverbervie |
| 102. | Caterthuns | (44) | C | Caterthuns - move cars to Edzell - Rocks of Solitude |
| 103. | Conachcraig | (44) | C | Spital of Glenmuick - Allt na Guichsaich - 274861 - Conachcraig - descend E |
| 104. | Wirren | (44) | C | Lethnot School (537684) - W Wirren - Hill of Wirren - E Wirren - Auchowrie - start |
| 105. | Tap o' Noth | (37) | C | Brae of Scurdargue - Tap o'Noth - descent - Kirkney Water - E of Finglenny - Mytice - car park |
| 106. | Gairnshiel | (37) | AB | 311025 - Mammie - Ardoch - Balno - Inverenzie - Lary - rail-bed to Ballater |
| 107. | Carnferg | (44) | C | 533906 - Fungle track - Carnferg - Glencat |
| 108. | Dunnottar | (45) | C | Stonehaven - Dunnottar Woods - Dunnottar Castle - coast path - Cowie Church |
| 109 | River Don | (38) | C | Persley CP - E down R Don - Beach Ballroom and return |

January 2004

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|------|---------------|------|---|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 110. | Blacktop | (38) | C | Countesswells CP - circuit - King's Hill Wood |
| 111. | Braes o'Gight | (30) | C | Methlick - W to Braes o' Gight - Craig Horror - Hagberry or Otter Bridge - Gight Castle - 840392 |

A Scarecrow on a Pyramid

Rhona Fraser

If I win THE big Premium Bond I know where and what I am doing - the 'Fourteeners', the term given to the 54 mountains over 14,000ft in Colorado, USA. Most are long but not technically difficult peaks. Only a few are narrow and testing. A challenging but possible goal.

So far I have done four summits in trips in 1992 and 2001. My first fourteener was Quandary Peak (14,265ft) - a rather boring walk, mostly traversing a large boulder field. However it gave an amusing incident involving a large school party, when I overheard a boy excitedly tell his friends he had been sick and therefore was going to get off school for several days. I did not have the heart to tell him that this was altitude sickness and would improve as he descended! We also climbed the highest, Mt Elbert (14,433ft), another easy straightforward walk, though done in unusually wintery August weather.

In 2001 David Joule and I returned to America to tackle some big peaks in the Aspen area. Our highest summit was to be La Plata Peak (14,336ft) from South Fork Lake Creek Road, an easy ascent of 3,600 feet. The sign at the start of the walk, though, was rather disconcerting:

Beware of Bears

Do not drink the water because of giardiasis

Do not treat the water as it is laden with minerals and toxic

Do not enter private land as you may be shot

Makes the risks of the stalking season in Scotland seem insignificant!!!

The climax of the holiday was planned to be the ascent of one of the more difficult peaks in Colorado. We had considered North Maroon Peak, and its lesser companion, South Maroon (the names are due to the spectacular colour at sunrise), but the local Aspen guide persuaded us that due to loose terrain, it was safer to ascend these in early summer when snow secured the rock. Pyramid Peak (14,018ft), the third of the Maroon Bells on the opposite side of Crater Lake, was suggested as a good alternative. All these peaks are known for fatalities, mostly due to rock fall.

The first problem was finding the turn-off from the Maroon Bells trailhead to the start of the climb. The guide had told us this would be difficult to find in the pre-dawn darkness, yet he encouraged us to set off early to avoid the risk of afternoon thunderstorms. We compromised by setting off just as the sun was rising and managed both to find the path and get a wonderful glimpse of the crimson summits. The first section involved very steep climbing up to the tree-line, on a muddy path using branches as handholds. A steep scree section followed, which led into a boulder-filled corrie beneath the pyramid-



Sunrise on the Maroon Bells

shaped mountain. It was in the corrie that I discovered a 'slight' problem. I HAD NO WATERPROOF JACKET!!!! I blame David. He is a bachelor and, even worse, an engineer. He is very tidy. He carefully folds clothes into drawers and even into rucksacks and never has a strand of hair out of place, even after hours of walking (though I do have more of the latter item to control!) He never gets dirty, however muddy the terrain. I, on the other hand, cannot see the point of neatly packing, as things will inevitably get creased. I do not have the patience or time to be tidy, and have learnt to accept, in fact to take pride in, looking as if I been dragged through a hedge backwards within minutes of starting a walk. At Aspen I had a bout of guilt as I saw David lovingly unpack his clothes, as mine lay apparently haphazardly on the floor. So I had unzipped my waterproof jacket, put it on a hanger and placed it in the wardrobe ... WHERE IT WAS STILL. Damn ... double damn. It was windy and cold, and

while it is one thing not to do a big mountain because of altitude sickness, it is just NOT acceptable to descend having forgotten your waterproof. But what would I say to the mountain rescue team? Somehow I had to design a windproof shelter using my waterproof trousers. Solution: wrap the legs of the trousers round my arms, the 'bottom' providing a windbreak for the chest, the rucksack for my back. I felt and looked like a mobile blue scarecrow.

Our route then took us from the corrie left to the north-east ridge, where the interesting scrambling began. The first section was easy angled but very shattered, reminiscent of Stac Pollaidh. Then the slope increased, and the ascent consisted of negotiating several narrow ledges and jumping across a three-foot gap. The crux was obvious - a white steep wall with a considerable drop, which was lovely to climb because of good foot- and hand-holds. Above this, route finding was difficult. We had been told that any very hard moves would indicate that we were probably off route. This was reassuring but route-finding took time, for though there were cairns these were often lost in the confusion of ledges and gullies.

We reached the surprisingly wide summit at 2pm, rather later than we had hoped. We did not dare stay long, as black clouds loomed beyond Maroon Peak. However, the descent seemed easier than we had expected as the cairns were more obvious from above, and we seemed to avoid the crux by staying high, but instead found ourselves at a notch. As we debated how to descend this, there was a flash of lightning. It's amazing how the thought of imminent death sharpens the mind and lessens the exposure. We half-climbed, half-jumped down the step and ran across the red gravelled ridge. Suddenly my head was crushed by a dreadful pain, the sky darkened, hailstones rained from above and worst of all, lines of static electricity raced along the wet ground. WE HAD TO GET OFF NOW!!!! We launched ourselves from the ridge, ignoring the loose terrain in our haste to escape. We sheltered for around 15 minutes huddled on a narrow ledge, the observant David noting we were beneath a rather fragile-looking rock pillar. Thunder and lightning rushed through above us. Hail mixed with the gloom. We were not safe, but there was no way I was going to walk down that exposed Stac Pollaidh ridge. The rest of the descent was unsurprisingly rushed. Irritating steep gravel slopes on ascent, were slithered down. Boulder fields dealt with, with unusual efficiency. It hailed slightly, but only started to rain when we got to the tree-line. Remember I had no waterproof, but it did not really matter - we were now down and safe, having done one of the more difficult hills in Colorado.

The next day we drove to Salt Lake City for the journey home. Pyramid Peak shone completely white at the end of its valley. We had just made it!

Enjoying CAI - the Club Alpino Italiano

Hazel Witte

We chanced upon the notice board while wandering round central Ravenna on a chilly Sunday in December. The city, country and language were all new to us but here was a point of common interest - the programme of CAI, the Club Alpino Italiano. We noted down those words we couldn't understand for translation at home, and in due course negotiated the maze of corridors in a community centre where CAI open their office for two short evenings each week. We were met with polite curiosity and some surprise but managed to book for the next outing, and established our hill walking credentials through a German-speaking Italian climber.

So off we went to the hills in mid-January with a full busload. The club President spoke at length by loudspeaker, including an effusive welcome to the two foreigners - us. Folders of photocopied information were distributed and the designated leader of the day's outing encouraged us to study them before the walk. We poured out of the bus into a village café for the morning espresso - a necessary kick-start to the day for most Italians. The recently opened Monterenzo museum was our first stop so that we could, according to my translation "immerse ourselves in an atmosphere suggestive of Etruscan (9th to 4th century BC) and Celtic (4th to 1st century BC) cultures." The archeological finds related to our walk in the nearby hills later - the necropolis on Monte Tamborino on a narrow ridge and the remains of an Etruscan village on Monte Savino with its water cistern, perched high above the valley for safety. Later we traversed the 617m summit of Monte Bibele and gingerly circled its Celtic sacrificial area, then descended through groves of sweet chestnut trees. Thus well exercised both bodily and mentally, we located the bus in an upland village. Trays of savoury and sweet nibbles emerged with massive dispensers of wine and fruit juice for a New Year *al fresco* party.

We became regulars on the fortnightly outings encouraged by detailed information sheets describing the next event circulated on the bus. These include degree of difficulty, amount of ascent, duration of each section of the route, and several committee phone numbers for booking. Curiously, map numbers and grid references are not used, so we often have to use the internet to find the location. Each outing has a designated leader with responsibility for researching the route and providing relevant information, either printed or as a discourse on the way. If 30 or more members book at least three days beforehand, a bus is provided. If not, cars are used and drivers recompensed. Pricing is decided on the day, depending on the number attending, and includes a fixed amount for accident insurance. Food and drink are only provided when



The Appennines near Ravenna

the bus is full, making immediate use of the day's profit margin. On hot evenings demands for an ice cream stop are usually satisfied on the return journey.

Most Sunday outings from autumn through to spring are to the Appennines within the province of Emilia-Romagna and north-east Tuscany. There is no long walk in to the hills, as tracks lead steeply uphill from the roadside through the trees. It is strange, coming from Scotland, to find deciduous woodland reaching to the skyline at Munro height. These woods have a history of unified management dating back to the Middle Ages, led by monks and trade guilds. Massive beech trees dominate the upper valleys and those on the ridge bordering Tuscany are so magnificent that their trunks resemble cathedral columns. In November we swish our way through knee-deep leaves and have a soft landing if we trip over unseen obstacles. Below 900m there are groves of sweet chestnuts, the most gnarled said to be several centuries old. Local knowledge indicates that they reach peak productivity after

80 years and most have been in family ownership for generations. The chestnuts were ground into flour by water mills in the lower valleys, producing a reliable staple food. Now most are sold whole, dried, candied and even made into a most delicious and very localised ice cream. Lime, hornbeam, cobnut and oak cloak the lower slopes and there are sharp lines of delineation from one dominant species to another, according to steepness and aspect.

The flowers are a joy here, and spring comes early with the intense blue of *Anemone hepatica* peeking out from leaf mould. Acid green swathes of stinking hellebore brighten the woodland and striped crocuses appear in clearings. Banks of primroses and violets clothe damp areas near water for several weeks from March, while the azure *Anemone appennina* flutters in short grass higher up. By April the first of the orchids appear and this is when I have problems keeping up with the others. I won't bore you with further rhapsodising; just accept that the Appennines are my idea of botanical heaven.

The mountains are also home to the wild boar and their two-legged hunters, whose dogs are kept in kennels well away from villages to reduce the nuisance of their frustrated barking. Crested porcupines range the woods too, but so far we have only seen some discarded quills. Red, roe and fallow deer are plentiful, preyed upon by at least two packs of wolves based in the Campigna National Park. Signs of depopulation are all too frequent - ruined farmsteads, overgrown tracks and untended fruit trees. Small museums show pictures of smiling family groups and cheering Partisans, most massacred during 1943/4 by the German SS in this remote region of defiance. Farming at these altitudes must have been marginal even then, but we occasionally come across herds of white Romagnola cattle grazing in the more open areas of woodland, and tiny, steep fields scythed for fodder.

There are so many tracks, some cobbled and with wheel tracks from Roman times, but most used by mules for centuries. Some routes are marked using CAI, local or national signage, but these need to be maintained regularly or they become lost in the rampant foliage. Route finding by compass alone is not usually practical since tracks swoop alongside streams then climb to surprisingly sharp ridges, where there may be a glimpse of yet more ridges fanning out in all directions. Separating into groups is not an option. We need to keep within sight of each other as the potential for becoming lost is always present. Extended views are rare until reaching the higher ridges, and here we look down upon the pall of grey-beige smog, which smothers the great plain of the river Po for most of the year.

Every time we visited the club-rooms we met folk we had never encountered before. All became clear when it dawned on us that CAI contained several specialist groups. The Alpinism, Ski-touring and Climbing group is open to those with at least basic knowledge of techniques and safety as well as mountain experience. Most of their meets are full weekends, as the Dolomites

and Alps are several hours' drive away. The Young Climbers group provides instruction for 8-18 year olds, and aims to engender appreciation of all aspects of the mountains. They have their own programme that includes camping weekends and an overnighiter in June. The Cross-country Skiing group is for those with enough experience to cope without assistance. They meet fortnightly in winter and arrange two separate weeks away in the spring. The Excursionists, to which we belong, have fortnightly Sunday outings from autumn to spring, then weekends to the higher mountains from June to September when it is too hot to walk nearby. The Caving group owes its existence to a chalk vein in the Appennines less than an hour's drive away. They run a course for beginners each spring and have regular meets until the rains come in autumn.

Each group produces an annual programme and has at least one shared event. Thus Kees spent a happy day wriggling along subterranean passages, then marvelling at deep caverns lit by carbide headlamps. Nearby clubs combine outings on occasions, which can mean a large number following the same track but is highly sociable. Ninety of us sailed through the salt marshes of Commachio to the north, had a fly-past from the local flamingoes, and then walked for hours along a narrow peninsula to the safety of solid ground. There are also local courses in climbing, downhill and cross-country skiing. All groups are autonomous and self-funding, but must liaise with the local CAI committee and adhere to national standards. Excursion leaders should have successfully completed a recognised hill-leadership course.

We gradually learned more as our grasp of the language improved. CAI was formed in 1863 in Turin, which remains the centre of the association with its archives, National Museum of the Mountains, and National Library. Its constitution, with eight pages of statutes, is based on its purpose (Article 1) "A national association for all aspects of mountaineering, particularly in Italy, and the defence of their surroundings." The national association consists of an assembly of delegates, a general president, a central council, which elects a secretary-general and vice-secretary every five years, and a president's committee. Two councils, one for accounts, and one for trade including legal responsibilities, are elected by the assembly of delegates at its annual meeting. There are six geographical assemblies with 478 sections, each of which can have up to 20 sub-sections. National membership currently stands at around 308,000. The Ravenna section, formed in 1981, is part of the Tuscany and Emilia-Romagna assembly. It has its own 58-article constitution (centrally approved of course), president, vice-president, treasurer, secretary, and committee of 11, plus an accounts council of three who deal with social events. Membership fees are decided nationally, currently €35 for full membership, €17 for an additional adult family member (me), €11 for youths aged 8-18 and €20 for those aged 18 to 21.

We receive three different publications. *Edelweiss* is a quarterly four-page publication for the Ravenna section, with content similar to the *Cairngorm Club Newsletter*. *Lo Scarpone (The Climbing Boot)* arrives monthly, a 40-page journal of national and local reports and articles, as well as related events and book reviews. *CAI Rivista* (magazine) appears every two months, its 100 or so glossy pages awash with advertising, and its articles dominated by alpine and international climbing. This circulation of information enables members to learn of events throughout the country, and to join them. There is a national website (www.cai.it) as well as our own (www.racine.ra.it/cairavenna), and presumably one for each section.

CAI produce their own excursion maps on a scale of 1:50,000 and some of 1:25,000. These have numbered tracks marked in red, with supporting text and estimated time required. Each is classified as suitable for tourists, excursionists or experts. They liaise with National Park and other authorities to produce local maps, and are involved in a Working Group that aims to standardise mapping throughout the country. CAI also promotes the publication of guide-books and articles, often in collaboration with tourism groups. They finance and maintain CISDAE, the Italian Centre for the Study and Documentation of Alpinism Outside Europe. There are two national sections - alpine guides and an academic group which liaises with relevant university departments.

CAI also takes responsibility for leading the construction and maintenance of paths throughout the country, 6,844 of them at the last count covering 60,000km, all numbered on the maps mentioned above. A recent publication celebrated its 436 refuges, 223 bivouac sites, 66 social club huts and 14 emergency stations, which together provide 23,500 beds. Three hundred of the refuges have custodians, while access to the others is co-ordinated by the local section. Each refuge is categorised according to its facilities, with overnight charges ranging from €8 to €13. Bed and board prices are standardised nationally and are doubled for non-members. The recently constructed Bruno Crepez Mountain Centre at the Pordoi Pass in the Dolomites combines accommodation with training facilities for all sorts of mountain skills. Trenitalia, the national railway company, liaises with several sections to organise and lead day-excursions using regular train services. These are well advertised, seem to be very popular with non-members as well, and can be accessed through the website: trenotrekking@libero.it.

The Ravenna section evening meets are usually illustrated talks given by members from outwith the area. These are 'bring your own wine bottle' affairs with accompanying nibbles, so socialising can be long and late. They may coincide with the weekly opening of the club library, when the librarian asks what you want to know then produces a selection from which to choose - after prolonged discussion with others in the true Italian manner. It has a huge stock

of videos, some produced to celebrate the International Year of Mountains in 2002. Committee members also run open evenings of talks and films related to all aspects of hills and mountains, in a bid to educate the public. We have so far managed to avoid joining in the club's twice-weekly exercise sessions in a city-centre gym, and are reminded of it whenever we show any signs of breathlessness.

Our intention was just to join a local walking club, so were amazed as we learned so much about this national organisation. Here we are, thoroughly enjoying the Appennines through membership of CAI, as well as becoming more aware of local and national history, geology, customs, botany, agriculture and language. But the greatest joy is meeting folk whose interests are similar to our own - isn't hill walking great!

**The Cairngorms National Park:
The Club's Part in the Dialogue Leading to its Establishment**
Richard Shirreffs

The Cairngorms National Park came into being on 1 September 2003, the result of many years of dialogue about the need or otherwise for National Parks in Scotland, and latterly about the form that they should take and about which areas were worthy of this status. The Cairngorms Park was the second to be established in Scotland. It extends to some 3,800 square kilometres and has the Club's home hills at its heart. The Club cannot claim to have shaped the course of history in these matters, but it has made a creditable attempt to see that its values gain recognition. In this article I seek to give a brief overview of this contribution.

The debate about the appropriateness or otherwise of having National Parks in Scotland had, perhaps to the nation's discredit, gone on for decades. The Club made a carefully considered submission to the Countryside Commission for Scotland in the early 1970s, in a consultation that led to its Mountain Areas Report. About twenty years later the government of the day set up the Cairngorms Working Party, and the Committee made extensive submissions and even a personal presentation. A Club member, John Duff, was a member of the Cairngorms Working Party and was one of the two members who dissented from the majority conclusion, taking the view that the measures recommended by the majority were inadequate and that National Park status was appropriate.

The recommendations of the Cairngorms Working Party led to the setting up of the Cairngorms Partnership, which brought a more unified approach than before to the addressing of issues affecting the Cairngorms as a whole. However, things were destined to change more radically when, following the inception of the Scottish Parliament, the establishment of National Parks was announced as a definite objective of the new Scottish Executive. Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) were commissioned to consider how National Parks might best be established and operated in Scotland, not necessarily on the same lines as those elsewhere. They published a consultation paper in September 1998, and the Club of course submitted a response. SNH then reported back to the Scottish Executive, who in January 2000 published a draft National Parks (Scotland) Bill, draft because the Executive wished it to be open to public consultation, before an actual bill was laid before the Parliament. The draft Bill said nothing about which areas might be designated as National Parks, but set out criteria for selecting such areas. There was also a method for the implementation of designation, a draft Designation Order which would be



The Cairngorms in Winter from Sgor Mor

open, surprise surprise, for still more consultation before being laid before the Parliament. Finally, there was a list of powers which might be conferred on a Park Authority, and a scheme for how its members might be appointed.

The Club in March 2000 dutifully made its contribution to the consultation process on the draft Bill - a modest four pages, as the merits of the approach taken were not really open to discussion, just the details. In due course the actual Bill was laid before the Scottish Parliament and, without much more public discussion, enacted.

By this time the Scottish Ministers had set themselves the political agenda of having two National Parks in place by early 2003, and it was known that the prime candidates were Loch Lomond and the Trossachs, and the Cairngorms. Detailed proposals were put forward, consulted on and adopted for a Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park before there was evident movement towards a Cairngorms National Park, but the Club took no real part in these discussions.

At the end of 2000 consultation began, again through SNH, on the possible establishment of a Cairngorms National Park. SNH were invited to consult and advise amongst other things on whether the Cairngorms met the statutory criteria, on the precise area which should be included if they were to be designated a National Park, and on the powers that the Park Authority should

have. The Club took a lead in arranging a meeting of kindred clubs in the north-east, with representation also from the Mountaineering Council of Scotland. The intent was to collate ideas, though not necessarily to arrive at a unanimous view. In April 2001 the Club's submissions were put in, this time eleven pages plus a summary. There were two issues which later came to be particularly contentious. On the first, the extent of the Park, the Club advocated a large area, essentially the whole mountain area centred on Upper Deeside, bounded on the west, north-west and south-west by the line of Glen Garry-Drumochter-Speyside, and coming down Deeside to around Dinnet. On the second, the powers of the Park Authority, we recommended that it should have as full powers as possible, including that of serving as the Planning Authority for its area.

A period of seeming inactivity followed, though punctuated for me by a pleasing manifestation of how systematic and consistent the Club had been in its approach. In February 2002 I had e-mailed a number of MSPs urging them to support a motion tabled with the Scottish Parliament that the Scottish Ministers should do more to pursue the possibility of World Heritage Site status for the Cairngorms. One of the recipients was an MSP who was on record as wanting to tear up the agreements and planning conditions whereby the operator of the Cairn Gorm funicular could not allow non-skiers to exit on foot at the top station. He e-mailed back asking on what basis the Club thought that the Park Authority should be the Planning Authority for its area (an issue linked with World Heritage Site status and canvassed in my e-mail). This response was at first sight innocuous enough, but it struck me that it might be a clever way to find out if we were just a club jumping on the band wagon of what others were saying without ourselves having thought things through. I picked the e-mail up one lunchtime, just hours before a debate on the motion about the World Heritage Site aspects, and I wanted to shoot something straight back. After a moment's hesitation, I realised that I had a ready-made answer in what we had said at one of the earlier stages of consultation, and so, with no more than a quick search of texts on the PC, I was able to send back a cogent response. It may not have persuaded the gentleman on the merits, but it should have let him see that the Club did not lobby about things that it had not stopped to consider!

At the end of May 2002 a Draft Designation Order was published. As with the draft Bill, the intent was that there should be a period of public consultation, with account taken of the responses before a definitive Draft Designation Order was laid before the Scottish Parliament. The Draft almost immediately became known as the Daft Designation Order. It allowed for an area markedly less than the area recommended by SNH (in particular including nothing from either Perthshire or Angus), and contrary to the prevailing view amongst groups such as the Club (though in keeping with SNH's recommendations) it did not make the Park Authority the Planning Authority for



The Cairngorms in Summer- the Cairngorm Traverse September 2002

its area. A period of less than three months, overlapping with the summer holiday period, was allowed for consultation, and there was no real chance to consult widely with kindred clubs in the way that had been possible with the draft Bill. However I was able to assimilate a range of informed views at a workshop in Dunkeld arranged by the Cairngorms Campaign and LINK. A Club position was then tentatively agreed by the committee and made known to members, who were encouraged to lobby MSPs. The Club's submissions on the issue of the designated area expressed criticism of the disparity between what the Ministers were proposing and what their own statutory adviser, SNH, had recommended (a disparity for which the Ministers gave no explanation, but which was generally taken to have political reasons, rather than reasons based on the success of the Park), and again urged more extensive planning powers.

There was some cause for optimism when the Scottish Parliament's Rural Development Committee, after looking into aspects of the Draft Order, came out with pronouncements critical of the limited area, but despite that, when the definitive Draft Order was formally tabled, it reflected only a small concession, the inclusion of the tops of the Angus Glens, though still none of Perthshire.

The parliamentary procedures and terminology, it should be said, were a little perplexing. We had had a Draft Designation Order put out for public

consultation. It was still however a Draft Designation Order when laid before Parliament. But it was not open to Parliament to scrutinise it and to table amendments in the way that happens with Bills. They could only debate whether or not it should be passed and either pass it in full or reject it in full.

It seemed that a significant number of MSPs, in line with the comments of the Rural Development Committee, thought that the Draft Designation Order was flawed. There was a school of thought that MSPs should be lobbied to reject it, with a reasonable prospect of them doing so. However, there was a contrary view that such an outcome might leave us with no Cairngorms National Park for a long time to come, and that half a park with an Authority possessed of half the powers that it might have, was better than none. Against this it could be argued that the Executive were so politically committed to having a second National Park in place before the May 2003 elections, that if they saw a real prospect of a defeat they would yet concede something.

For most of November 2002, there was ongoing dialogue amongst the groups who wanted a better Cairngorms National Park than the Scottish Ministers were offering. In order to be present at an important meeting in Edinburgh sponsored by the National Trust for Scotland (who were taking a lead role and making some very pointed public statements), I allowed myself, for the first time in thirty years, to miss a Club AGM. The meeting was worth attending, and after it I heard a few sympathetic MSPs in action at a briefing section. Alas, when it came to a parliamentary vote, although there had been nearly 50% support for a motion which might have led to something different, the vote on the actual Designation Order approved it by a considerable majority.

Before the Designation Order was even passed, advertisements had appeared in newspapers to the effect that applications were invited from persons interested in serving on the Park Authority. The Authority was to comprise twenty-five members: ten appointed by the Scottish Ministers on local authority nominations; five appointed by local elections; and ten appointed by the Scottish Ministers simply on the basis of their judgement as to who else would be well-qualified and committed members for the Authority. I came to think that I might myself apply to be considered, and others within and outwith the Club encouraged me to do so. I had some misgivings, mainly in relation to the time factor, but I did apply. I was afforded an interview, but I was not amongst those ultimately chosen. I must have been the only interviewee who had never undergone any similar interview before, but having progressed from apprentice to senior partner in the same office my only experience of interviews was from the side of the prospective employer!

The Cairngorms National Park Authority Board came into being on 25 March 2003. It had an initial period of just over six months within which to take stock of its role and resources before the Park itself came into being on 1 September 2003. As yet the Board has kept a fairly low profile, but it is

heartening that they chose as their Chairman someone who might be regarded as independent, rather than one of the local authority nominees. There is a Park Authority website at www.cairngorms.co.uk which is gradually being developed, and which brings copies of discussion papers and Board minutes into the public domain. As yet the Club has not sought to influence the Board in its policy-making. Perhaps in the next Cairngorm Club Journal we can review what the Park Authority has begun to achieve. Perhaps too there may be then be other National Parks in place or in prospect, and the Club will have to consider if the ranks of its office-bearers should be swollen to include a National Park Liaison Officer!

Past Proceedings

The first volume of the Cairngorm Club Journal was published in July 1893. This and the 105 issues that have followed over the subsequent years bring vividly to life the activities of the Club, the hills and the history of the times, and are fascinating for both the similarities and the differences when compared with Club activities in the twenty-first century. As many members may not have the opportunity to peruse these early volumes, it seems appropriate that as the Journal enters the new millennium it should reproduce a few extracts, some taken from a hundred years ago and some from fifty years ago.

A Hundred Years Ago

From Volume III no.18, January 1902

LOST ON CAIRNGORM

It must be emphasised that this cautionary tale of misadventure on the hill and an early mountain rescue does not refer to Club members!

The concluding sentence of a Note under the above title in Vol. I (1895) p. 260 of the *Journal* is: "It would be difficult to imagine a more badly equipped or a more mismanaged hill excursion from start to finish than the above." This was written of the doings of a young Grantown company, but last September another Grantown party risked their limbs and lives in an even more wanton manner. The recklessness of those in charge in these cases is difficult to explain, and can be fully appreciated only by experienced hillmen. The thoughtlessness of the excursionists of 1894 may be excused on account of their youth; but not so that of the more recent adventurers. The amateur mountaineer who undertakes to lead a mixed company to the top of any of the Cairngorms, especially when young girls are in his temporary charge, has a grave responsibility, and must make his dispositions accordingly. We should say that he must make a start from the bottom *before* mid-day, and provide himself with a map and compass, it being of course presumed that he knows how to use each. He is not entitled to assume that mist will not appear till he has conducted his charge to the bottom.

A party of twenty ladies and gentlemen drove and cycled from Grantown to Loch Morlich on 13th September last. Glenmore Lodge was reached at ten o'clock, but not left till noon - four ladies, however, preferring to remain below. Tea was to be ready for the climbers at 4.30, so they did not under-estimate their capabilities. The top of Cairngorm was reached about three o'clock, mist being entered into in the vicinity of the cairn. Apparently little attention had been paid to the nature of the ground as the cairn had been neared,

for they were not able to recognise or remember the side on which it had been approached. The wind was therefore adopted as guide for the return journey. Occasionally the wind *does* blow in one direction for several consecutive days even on the summits of the Cairngorms, but it also frequently indulges in rapid journeys round the compass. However, it did lead the party down - but on the wrong side, though they were ignorant of that fact. They only knew that, following running water, they found themselves near the edge of a precipice. They had descended towards Loch Avon at the most dangerous point; had they been more to the west there would have been a safe descent by the Coire Raibert Burn, more to the east by The Saddle. As it was getting dark, the party held upwards again, halting at a shingle and boulder-strewn patch. Their feet were wet, and they had with them absolutely nothing to eat - everything had been risked on the afternoon tea arrangement. A rough dyke was erected as some slight shelter for the night, but the temperature did not permit of a long-continued lack of motion, even though the gentlemen parted with some of their raiment to the ladies - all wraps having been thoughtfully (?) left below. The party marked the close of the 'day' by praise and prayer; we would fain hope that the leaders asked forgiveness for the great wrong they had done those dependent on them.

Shouts, whistles, and yells were occasionally indulged in, in the vain hope of rescue; the mist was even worse in the morning, and rain fell. A start was, however, made soon after 5am, but the running water was again found to lead only to precipices. At 7am one of the party had the misfortune to slip on a boulder, receiving an ugly gash on the forehead. There was, however, help at hand, as there were no fewer than three medical students in the company. This accident, coupled with the general unfortunate position, had a depressing effect, and another night on the hill seemed not improbable. A wounded ptarmigan was captured in case the involuntary fast should have to be prolonged for another day. A consultation was held between eight and nine o'clock, and again prayer was made. Soon thereafter the mist partially lifted, and the lost party imagined they were alongside the Nethy, but they were soon able to recognise Loch Avon. They estimated they were 300 - 400ft above the loch, to which they slowly and carefully descended, probably by the Feith Buidhe of the Stac an Fharaidh. When they had passed the lower end of the loch, and had decided on following the Avon to Tomintoul - an extraordinary resolution - they heard a shout on the slope to their left, and their rescuer appeared.

As hour after hour passed at Glenmore Lodge without the return of the hill party, considerable anxiety was felt for their safety. At 8pm, as it was evident that they could not descend without some difficulty, Mr. Hector M'Kenzie, the head forester, sent three ghillies, James Munro, Lewis Grant (1), and Lewis Grant (2) to the top of Cairngorm with a lantern. They returned at 1am, without result. These men, along with Mr. M'Kenzie, had to leave at 5am

for a grouse drive at Dunachton - Mr. Cooper being lessee of that moor as well as of the deer forest of Glenmore. Dunachton was reached at 7am, when Mr. Cooper, whose sympathy was of a practical nature, on being informed of the non-return of the climbers, sent his men back to Coylum Bridge in his motor car. Mr. M'Kenzie and the ghillies started from Glenmore Lodge, accompanied by two gentlemen who had arrived in search of their missing relatives. Two search parties were formed for the rocks above Loch Avon - one to descend to the Shelter Stone and return by Coire Lochan, the other to return by Mam Suim and Ryvoan. The latter party consisted of Mr. M'Kenzie and Lewis Grant (2). Before setting out Mr. M'Kenzie ordered telegrams to be sent to the Fife Arms Hotel, Braemar, and to the forester at Inchroy. He sent a man on horseback to W. Cameron, the 'Watcher' at Ryvoan, directing him to go up the Garbh Allt (Nethy) to Loch Avon; and also a message for assistance from an adjoining forest - but this request received no attention. Such a plan of campaign was almost bound to be successful, and the Ryvoan 'Watcher' had the good fortune to pick out the lost party with his telescope, finding them about a mile below Loch Avon. His supply of food was eagerly devoured, and stimulants were given to such as required them. A snap-shot was then taken of the group, and thereafter, Cameron leading, Ryvoan was reached, *via* the Garbh Allt, about 6pm. The effects of the long exposure were evident, except in the case of the youngest member - a twelve-year-old boy. A waggonette picked up the party near Glenmore Lodge.

Had the weather been stormy the result to the ladies and the weaker members would have been very serious. It is such hare-brained excursions as these that bring discredit on hill-climbing, besides causing anxiety to friends and relatives, and expense to those on whom falls the work of rescue. Cairngorm, though it is over 4000ft in height, is one of the easiest and safest mountains to climb we know, when the sun shines; but to those lost in the mist it is one of the most dangerous.

Fifty Years Ago

From Volume XVI no. 88, 1951-52

To celebrate the opening of the Cairngorms National Park in 2003, we reprint this prophetic glimpse of its possible future development by L.B.Perkins, then Honorary Meets Secretary.

NATIONAL PARK S7 (BLUESTONES)

I was glad to leave my class of 450 youngsters. I still feel that 400 is a reasonable maximum, even with the aids that science gives us today. So I was looking forward to my holiday, even though I had made S7 my third choice, and had now been given accommodation at the Corner Hotel. My acknowledgement card informed me that my room number was 635 and that I could have a bath on Tuesday and Friday, at 9pm, and that meals would be served to me at the fifth sitting.

The bus-train was late at Dee Falls, and as I waited in the checking-shed for the hotel car I reflected on the recent revision of names carried out by the Survey Committee. Some of the old names had become debased, losing their original meaning. The Committee had attempted to rename every point of interest, selecting names to accommodate local legend. For example, the Grey Pass was named to link up with the Grey Man of Black Mountain, and the former names of Larig Grau and Ben Dubh were no longer to be used.

An official approached me as I ruminated and asked me what I intended to do, as he was about to go off duty and had to lock the gates. The hotel car had left and there was no other means of transport. I asked if I could walk, and permission was granted after the official had taken part in a four-cornered telephone conversation between himself, his supervisor, Glasgow, and London. If I filled in an indemnity form . . .

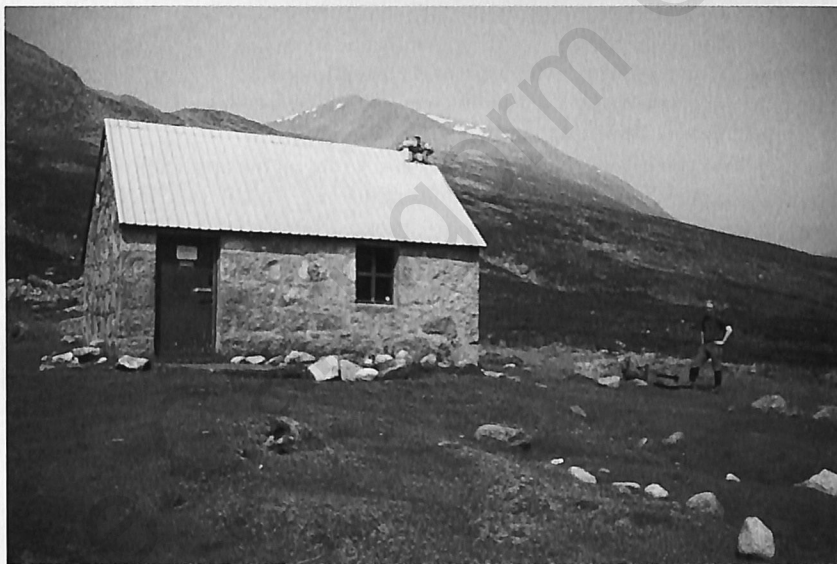
The official explained that the red path led to the Border Mountain, the green to the Low Pass, the black to the summit of Black Mountain, and the grey, leading up the Grey Pass, was the one for the Corner Hotel. The plastic tiles were electrically heated and glowed with fluorescent colours at night. It was forbidden to leave the paths.

I set off along the multi-coloured path and passed the Cleft of Yearning, where the red one went off up to the right. Derry Lodge, the notorious home of the Cairngorm Club, was skirted, and later I passed over a charming rustic aluminium and concrete bridge, up a long flight of steps, along the path, now grey in colour, and eventually came in sight of the Corner Hotel, which stands at the base of an impressive mountain called the Devil's Point.

From where I stood, looking up the Grey Pass, I could see the great mass

of the wind barrier, with its patterned openings in which revolved the great wheels generating electricity. I would have a closer look at Norlek's schemes during my holiday.

I turned away, crossed under the Dee through the famous tunnel, and entered the hotel. Its interior was familiar, as it was one of the standard ones built by the Tourist Board in the latter half of the century. The reception was also familiar and I entered my room in possession of only my most personal belongings. However, my room had a view to the east of a long, towering ridge, nameless because the Survey Committee had not agreed, as indeed they had failed to do with many others. As the use of the old names, either by word of mouth or in writing, was forbidden by statute, the position was obscure at least.



The Site of the Corner Hotel in Earlier Days

I went to the dining-room, but ran into difficulty when I found that I could not get a meal without production of my acknowledgement card, which was at the hotel office with my other identity papers. Explanations of a busy television channel leading to delays in contacting the identification section of Somerset House did not satisfy me, and in desperation I said "Cairngorm Club" and was immediately given a reserved table.

It should be explained at this stage that the Cairngorm Club found themselves in a very strong position on the founding of the 'S' group of parks. At that time its members, by clever negotiation, obtained for themselves and

their nominated successors the right to travel within the park by any route and to enter or leave it at any point. They also had the right to obtain full-service at the Corner Hotel free of charge, in view of their connection with the previous building. Among other things, they also held the right to feed the reindeer and bears which comprise the principal indigenous fauna of the area.

After dinner I walked in the ornamental park surrounding the hotel. The use of soil-warming has allowed the introduction of many exotic plants into this garden, but perhaps the most interesting sight is the artificial hot spring and geyser, the latter working on the introduction of a £1 note into a slit. The display in colours is very fine and well worth the trivial expenditure.

My luggage was in my bedroom when I returned and I took the opportunity of trying the fit of the nailed over-soles I had smuggled in. Nails, of course, are forbidden on the paths. To leave the path is also forbidden, and the application of these rules is carried out by checking the entry of nailed boots. Cairngorm Club members, who were of course allowed, in fact entitled, to leave the paths and very rarely used them, were given over-soles of polythene, but apparently they never used them.

I arranged to leave the hotel early and wrote on the application form that I wished "to study temperature variations at dawn." This is much safer than to mention the study of flowers or animals, as one never knows when an inspector will appear to catch one stealing specimens or taking photographs.

Arising at 5am I took breakfast from the preateria, getting the standard meal of fruit juice, protein slab, toast and coffee by the simple process of pushing six £10-note packets into the machine. I noted that porridge was available with the served breakfast. The Parks Executive do really try to maintain old customs; and I mean 'try'.

Leaving the hotel a little later, it was with little hesitation that I crossed the Dee by the stepping-stones, now an ancient monument, and set off across the heather, spurning the path, towards the slopes between Black Mountain and the unnamed hill. I would have been better advised to keep to the path, but my unorthodox route enabled me to see the fence denoting the boundary between land controlled by the Parks Executive and the high tops controlled and owned by Norlek.

In an hour I was at the fence, and soon found my way along it to a gate - open. I hesitated and then slipped inside. Now I would find out what happened inside the Norlek enclosures, the enclosures surrounded by a ring fence with open gates. The wind-stations were, of course, obviously generating electricity, but since the Nature Reserves had been taken over by Norlek some disconcerting tales had been given currency. However, the area within the fence had the appearance of being fairly normal but rather bare. I soon detected the absence of indigenous plants, contrasting with the carefully random planting of

them in the 'Park' area.

Bare stones with obviously misfit plants such as crowberry, cranberry, and moss campion seemed to indicate a reversion to the mid-century conditions, when 'indigenous' was taken to mean that plants found growing in any place were natural to that place, when in fact they might be merely relics from glacial ages. In these more enlightened days 'indigenous' is applied to plants and animals which are fitted to certain climatic conditions, and it was on this basis that the Parks Executive introduced strains of animals and plants, suitably conditioned, into the area and removed the misfit relics of glacial epochs.

On the other hand it was apparent that Norlek had done nothing. With its statutory control of Nature Reserves, obtained during the notorious 'access' action at the New Bailey between itself and the Parks Executive, it had maintained the status quo.

As I stood, a flock of ptarmigan wheeled, circled, and landed and I noticed a man feeding them; that is, he threw some food on the ground and the ptarmigan ate it. It was evident that the food wasn't being weighed, the ptarmigan were not counted, nor even a photograph taken. I couldn't understand this lack of desire to collect statistical information when the opportunity was so splendid. I approached and we had a long conversation. His job was with Norlek, in the wind-station. When not on duty he did what he wanted. He hadn't studied the diet of ptarmigan, but they liked the remains of his and his colleagues' meals. If they didn't they could go down to the Park and be studied. He didn't fill up a daily statistical card, he had a universal permit, he ... well, he was as free as any human being could have been in the early part of the last century, and that is saying a lot. The world of to-day seemed a long way off, with its standardisation, planning, control; statistics, and official orderliness.

After further conversation we parted and I was free to roam where I liked on the tops of the Black Mountain. Below me lay the Grey Pass, with its carefully planned random groups of indigenous trees and plants; its path, properly graded; its standard rock-climbs, constructed, classified, and labelled in varying degrees of severity and conforming with those in every other National Park. I turned and went over the bare Norlek zone, untouched except for the wind-stations, linked by pylons, and after an exciting hour reached the summit cairns.

There were three. One erected by the old Ordnance Survey sheltered a little stone pillar with a badly chipped, porcelain top. This was once a viewfinder, but none of the old names was now visible. Dwarfing the other two was the plastic-bonded transparent one set up in the middle of the twentieth century by the Society of Strangers to commemorate the Great Fire of London. The State, of course, had control of cairns now, following the indiscriminate erection of them to commemorate odd events, which aroused public feeling

recently and led to the official destruction of all the destructible ones.

I sat for a time and relaxed. I may have dozed off, but suddenly sat erect. Was I alone? I didn't feel alone. Surely someone, something, was watching, studying me, from behind one of the cairns. A picture of an official taking photographs and making notes sprang to my mind - I would break his beastly little camera. I jumped up and did a gyratory run round, in and out of the cairns. Nobody was there. I sat down again, still feeling watched. The Grey Man! The thought came to my mind and a flood of recollections of metaphysical studies poured into my conscious thought. Telepathy, hypnotism, thought control were established - spiritualism, demonology, black magic, all laughed out of existence, except for children's games.

Yet there was something - some nervous tension, something passing the thought to my brain that there was a better place for me than the summit of Ben Dubh.

I reached for my 'Familiar', the only term I had for the complete and ingenious instrument with which all mountaineers provide themselves, a device indicating every variable factor concerning natural conditions, and with many more functions as well. "Check everything," said my mind, and I started. Temperature normal; wind direction and force normal; relative humidity normal; light value - a little low for the clear sky and sunshine I was enjoying, but so was the temperature, possibly my eyes had got over-acclimatised. Magnetic field normal, as were total radiation from sun, colour of sky, ionisation - wait, ionisation was high. High indeed, it was visibly rising. I checked the temperature again. It was lower than before. Switching to humidity I found it rising; that was consistent with temperature drop. Light value was dropping, but sun's radiation the same. Ionisation was rising still and fairly rapidly, and a visible drop in temperature became apparent. I began to feel cold. The Grey Man or no, there was something inexplicable, and as I worked the instrument I felt fear, for I could feel darkness and cold creeping over me. Darkness and cold. No heat in the sun now and little light.

And then a sound came, a footfall, and I jumped up and fled. And as I did so, I thought I was followed, but had no time to look around and ran till I was exhausted and in bright sunlight again.

Later, as I neared the open gate in the Norlek fence, I met the man again. He has been busy, he ventured; trouble on the summit line. Queer it was, they often had flashovers on this line - just like a lightning stroke - when there was no storm within miles - and always when somebody was wandering about. It was maybe warm air currents rising. Queer, it was.

Queer indeed, thought I, but not warm air currents rising. Cold currents coming down. Cold currents coming down.

REFERENCES.

Dee Falls	Linn o' Dee
Black Mountain	Ben Macdhui
Ben Dubh	Ben Macdhui
Border Mountain	Beinn a Bhuird
Low Pass	Lairig an Laoigh
Corner Hotel	At Corrou
Grey Pass	Lairig Ghru
Cleft of Yearning	Clash Fhearnaig
Committee Hill	Carn a Mhaim
Norlek	Northern Electricity Authority

IN MEMORIAM

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

Ernle Beyts (OL 1973)
John C. Elgie (O 1994)
Muriel Fisher (A 1975)
Ada A. Graham (OL 1943)
Williamina Hay (OL 1931)
Kathleen Hetherington (A 1982)
David Levie (O 1984)
Edward I. McDougall (O 1952)
Archibald M. McGregor (OL 1947)
Robert A. Ruddiman (A 1979)
Alexander Tewnion (O 1947)
Harold Watt (OL 1967)
Charlotte H. Wisely (OL 1933)
William Wright (OL 1950)

Many of the above were members for a long time and had served on the Committee. Some current Club members will have affectionate memories of them.

ERNLE BEYTS

Ernle Beyts died on 18th September 2003, at the age of 87. He joined the Club in 1973, joining his wife, Edna, who had been a member for some time. By then, Ernle had been a diabetic for well over 30 years, so that Edna was not only his companion, but also the 'monitor' of his health on the hill. Sadly, Edna's own health failed, and she was no longer able to continue hill-walking. However, Ernle, by now an Ordinary Life member of the Club, was by no means ready to give up the hills, so others in the Club kept the necessary 'eye' on him.

Ernle's determination to 'bag Munros' had him attending bus meets and overnight excursions until he was past 70; and that included the long overnighter from Dundonnell to Kinlochewe via Beinn Tarsuinn on a glorious June 'night'. He joined in a memorable weekend meet to Knoydart in the early 1980s, and managed (with some of the weight of his food carried for him - we tend to forget that standard 'dried packets' don't suit diabetics!) to walk in to Barrisdale. The next day he was thrilled to reach the top of Ladhar Bheinn. His first solo 'wilderness experience' came the next day, when he was 'sent' via the stalkers' path to Loch Quoich; the rest of the group carrying his bags via the Loch Hourn path back to the cars and then picking him up. He had received STRICT advice on food intake, and knew that we'd find

him whatever, and enjoyed the stillness and isolation that so many of us (who can, and do, routinely walk alone in our Scottish hills) value enormously.

Professionally, Ernle was a librarian, but a man of many interests and talents, from gardening to playing the flute. He achieved medals for well-controlled diabetes lasting 50 and then 60 years - at the time of his death he was close to 70 years on! Ernle was a Quaker, and on a Club meet in Perthshire was observed standing on a 'quaking bog' - he 'quaked'! The Club was well represented at his Memorial Meeting in late September.

Ruth Payne

JOHN ELGIE

John was an experienced and accomplished mountaineer, with a keen sense of adventure and an immense sense of fun, and it was a privilege to have known him.

Originally from Buckinghamshire, John joined the RAF at an early age and travelled the world with them before moving to Plymouth where he developed a love for antiques and diving, gathering an interesting collection of maritime artefacts. Following his time in Devon, John was employed by Marconi as a telecommunications engineer, and travelled throughout the Middle East and North Africa, before settling in Aberdeenshire where he established a guiding company specialising in long, wild treks across the Scottish Highlands. However, realising that the guiding business was taking the enjoyment out of his hobby, John started a gardening business instead and saved the hills for pleasure. He soon found that he really loved being a gardener; it fitted well with his strong feelings about environmental issues. It also gave him the space to rekindle his love for the hills and allowed him to spend more time with his family, and to exercise his talent as a dog trainer, another facet to John's full and active life.

John was an active Club member, enjoying many of the Club's activities, from climbing on the Aberdeen sea cliffs, to barbecuing hamburgers at the Shelter Stone during the annual Cairngorm Traverse. He particularly enjoyed the camaraderie of the Weekend Meets, where his sense of fun and endless enthusiasm was an inspiration to others. On occasion, though, John's good humour wasn't always apparent, and it was sometimes joked that he had spent too long in the sun and sand to really enjoy the delights of the Scottish bogs and the unpredictable weather. I remember in particular an especially wet and windy round of the Fisherfield Six which didn't have the same appeal as a dry Shenavall Bothy. But an incident with the gas stove left John with no air in his inflatable sleeping mat, resulting in a sleepless and rather grumpy night before a hasty retreat the next day to a warm car and a good laugh at Corrie Hallie.

John's sense of fun was never more apparent than on a Club trip to Rum, when an amusing incident with fire might have easily led to the destruction of

Kinloch Castle, as the rest of us were far too helpless with laughter to lend a hand to extinguish the flames. Fortunately no damage was done, and it didn't prevent John from joining in the laughter before completing a round of the Rum Cuillins.

John was a knowledgeable and skilled climber who selflessly gave his time to instruct and lead others, but though climbing was his first love he just enjoyed being in the hills, having fun, in the company of friends. He died as a result of injuries sustained in an avalanche on Lochnagar and with his death many people have lost a great friend.

Geoff Cumming

KATHLEEN HETHERINGTON

Kathleen died, aged 58, on April 1st 2004 after a short illness. She had been a Club member for many years following in the footsteps of her husband, John. Kathleen trained in PE at 'Dumf' and worked at Aberdeen University, before marrying John, whom she met here. Latterly she taught PE, especially at Donaldson's School for the Deaf in Edinburgh. She had many interests and skills, from sport and Scottish country dancing to music, and of course her love of the hills.

Although she and John have lived in Edinburgh for many years, Kathleen was one of the original group of Club mums for whom Eddie Martin set up the Muir July Family Week. Kathleen, along with Gill Shirreffs, Judy Middleton and Shelagh Lawson and their respective children, spent a number of these 'weeks', encouraging the young, keen and not so keen, up their first Munros, and spending relaxing hot summer days around Muir. She kept us all on our toes but always with good humour.

Kathleen was always good company on the hill and was especially pleased to walk with those of us who did not move at speed! She enjoyed getting out and away from busy city life, into the peace of the mountains. In addition to the Family Weeks Kathleen also came on some of the early Weekend Meets, and she and John regularly attended the Club Dinner.

She leaves her husband John, and sons Callum (keen Munroist and Club member) and Thomas.

Gill Shirreffs

SANDY TEWNION

Sandy Tewnion, one of the hardy breed of outdoor characters forged over the years on the granite anvil of the Cairngorm mountains, died at his home in Dollar in April 2003. He taught biology at Dollar Academy for 20 years from the early 1960s.

Sandy was one of three Aberdeen brothers who conducted a campaign of exploratory climbing in the Cairngorms in the 1930s and 40s, when it was still something of an adventure even to penetrate into their craggy recesses. One brother

emigrated to Canada, becoming President of the Alpine Club of Canada; a second died in a blizzard of exceptional savagery that engulfed his party above Loch Ossian in December 1951.

Sandy came to wider notice in a characteristically distinctive way. While on leave during the war, and walking alone on the cloud-blanketed plateau of Ben Macdui to study dotterel, he had a terrifying encounter with the Great Grey Man. Sandy brought the meeting to a close by firing three shots from his Service revolver into the mist. Anyone less likely to have invented such a tale, or to be subject to the fears or imaginings that might give rise to mountain spectres, it would be hard to envisage: but no-one who heard Sandy describe the incident was left in any doubt of its reality for him. Sightings of the Great Grey Man seem to have been few and far between since the War.

Later in the war he suffered severe leg wounds that left him lame and in pain for the rest of his life. Despite this handicap Sandy continued to walk the Scottish mountains, and to study and photograph their wildlife. He made a real contribution to our knowledge of mountain hare, dotterel, and snow bunting, and contributed finely illustrated articles and notes to a range of journals and magazines. It was a measure of his enthusiasm that he was able to convert me and several equally sceptical friends, who had joined his school Natural History Society at Dollar in the hopes of gaining access through Sandy to bigger and further mountains, to the joys of counting ducks and trapping spiders around the Ochils.

On first acquaintance Sandy appeared the dourest of dour Aberdonians. His withering stare and gruff sarcasm could cow any unruly pupil. But that granitic exterior concealed a man of much kindness, wry humour, and intense feeling for the mountains, islands, and wildlife of Scotland. His compelling blue eyes shone with a light that seemed drawn from the wide winter skies of the Cairngorms. For many friends and former pupils who held him in high regard and affection, memories of Sandy will always be inseparable from a vision of the inspiring spaciousness of those high plateaux and the plunge of their remote crag-rimmed corries.

Bob Aitken

HAROLD WATT

The death of Harold Watt in Cambridge in December 2003 brings to the end a long family association with the Club, the printing industry and Aberdeen. Harold's father, Theodore Watt, and his uncle, Edward Watt, who both joined the Club in 1911-12, were eminent local men - Theodore a master printer and Edward Provost of Aberdeen in 1935. Harold joined the Club in 1967, the same year that his brother Alan became Club President, and Harold himself became Vice-President in 1973 and President in 1976.

After wartime service as a pilot, and afterwards training as a printer, Harold

joined Aberdeen University Press in 1948. He took a professional interest in the appearance of the Club's *Journal*, and helped Sheila Murray design the President's Badge of Office. On the hill, he was famed for the same precision, returning to the bus within a minute of the Meet Secretary's appointed hour.

Elizabeth Hardy writes:

I enjoyed the pleasure of Harold's company on a number of Club Meets. He had joined the Club in 1967, but his knowledge of and interest in the hills, particularly the Cairngorms, began many years earlier. He recalled the days when one could take a morning train from Aberdeen to Grantown, for example, cycle in for a hill walk, then return to Aberdeen in the evening with the added comfort of the dining car.

He rarely missed a Meet and for some years was accompanied by his wife Betty. He enjoyed the overnight excursions even when the weather left much to be desired. In 1983 he underwent heart by-pass surgery and only six months later was able to tackle the traverse of Glen Tilt. He was proud to be President, continuing his family's involvement with the Club. His sense of humour was much appreciated at Club dinners.

After Betty died he later married again, exchanging the Scottish hills for Cambridgeshire, where he enjoyed another of his interests, music, attending many concerts.

Robbie Middleton, Hut Custodian, reports a last word:

Shortly after our initial appeal to members for financial assistance to renovate Muir of Inverey, I received a letter from Past President of the Cairngorm Club, Dr Harold Watt, from his home in Cambridge. I had been away over Christmas and unfortunately did not hear of his sudden death in December. I therefore replied to him, thanking him for offering us his Christmas heating allowance bonus from Mr Brown towards the proposed works to be carried out at Muir. What a practical idea!

It was a shock to receive a call from Muriel Watt, telling me that Harold had died on his way home from church in early December. She intimated that she knew of his wish to help with Muir and asked if she could send the cheque directly to me. I little thought that the accompanying letter would contain a lovely last word from Harold to share with all his old friends in the club. Muriel copied what Harold had written in his diary just four days before his sudden and unexpected death:

"I have written a note, promising a £160 gift as a contribution to there refurbishing of Muir, as a modest return for what in sheer enjoyment the Cairngorm Club has given me."

Muriel closed, *"He was such a happy man!"* Thank you, Harold.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE CLUB

GENERAL MEETINGS

Since the last journal in 2001, there have been two Special General Meetings. The first was on 26th November 2003, when a motion to amend the Constitution to include a new Office Bearer position of Communications Secretary, was unanimously approved. The position relates to communications in a broad sense, but in particular covers the production of the Newsletter and the management of the website, as the latter has gained increasing significance in this electronic age and has become an essential marketing tool for the Club.

The second SGM, which was held on 31st March 2004, brought the unanimous approval of constitutional amendments which have radically altered the legal status of the Club. The Club is now a non-profit-making organisation and, as such, can obtain Inland Revenue recognition as a Community Amateur Sports Club (CASC). The change in legal status came about upon the recommendation of the Treasurer, Derek Pinches, against the background of the fundraising initiative in connection with the Muir refurbishment project. Donations made toward the project now should be able to attract Gift Aid tax relief. Future additional financial benefits may also flow from this change in status.

At the AGM on 21st November 2001, vacancies in the Office Bearer positions were filled as follows: Geoff Cumming was elected as Vice-President; Fred Belcher as Climbing Secretary; Derek Beverley as Weekend Meets Secretary and Anne Cassidy as Secretary. The following were elected to the vacant Ordinary Committee positions: Marjory Ewan, Joyce Ritchie, Adrian Scott, Gill Shirreffs, Zöe Šokec and Stan Urbaniak.

At the AGM on 27th November 2002, all existing Office Bearers were re-elected and vacancies in Ordinary Committee member positions were filled by Kevin Bannister, Neil Gauld and Andy Lawson.

At the AGM on 26th November 2003, Ian Bryce was appointed President and other vacant Office Bearer positions were filled as follows: Eilidh Scobbie as Vice-President; Andy Lawson as Bus Meets Secretary; Kevin Bannister as Climbing Secretary and Garry Wardrope as Communications Secretary. Ordinary Committee member vacancies were filled by Tim Walmsley, Jean Robinson and Ken Mills.

ANNUAL DINNERS

The 2001 Annual Dinner was held in the Jarvis Amatola and a talk was given by Bob Reid of the SMC on 'A Winter Traverse of the Cuillin Ridge'. The 2002 Annual Dinner was held in the Jarvis Amatola and a talk was given by nutritionalist, Dr. Chris Fenn, on 'Eating to Climb Everest'. The 2003 Annual Dinner was held in the Aberdeen Northern Hotel. John McKenzie, President of the Mountaineering Council of Scotland, gave a talk on 'Climbs in the Northwest Highlands'.

Anne Cassidy
Secretary

MEETS AND EXCURSIONS

Below is the final report from Graham Ewen, who retired as Bus Meets Secretary at the November 2003 Annual General Meeting, after no fewer than 36 years of service. Such a period of effort over Sunday early morning rises, the Scottish bus and hotel systems, late returnees from the hill, complaints over supper menus, and what Graham, in his first report, called the 'economic rate' of providing bus seats, should not go unremarked.

Over the years the *CCJ* accounts of bus, overnight and Easter meets give little away about the activities of their author; and it was sometimes observed on the bus that the Meets Secretary (in conformity with current MC of S safety guidelines, and like his successor) was a facilitator rather than a leader. Thus, his comings and goings during a meet tended to be shrouded in some obscurity. Yet, at the end of the day, he usually appeared well acquainted with conditions on the hill, and on cross-country excursions, though last to leave the bus, he was mysteriously sitting in his usual seat when the rest of us clocked in. Things were a little different on the return journeys; Graham no doubt felt it his duty to see that the hotel bar was ready for the Club's custom.

Graham has faithfully recorded bus and other meets over the years in this *Journal*, but only the Committee was fully privy to his statistical system, which could tell you that the average bus meet attendance was 35.2 in 1979, or that we had visited Lochnagar 27 times in the last 15 years, 75% of the time in bad weather.

During Graham's reign, although roads have improved, changes in the regulations over bus drivers' hours, have made life more difficult - bus meets once ventured as far afield as Ben Lomond! The numbers, patterns and behaviour of Club members have also changed enormously - no longer are the ladies allowed sole access to the bus to get changed. But, throughout this time, behind the scenes, Graham was always there, on the telephone, dealing with his coloured forms, and planning the next dozen meets for the Committee. The Club owes him an enormous debt, and we offer sincere thanks from all those who have enjoyed bus meets over the past decades.

Ken Thomson

EXCURSIONS 2001-2003

The average attendance for the period covered by this journal was 21.8, a drop of 1.5 from the average of the previous period. The attendance for each is given in the list at the end of this report.

The first excursion to take place in the period covered by this report was the Cairngorm Traverse in September 2001. On arrival in Speyside the hills were very much covered in cloud and the day did not look very promising. However as the morning progressed the clouds cleared and it became a very pleasant day. Most members stayed on the bus as far as the car park on Cairngorm and all the Munros between there and Derry Lodge were climbed by at least one party. One member

went through the Lairig Ghru. In October between Crathie and Glen Muick it was a bit windy, but most of the party traversed Lochnagar, one or two of them ascending by the Black Spout. The November excursion to the Cromdale Hills turned out to be a very wet and windy day. Nevertheless the party disembarked as planned at Bridge of Brown and traversed the Cromdale Hills finishing off at Advie rather wet for the experience. At Auchallater in December the day started rather windy and later on became rather wet, but a wide variety of hills were still climbed on both sides of Glen Clunie, some members even going as far as the Tolmount. This trip finished with a ceilidh in Braemar Golf Club.

On Lochnagar in January 2002 it was a rather cold and windy day. Most members ascended Lochnagar via the Ladder and returned by the Glas Allt. A number of members climbed the Black Spout. There was a very disappointing turn out for the excursion to Clachnaben in February with only ten in attendance. It was a very pleasant day and all present ascended the hill by the new path from Glen Dye. Most people extended their day by going west to the Hill of Edendocher before descending to Charr, from where they made their way back to the bus along the estate



At the Summit of Little Wirren

road. Having failed to get to Loch Lee in February of 2001 it was decided to attempt this excursion again in March 2002. Alas, it was not to be. When we arrived in Edzell it was snowing heavily, and it was deemed inadvisable to take the bus any further. The bulk of the party plodded through the snow to the top of the Hill of Wirren from there. Others went on shorter low-level walks.

In April the excursion to Glas Tulaichean turned out to be rather wet and cold. The main party ascended from Glen Lochsie and descended via Loch nan Eun. In

May the customary excursion to Perthshire was on this occasion to Ben Vorlich and Stuc a' Chroin. Despite the fact that it was a very wet day, both these hills were climbed by the President's Party. Others called it a day after climbing Ben Vorlich itself. One party persuaded the bus driver to take them halfway down Loch Lubnaig, and then made their way over the low pass which leads from there into Glen Ample. The June excursion was advertised as a trip to Beinn a' Bhuidr but in fact the President's Party went to Ben Avon via the Slugain Glen and the Sneck. It was a wet morning but later cleared up. The descent was made into Glen Gairn and from there returning to Alltdourie via the Bealach Dearg.

Only eight people turned out in August for the excursion from Auchallater to Glen Muick, almost certainly the lowest attendance ever recorded on a Club bus meet. It was a beautiful day and seven of the party traversed both Cairn Taggart and Lochnagar, while one lone member went over Cairn Bannoch and Broad Cairn. The good weather continued on the Cairngorm Traverse in September. The bulk of the party made their way to the top of Ben Macdui by various routes, some going on to Derry Cairngorm. One party went down to the Shelter Stone, thereafter climbing Beinn Mheadhoin. In October we had another good day for the excursion from Glen Esk to Glen Clova. The most popular route on this occasion was over Cairn Caidloch and from there westwards to Muckle Cairn. From here a detour was made southwards to take in Ben Tirran before turning north again to Green Hill to pick up the track which leads down into the glen past Loch Brandy. The run of good weather continued in November for the excursion to Ben Rinnes. The starting point was in Glen Rinnes and the entire party followed a much improved footpath from there to the summit. From there the route was northwards, eventually crossing the main Aberlour to the Grantown-on-Spey road, to pick up the Speyside Way, which was then followed into Aberlour where the bus was waiting. The last excursion of the year was to the Linn of Dee followed by a ceilidh at Braemar Golf Club. A variety of walks were undertaken on a rather pleasant day, the most ambitious being a traverse of Derry Cairngorm.

As usual the first excursion of 2003 was to Lochnagar in January. It was a rather overcast day with snow lying right down as far as the Falls of Muick but it was melting rapidly and by the end of the afternoon all the snow below around 2,000ft had melted. Most of the party set off to climb Lochnagar by the Ladder route, but some of them diverted to climb the Black Spout. It was here that an avalanche took place that resulted in the tragic death of John Elgie, one of our members, whose obituary is on page 179. In February the excursion was to Ben Wyvis. Following a string of low attendances on previous February excursions a self-drive minibus was used instead of hiring a coach. The experiment proved quite successful, the attendance being the best February figure for some time. Ben Wyvis was successfully 'conquered' and the party stopped for a fish supper in Dingwall on the return journey. In March at Glen Clunie the weather was very poor, as it was raining and there was quite a strong southerly wind. Undeterred, the bulk of the party left the bus at the old Glen Clunie Lodge with the intention of climbing Carn Aosda, Carn a' Gheoidh and the Cairnwell. However the weather won on this occasion and only Carn Aosda was climbed, the party arriving back at the bus around lunchtime. The

afternoon was spent in Braemar where the weather was much better. Several members ascended Creag Choinnich, while others spent the afternoon looking around souvenir shops or in the pub.

The weather was very good for the excursion from Glen Clova to Glen Muick in April. Most of the party ascended Broad Cairn from Bachnagairn and returned via Loch Muick. In Perthshire in May the weather was less kind, with some heavy showers and the higher tops covered in mist for most of the day. Nevertheless some members did climb Ben More but the largest party got off the bus at Ardchyle and walked from there to Lochearnhead through Gleann Dubh and Glen Kendrum, some taking in the Corbett of Meall an t' Seallaidh on the way. Much better weather attended the excursion from Glen Esk to Ballater in June, the whole party following the right of way throughout, taking in the summit of Mount Keen on the way.

The first excursion after the summer break was to Lochnagar. It turned out to be a very hot day, but the whole party ascended Lochnagar by a variety of different routes. On the Cairngorm Traverse, however, the weather was not so good, the day starting off rather overcast and gradually deteriorating into a persistent drizzle which left most of the party rather wet by the end of the day. Nevertheless the bulk of the party did a traverse of Ben Macdui descending into Glen Luibeg via the Sron Riach. Surprisingly everyone was back at the bus well before the deadline of 7pm so the bus was able to leave the Linn of Dee early. The October excursion was from Inverey to Spittal of Glenshee. It was again a rather overcast day with a low cloud base but at least it stayed dry. Some members crossed Beinn Iutharn Mhor, reporting that they had found it very cold on the top. A rather larger number ascended An Socach, while others took the 'low ground route' crossing over from Glen Ey in between An Socach and Beinn Iutharn Beag to Loch nan Eun and descending from there. In November the excursion was from Strathdon to Ballater. The starting point was about a mile west of Candacraig, where there is a bridge across the Don. It was quite wet in the morning but cleared by lunchtime to give a fine afternoon. The entire party climbed Cairn Mona Gowan with some going on from there to climb Morven also, while others descended from there into Glen Gairn. The last excursion of the year was to the Gordon Way, starting off at the top of the Suie Hill and following its entire length to the Bennachie Centre or Esson's Car Park as it used to be called. It turned out to be a beautiful day and all present completed the entire route, many taking in all the tops of Bennachie on the way.

2001

16 September	Cairngorm Traverse (42)
7 October	Crathie to Glen Muick (15)
4 November	Cromdale Hills (19)
2 December	Auchallater (32)

2002

13 January	Lochnagar (36)
10 February	Clachnaben (10)
10 March	Loch Lee (19)

21 April	Glas Tulaichan (20)
19 May	Ben Vorlich (24)
16 June	Beinn a Bhuird (16)
25 August	Auchallater to Glenmuick (8)
15 September	Cairngorm Traverse (26)
6 October	Glen Esk to Glen Clova (22)
3 November	Ben Rinnes (19)
24 November	Linn of Dee (21)

2003

6 January	Lochnagar (28)
9 February	Ben Wyvis (14)
9 March	Glen Clunie (14)
13 April	Glen Clova to Glen Muick (15)
18 May	Ben More and Stobinian (27)
15 June	Glen Esk to Ballater (16)
24 August	Lochnagar (24)
14 September	Cairngorm Traverse (32)
12 October	Inverey to Spittal of Glenshee (20)
9 November	Strathdon to Ballater (20)
7 December	Gordon Way (27)

Graham Ewen

WEEKEND MEETS

In January 2002, only two months after taking over from Geoff Cumming as Weekend Meets Secretary, my home in the north-end of Aberdeen was completely destroyed by fire. I lost everything, including hill journals and all my mountain gear. I tell you this not to secure your sympathy, for I am now well over the event and the turmoil that followed, but rather as an excuse for the absent or patchy detail that may follow.

The first meet covered took place at Laggan Potteries Bunkhouse in December 2001. Organised and run by Geoff Cumming, a Christmas Dinner of turkey and all the trimmings awaited parties who were out on Corrieyairack Hill and Creag Meagaidh. On the latter, the party who had been climbing failed to reach the summit due to deep soft snow on their chosen route and were forced to turn back. In the evening many adjourned to the hot-tub and enjoyed a wine or a beer *al fresco* beneath the stars!

The January Meet of 2002 was as usual at Muir Cottage. Carn a' Mhaim in the Lairig Ghru and Sgor Mor lower down Glen Dee were both successfully climbed. Deep soft snow again however was the issue of the day - one party, ascending from Loch Etchachan, failed to reach the summit of Derry Cairngorm due to white-out conditions and deep soft snow underfoot, and a party climbing on Lochnagar was likewise hampered. This overdue but safe duo ran out of time on Black Spout Buttress and had to abseil off from halfway up. They were very late sitting down to

their haggis, neeps and tatties - for this meet has traditionally been a Burns' Supper Meet. In February, Ian Bryce and the usual suspects made it to Crianlarich Youth Hostel where many of the surrounding hills received attention. In March the late John Elgie was the sole attendee at the Ratagan Youth Hostel Meet. Deep soft snow and blizzard conditions once on the Five Sisters Ridge hampered progress to such an extent that he was forced to retreat.

The Easter Meet, which now comes under the umbrella of Weekend Meets, took place at the Spean Bridge Hotel in April 2002. The weather was glorious. Cloudless blue skies and near windless conditions meant that many of the surrounding snow-capped hills were visited. Corbett's List received much attention, especially from the 12 or so more senior members who chose to stay in the Hotel itself - a further 10 members, occupying the Roy Bridge bunkhouse, were more set on gathering Munros. All got together in the evening. In May the Club descended on Skye for what was, again, a weekend of terrific weather. Many took tents, it was midge-free, and some long days were had including a 12½-hour round high above Coire Lagan. This party ascended by way of the Cioch Slab (Original Route) and Eastern Gully and descent was by the An Stac screes. The Pinnacle was not climbed due to lack of time, queues and dehydration. One party however failed even to make the ridge: without ice-axes or crampons, wet sun-warmed snow and ice high up in the Great Stone Shoot halted progress. A comical descent, partly on our bums, followed, the remainder of the day being spent on the hot stone-slabs that are Coire Lagan. Blaven and other tops on the ridge were also visited by members, one of whom was celebrating her birthday.

In June 2002 we had two weekends away. The first, to the Lazy Crofter at Durness, attracted 16 members. Ben Hope and Arkle were climbed and a five-pitch V. Diff climb (I believe it was 'Offside') on Creag na Faolim, a crag, was successfully undertaken by many. The second at Glenmore Lodge, attracted three members for the AGM of the MC of S, when Fred Belcher was elected as Vice-President. In July Gordon Stalker and myself walked into Kinbreack Bothy in Glen Kingie for what was a very enjoyable meet (well it was a meet: there were the two of us!). See Gordon's article elsewhere in this *Journal* for a fuller report. In August Laggan Potteries again was the venue. The Saturday was a bit misty and wet but many of the surrounding hills received attention including the Easains and the Grey Corries. Beinn a' Chaorainn and Beinn Teallach were ascended by one party as was Stob Poite Coire Ardair from 'the window' on Creag Meagaidh. In the evening after a communal meal, all attended and very much enjoyed a ceilidh, which is held annually in Laggan Village Hall. September saw the club at Onich. Climbing in Glencoe was undertaken by nearly all, and the Long Climb and Archer's received attention. The Buachaille Etive Mor was also bagged by the tourist route, and the Aonach Eagach ridge was successfully traversed by three lady members. On Sunday the girls found themselves 'off route' on Curved Ridge, Buachaille Etive Mor. Some very difficult ground had to be climbed before the easy descent could be made. On Monday Bidean nam Bian was climbed by one party by Dinnertime Buttress.

October saw the meet split between the SMC Hut at Elphin and the Assynt Field Centre. Good weather meant Ben More Assynt, Conival and many local

Corbetts were climbed, the hills all having snowy tops. One party managed Cul Mor and Cul Beag. Everyone descended on the Hut in the evening for the now fairly regular communal meal and get together, Eilidh Scobbie organising. In November only six members made it past a flooded Elgin for a meet at Kath Gregory's Bunkhouse at Cannich. All six successfully traversed the Strathfarrar Four, which were in winter condition. Sgorr na Diollaid was visited on the Sunday. The December Meet took place at Callander, as the original venue, Loch Ossian Youth Hostel, had to be closed for refurbishment. Again a Christmas Dinner featured and a great time was had by all. Ben Vorlich and Stuc a' Chroin were climbed, the meet being organised by Joyce Ritchie.

Joyce also organised the following meet in January 2003 to Muir. Derry Cairngorm, Carn Bhac (from Altanour Lodge) and Sgor Mor in Glen Dee were all successfully climbed, as was Carn na Drochaide by our then President and current Journal Editor. The party who set out for Ben Macdui failed to reach the summit owing to high winds and vicious wintry showers. In the evening Anne Cassidy piped in the haggis and a great night was had by all. The following day saw a dramatic change in the weather. It became really warm and incredibly windy. A party out on a snowless Culardoch had to crawl on all fours to reach the balmy summit. The temperature given for Aboyne, just down the road, was subsequently given as 17.7°C - unreal! In February a high-pressure system meant conditions at Crianlarich Youth Hostel were just right for some winter mountaineering. Beinn Mhanach, Beinn Achaladair and Ben an Dothaidh were all visited, as was Ben Lui by Central Gully. The Tarmachan Ridge was traversed by one party, again in crampons, on the Sunday. March saw the meet split between the Ling Hut and Torridon Youth Hostel. Messrs Belcher, Fellowes, Walmsly, Wardrope and Bannister traversed Liathach, roping up for the trickier sections, whilst the party at the Youth Hostel favoured the nearby Corbett, Ben Damh. Another party successfully climbed Beinn Liath Mhor. One senior member fell and injured himself quite badly whilst descending a Corbett in the area; he has however made a remarkable and almost full recovery.

The Easter Meet of 2003 took place at the Aultguish Inn, Loch Glascarnoch, and was attended by 42 members. Some lovely spring weather meant all of the Fannichs and Beinn Dearg hills were visited in many combinations. Two parties managed a five-Munro day, traversing all the tops from Sgurr nan Each to Beinn Liath Mor Fannich. Brocken Spectres were seen higher up, whilst lower down one party encountered an otter. Beinn a' Chaisteil, Ben Wyvis and Little Wyvis were all visited as was Sgurr Bhreac and A' Chailleach on Sunday by two parties. Seana Bhraigh was climbed by one member, who went on to gather the Munros of the Beinn Dearg group, leaving off only Cona' Mheall. One member who had recently reached 70 years of age added an extra excitement to the event by hiring a Ceilidh Band for us all to dance to on Saturday. The accommodation and food (we ate wild boar for tea) was good and the venue more than suitable to our needs, with quite a few members choosing to camp adjacent to the Hotel.

In May Zöe Sokec ran a successful meet to the Merseyside Mountaineering Club Hut in North Wales. Climbing and scrambling routes on Tryfan were undertaken on Saturday, despite intermittent lashing rain, and on Sunday a mass saunter to the Devil's Kitchen took place. Ironically, Monday gave the best weather,



The Easter Meet 2003, on the Druim Reidh Ridge of Tomain Coinich

but by then most Aberdeen-based members were on their way home. The party who stayed on undertook the Snowdon Horseshoe. June saw 10 members joining countless others for the MC of S AGM at Glenmore Lodge. Most stayed at the Lodge but one camped and another made use of the newly renamed Glenmore Lodge Youth Hostel. Bynack More and Cairngorm were climbed as was Meall a' Bhuachaille. The Fiacaille Ridge was ascended by one party whilst others opted for the organised events such as 'use and misuse of GPS'. In July with many members away in Zermatt, 29 made it to Achiltibuie for a camping meet. A ceilidh on Friday and a seafood barbecue on the Saturday made for a most enjoyable weekend for all who attended. Local Corbetts, perhaps unsurprisingly, received much attention. A highlight for the organiser must have been the disintegration and disappearance of her rather suspect tent during the first, rather windy, night!

In August, at the tail end of a long heat-wave, 32 members descended on Kinlochleven for a rather 'midgie' weekend. Superb weather meant climbing in Glencoe for some and Munros in the Mamores for others. Curved Ridge received a lot of attention. One party climbed the Pap of Glencoe and enjoyed some terrific views from its rocky little summit. September 2003 saw 14 members gather at the Whitehouse, Knoydart, which despite the cold showers was found to be an excellent bunkhouse. On Saturday most ascended Luinne Bheinn and Meall Buidhe. It was a warm and sunny day with views across to Mull and Rhum. The highlight came on Sunday, however, with a mass ascent of Ladhar Bheinn in deteriorating weather. Atop, Gordon Stalker celebrated his final Munro amongst friends, with all enjoying some champagne and shortbread. A presentation of a bottle (of whisky) and a gift

voucher was made. In October at Morag's, Fort Augustus, some terrific weather meant that many hills were bagged. Gleouraich and Spidean Mialach, Sgurr a Mhaoraich and the Carn Ghluasaid group were all visited over the weekend which saw members in shorts and tee-shirts high up above the fog, for there was a temperature inversion on Saturday. One party managed Stob Ban and two adjacent Munros in the Grey Corries, whilst others were out on the Five Sisters of Kintail. Gairich and Aonach Mor were also climbed, the latter partly by gondola! However, the weather changed on Sunday and one party had to turn back high up on Gleouraich due to high winds and snow. A salmon and champagne reception, in anticipation of an impending marriage, was given by the organiser and his bride-to-be on Saturday night, and was very well received!

The Laird's Bothy, Kingussie, was the venue for the November Meet and 24 members attended. Facilities were good and the following hills were all climbed: Stob Choire Clairigh, Stob Coire an Laoigh, Beinn Teallach, Carn an Fhreceadain, Sgorr Gaoith and Meall Chuaich. On the Sunday most folk headed for Glen Banchor, for an ascent of Carn Dearg, Carn Sgulain, and A' Chailleach. A highlight of this meet was stumbling upon the opening of the Strathspey Away Festival, a celebration of music, song and dance. All enjoyed the Friday night ceilidh, some so much in fact that they've taken to dancing classes!

Loch Ossian Youth Hostel has been extensively refurbished to a high and ecologically sound standard. At the head of a Loch Ossian there now stands a very grand and modern shooting lodge, and at Corrou Halt there is now a small pub as well as a bunkhouse. It was at the ever-popular venue of the Youth Hostel that 18 members met up in December 2003. On Saturday the weather was not great, with rain, sleet, hill fog and snow higher up. Despite this parties were out on Carn Dearg and Sgorr Gaibhre, Beinn na Lap, Leum Uilleim, Stob Coire Sgriodain and Chno Dearg. Another party, away early, managed all three Munros above the Uisge Labhair (loud waters), going over Beinn Eibhinn, Aonach Beag and Geal Charn, but were very wet on their return. On Sunday, most walked out mid-morning over the Road to the Isles, whilst others waited for the late train.

In January 2004, 34 members and guests were at Muir for the Burns' Supper gathering. Fred Belcher *et al.* supplied the haggis, neeps and tatties and the catering was up to the usual high standard. Longest day on the hill goes to the party out on the west-side of the Lairig Ghru, who managed Devil's Point, Sgor an Lochain Uaine and Cairn Toul. However, many members enjoyed a less strenuous time with lower-level walks, mostly in and around the Mar Lodge policies. Our new Bus Meets Secretary climbed a snowless Broon Coo Hill on the Sunday.

In February, 18 members made it through the blizzards and snowdrifts for a meet at Laggan Potteries Bunkhouse, a favourite venue. The weather was glorious both days with clear blue skies and much sunshine (many came home with sunburnt noses). The following hills were all climbed: Creag Meagaidh, Stob Poite Coire Ardair, Beinn a' Chaorainn, Beinn Teallach, Corrieyairack Hill, the Fara and the Geal Charn by Garva Bridge. Easy Gully on Creag Meagaidh was successfully climbed by one party. Snow conditions underfoot were a bit mixed, ranging from deep soft powder through to hard ice. The Window on Creag Meagaidh was very icy, and one

party witnessed a member of an unassociated group fall and slide some distance. Fortunately apart from a little bruising she was unharmed. In the evening, Ian Bryce and Ken Thomson modelled some Club-wear (fleece tops, tee-shirts, sweatshirts etc). On this occasion we shared the Bunkhouse with the Eagles Club.

The last Meet covered in this report was a meet to Cannich in March 2004. Some 19 members and one dog made it to Kath Gregory's Bunkhouse for a fairly wintry weekend meet. Parties were out on the Strathfarrar Hills, An Socach above Loch Mullardoch and Mam Sodhail in Glen Affric. The party for Strathfarrar had difficulty obtaining access to the glen but were eventually successful. From a party of nine, all but two descended after ascending Sgurr na Ruaidhe and Carn nan Gobhar. Vice-President Cumming and Ms Robinson continued up Sgurr a' Choire Ghlais, where conditions on top were described as 'bad'. Gales, wet snow showers and mixed underfoot conditions persisted, the wind and snow rising to such an extent that both feared escape might be impossible, but they did however make it. Only two in the party who set off for Mam Sodhail made the summit. Deep, wet and at times unstable snow underfoot meant many were concerned enough to turn back. Visibility was poor and the unrelenting snow and wind meant going was difficult and very tiring. One member of the party on Mam Sodhail fell around 50ft through a cornice on descent, luckily landing in some deep soft snow. The individual who set out for An Socach successfully bagged this rather remote hill, but he, like the rest of us, was very wet on return. In the evening we enjoyed a very pleasant communal meal with many different members contributing a course. One party visited some rather spectacular waterfalls at Plodda near Tomich on Sunday; most however decided to travel home despite a marked improvement in the weather.

In summary, Weekend Meets continue to be a healthy and popular part of the Club activities, and have an important role and function within the Club. Numbers attending are steadily increasing and occasionally, if you book at the last minute, you may find there is no bunk-space available and the organiser may have to turn you away! However, most establishments allow camping either in their grounds or nearby, and camping either by necessity or from preference is becoming quite a trend. As in the past, the Weekend Meets sub-committee try to produce a varied programme of venues with a mix of bunkhouse, hostel, hut, hotel, occasionally B&B, bothies and camping. Sometimes we may get it wrong, but we are always on the lookout for new and/or different venues, and if you fancy going somewhere, please do let a member of Weekend Meets sub-committee know. Better still, why not get involved in the organising yourself, for it is the individuals within the club that make the meets happen. Weekend Meets Forever!

EASTER MEETS

2002	Spean Bridge Hotel & Bunkhouse	(22)	Garry Wardrope
2003	Aultguish Inn	(42)	Derek Beverley

WEEK END MEETS

2001	November	Rogart Railway Carriage	(4)	Geoff Cumming
	December	Laggan Potteries Bunkhouse	(18)	Geoff Cumming
2002	January	Muir Cottage	(20)	Rowena Jay
	February	Crianlarich Y.H.	(17)	Ian Bryce
	March	Ratagan Y.H.	(1)	Derek Beverley
	May	Skywalker Hostel	(16)	John Elgie
	June	Lazy Crofter Durmess	(16)	Garry Wardrope
	June	Glenmore Lodge (MCof S AGM)	(3)	Ian Bryce
	July	Kinbreack Bothy / Kingie	(2)	Derek Beverley
	August	Laggan Potteries Bunkhouse	(22)	Derek Beverley
	September	McIntyre Hut Onich	(15)	Fred Belcher
	October	Elphin SMC/Assynt Field Centre	(17)	Eilidh Scobbie
	November	Glen Affric Backpackers	(6)	Stan Urbaniak
	December	Trossachs Backpackers/Callander	(22)	Joyce Ritchie
2003	January	Muir Cottage	(23)	Joyce Ritchie
	February	Killin Y.H.	(12)	Ian Bryce
	March	Ling Hut & Torridon Y.H.	(12)	Garry Wardrope
	May	North Wales M.M.C Hut	(21)	Zöe Šokec
	June	Glenmore Lodge (MCofS AGM)	(10)	Ian Bryce
	July	Achiltibuie Camping	(29)	Joyce Ritchie
	August	Blackwater Hostel Kinlochleven	(32)	Anne Cassidy
	September	The Whitehouse Knoydart	(14)	Joyce Ritchie
	October	Fort Augustus (Morag's)	(12)	Stan Urbaniak
	November	Kingussie (Laird's Bothy)	(24)	Neil Gauld
	December	Loch Ossian Y.H.	(18)	Andy Lawson
	2004	January	Muir Cottage	(34)
February		Laggan Potteries	(18)	Jean Robinson
March		Glen Affric Backpackers	(19)	Claire Marris

*Derek Beverley***ROCK AND ICE CLIMBING**

To anyone reading the previous two Journals, one of the prevailing themes is that of everything changing, yet the scene remaining the same. This theme has continued over the past two years, and the 'climbing scene' within the Club remains vibrant. There have been many comings of new faces, with marginally fewer goings of old faces. One or two departed to work in other lands, the most notable being Andy Lane whose move to South America and consequent closeness to some of the world's finest climbing areas is looked upon enviously by some. Others such as Stuart Stronach were away for much of this reporting period, due to heavy work commitments, but it is good to see him back climbing with us again on a fairly regular basis. Stephen Kirkpatrick, who with Stuart was one of the stalwarts of the climbing resurgence within the Club in the 90s (of the 20th century!), has recently started work at Fraserburgh Academy and promises to become an active force again within the Club. With Andy Lane leaving us, Fred Belcher became Climbing Activities Secretary at the 2001 Club AGM.

As is usual by now, the wall at Summerhill formed the mainstay of the early winter activities in 2001/02. These were well supported with on one occasion more than 20 people attending. Overall it was the best supported Summerhill season that the Club has had. Marge Ewan organised an excellent day trip to the wall at Alien Rock, Leith, with two car-loads making the return trip. Several people made sorties over various week-ends to assorted locations in search of in-condition ice-climbs with little success, the most notable of these failures being the attempt at a winter ascent of Black Spout Buttress by Adrian and Stephen. This resulted in the pair of them arriving back at Muir on the occasion of the Burns' Supper after 11pm. Not much was achieved until early March, when two of our members had an excellent climb on good ice up the waterfall of Look C Gully in Corrie Fee.



Climbing on the Sea Cliffs

The outdoor season of climbing started in early April at Black Rock Gulch and continued through until late September at Boltshough. During this period we had one major incident, when the Climbing Secretary fell whilst leading a climb at Deceptive Wall and was taken to the ARI by helicopter. (Fortunately nothing was broken, just battered and bruised and a destroyed pride, though it was a month or so before he was seen trying to climb again). Good climbing was had in early June during the course of the Club's weekend meet at Durness. The following week saw a party of eight Club members off to climb at various locations in the Peak District. This week saw some awful weather conditions, but nevertheless a good time was had by all. In July there was a Climbers Meet at Muir Cottage, with instruction being provided over the course of the weekend at the Pass of Ballater. On the Saturday there was the usual superb barbecue, organised by Anne Cassidy ably supported by various willing hands. The Reiff trip in August saw a lot of activity at the cliffs in good weather, whilst those who chose to go to Stac Pollaidh finished up having to abseil off in pretty foul conditions. The following day saw an attempt by four pairs

of climbers to ascend the Old Man of Stoer, the most impressive sea stack on the north-west coast. The lead pair of Stephen and Adrian was successful, as was the second pair led by Jim with a visiting French climber. Due to various hold-ups and deteriorating weather conditions, the remaining two pairs had to abseil off.

Beyond the Tuesday evening events, which formed the Club's organised programme, there was lots of activity in the north-east and the other major climbing venues throughout Scotland. There was then a lull in activity until Xmas, though a few people trained on the Bouldering Wall at the Beach Leisure Centre and more joined them for beers after they had finished.

The new year had an inauspicious start, when John Elgie, an active and well-known Club member, tragically died as a result of an avalanche in the Black Spout of Lochnagar. The indoor season got underway as usual on the wall at Summerhill. Lots of new faces appeared during the course of this season, and the evenings were well supported, but lots of people only appeared on a couple of occasions, which gave us a headache when it came to collecting monies due. It was only thanks to the efforts of Marge Ewan that most of the monies came in, and next year the monies will be collected on each visit. Due to the weather it was not a good year for winter climbing and nothing of note was reported. In addition to Summerhill, several week-end trips were made to the wall at Inverness.

The outdoor season commenced in April and after a couple of Tuesdays a large party, organised by Zöe Šokec, left for a long week-end to try the climbing in Wales. We stayed at the Merseyside Club's Hut at Llanberis and were joined by several of their members. On Saturday various pairs left to climb various routes, but after getting started on the climbs most people were thwarted by a sudden change in the weather - hail, sleet and pouring rain which then continued for the rest of the day. The most notable achievement of the day was by Tim and Ernie, who managed to outpace the weather and complete one of the major routes on Tryfan. The weather continued to be poor the following day and time was devoted to 'retail therapy'. On the Monday most folk headed back to Aberdeen, but Garry and Fred stayed on to scramble up and complete the Horseshoe on Snowdon.

June saw another climbing, training and barbecue weekend at Muir. Some folk took advantage of this to brush up on Alpine techniques prior to leaving for the Club meet at Zermatt. The ways and routes taken to Zermatt were various. Some came across the hills from Italy, others across the hills from Verbier, while others used either car, plane, train or combinations of these. During this meet there were several ascents of 4000m peaks, and a massed ascent of the Breithorn. An extremely pleasant afternoon was spent by several pairs, climbing the smooth polished rock of the Riffelhorn, before catching the train back to Zermatt. Several members had a narrow escape on the way down the Zinal Rothorn, when they were almost hit by a major rock-fall, which actually resulted in ropes being cut in half. Others had a grandstand view from the terrace of the Hörnli Hut of the collapse of a large section of the Matterhorn ridge above, and the subsequent forced evacuation by helicopter of all the climbers on the mountain.

During the time of the Zermatt trip, those climbers that did not attend organised a well-attended trip to Reiff, where much climbing was achieved on the cliffs. In August, during the week-end meet organised by Anne to Kinlochleven, several major classic routes were achieved by many of those attending. During all this, the Tuesday evening meets continued, with a consistent turn out of



Mass Ascent of the Breithorn

approximately 20 people. Activity continued along the cliffs and, once the bird nesting season was over, several routes that were out-of-bounds earlier in the season were attempted and ascended, among them the airy and exposed Diagonal Crack at Longhaven. Also this year Eagle Ridge at Lochnagar became almost the preserve of the Club, as it was ascended at various times by so many members. The most notable climb of the year, though, must go to Bill Stephen and Jim Woodley for their successful ascent of the Old Man of Hoy in Orkney, an event which resulted in several bits of lost gear.

On completion of our normal organised outdoor season, thoughts turned to indoor climbing again. The good news is that there is now a good wall in Dundee, and this has become the normal scene of Club activity until the Summerhill wall becomes available to us in January. In fact, recently three new climbing activities centres have opened in Scotland: Dundee, Kinlochleven and Ratho. Already a lot of Club members have made use of these facilities, and no doubt each of them will figure prominently in future activity reports.

Due to an ever-increasing involvement and clash of dates with his MC of S duties, Fred Belcher handed over the responsibilities for the Climbing Activities Secretary to Kevin Bannister at the 2003 AGM. As this report will have shown, the climbing scene within the Club is in an extremely healthy condition, and it continues to attract many new members to the Club.

Fred Belcher

THURSDAY WALKS

Details of the organisation and itineraries of the Thursday Walks over 2001-2003 are included in the article on page 144, so no formal report is presented here in this edition of the *Journal*.

BOOK REVIEWS

The Speyside Way, Sandy Anton, Cicerone Press 2002, 104pp, ISBN 1 85284 331 4, £8.00.

Cicerone Press demonstrates sound judgement in choosing this Cairngorm Club member, and a stalwart of the Scottish Rights of Way Society, as author of their guidebook. Sandy spent his early years in Moray, and more recently has enjoyed researching the history of this area. He leads us from Buckie on the Moray Firth to Aviemore, as well as on the spurs to Dufftown and Tomintoul. Each chapter is clearly laid out with distance, height gained, time required, car parking and facilities encountered. There are small maps for each section, but the reader is encouraged to use the official map or the relevant Ordnance Survey ones.

The author provides a concise historical perspective which brings to life the past and present occupants of the area. We learn of the large-scale salmon industry in the nineteenth century, using the old ice house at Tugnet and the development of Kingston as a shipbuilding and timber exporting centre. Many bridges of differing construction are described, and contemporary accounts of 'the muckle spate' of 1829 show the enormous destructive power of the Spey and its tributaries. Growth and decline of villages *en route* are explained in relation to agricultural and commercial developments, and visitor centres nearby are clearly indicated. Sandy shares his enthusiasm of vistas to the hills and mountains, and indicates flora and fauna to be seen by the observant walker or cyclist. The many distilleries may provide an incentive for some to travel this route, and there is a separate chapter on whisky production.

This is a book to encourage us to open our eyes to the many delights of the Speyside Way, and to appreciate so much that we may not have noticed while driving to the Cairngorms. At 18 by 12cm, it is a good size for the pocket and is light enough to be carried to enliven the journey.

Hazel Witte

Walking in Scotland's Far North, Andy Walmsley, Cicerone Press 2003, 160pp, ISBN 1 85284 377 2, £10.00.

This compact 160-page guide covers the area to the north of a line from Ullapool to Bonar Bridge, but excludes the lowlands north of Dunbeath and east of Thurso. The 62 walks described cover various approaches to the five Munros as well as most other hills, supported by sketch maps, distance and height gain. It provides information on most villages and their facilities as well as accommodation, campsites and parking, all linked to walks nearby. The reader is left in no doubt that even the shorter routes can be challenging. Longer traverses include the Assynt Horseshoe from Quinag to Canisp by way of Conival and Ben More Assynt, while the low-level walk to Sandwood Bay is lovingly portrayed. The sparkling text and excellent colour photographs provide a sound basis for planning several walking holidays in

Caithness and Sutherland - just remember to take waterproof boots and midge repellent.

Hazel Witte

With Friends in High Places, Malcolm Slesser, Mainstream Publishing 2004, 256pp, ISBN 1 84018 848 0, £15.99.

This interesting book is not a formal autobiography, but rather scenes and reflections from a long and adventurous life. In the 1960s Malcolm Slesser was, in his own appraisal, "well enough known as a mountaineer but not in the top flight." He was a member of the Anglo-Scottish-Russian expedition to the Pamirs on which Robin Smith and Wilfred Noyce slipped to their deaths, and also climbed in the Andes, and in many other parts of the world. These expeditions are well covered in the book, but the chapters that really fascinate are the accounts of several explorations in Greenland, where virgin snow peaks and rock pinnacles fringe unknown glaciers under the midnight sun.

Interspersed in the text are more reflective chapters on topics such as risk and safety in the mountains. As a 'survivalist' Slesser contrasts his own attitude to that of the more reckless of his peers, many of whom are no longer with us. The change in climbing techniques is brought home by two accounts of winter ascents of Crowberry Gully, the first in 1947 - hemp ropes, step cutting and meagre belays; the second in 2000 - front pointing, banana picks, and bomb-proof ice screws. Slesser also muses on the mountaineer's 'footprint', our impact on our environment: "The future of wild land cannot be divorced from the future of ourselves."

For me the only false note in the text is what Hamish MacInnes describes in the foreword as "some personal observations on the late Dougal Haston, which should have been long forgotten." Otherwise the impression is of a life-long love of the hills and wilderness, and of the friendship in these high places.

Lydia Thomson

The Ecology, Land Use and Conservation of the Cairngorms, edited by Charles Gimingham, Packard Publishing 2002, 224pp, ISBN 1 85341 102 7 hbk, £74.99, ISBN 1 85341 117 5 pbk, £39.99.

This is a multi-authored, well-produced and well-illustrated book, organised in three parts. The first part, the Ecological Basis, consists of chapters on the physical geography, vegetation and fauna of the region. This is followed by chapters on land use, agriculture, woodlands, deer and grouse management, fisheries, and recreation. Part three, The Future of the Cairngorms, comprises two chapters by the editor: *Towards an Integrated Management Strategy* and *The Cairngorms in the Future*. Clearly this is a book for the library and not the rucksack. But what, exactly, are its aims? These are to establish clearly why the region is especially important, to define the priorities of its natural heritage and to "consider the guiding principles and options for future administration and management." I think these aims are achieved, at least

for a non-expert reader like this reviewer. I would like to have seen more on archaeological aspects but, as a layman, I found the chapters comprehensive and largely comprehensible. (But as a layman you accept much, uncritically). The team of authors impressed and reassured me. Some are even Club members and you cannot get a higher recommendation than that! In some ways the timing of the publication was unfortunate, occurring before the boundaries of the National Park and the planning function of the Park Authority were settled. I support the book's closing sentiment: "A unique opportunity is now opening up to make lasting provision for the sympathetic and integrated management of this superb area", but confidence I have not. The weak Park Authority must work to earn our confidence and this book will provide one of several baselines against which its performance can be judged.

Alister Macdonald

Climbing Free: My Life In The Vertical World, Lynn Hill with Greg Child, Harper Collins 2002, 270pp, ISBN 0 00710 273 9, £18.99.

Climbing Free begins with a fall. The injuries are only moderately severe, but the cause, forgetting to tie in, spectacular. So begins in 1989 Lynn Hill's self-reflection of her life as a world-class climber: "I needed to pay more attention - not just to how I climbed but to how I lived." This culminated in 2001, in her pulling together her experiences into the chronological, autobiographical narrative of this book.

Early chapters follow her family roots and early athletic prowess in swimming and gymnastics until she is wowed, aged 14, by her first rock climb in Southern California. Quickly she is immersed in a climbing community and location, the area called Joshua Tree in the Mojave Desert. A number of chapters entertainingly describe the culture, characters and craziness in the zany, hippie, post-Vietnam climbing scene. The early loss of a brother-in-law on the South Face of Aconcagua reinforces her conviction that mountaineering and ice climbing are not for her. Yosemite in the '80s, living an entire summer on \$75, and 'freeing' the Nose route of El Capitan in 1979, aged 18, leads to a period as stuntwoman in Hollywood. Her partnership with John Long (Largo) takes her to big walls in Colorado, competition athletics and television stunts. With the end of this relationship she moves to New York, majoring in Biology and 'the Gunks' climbing area. A new gang includes Russ Raffa, whom she marries in 1988. Competition climbing follows, pitted in her first year against Catherine Destivelle. By 1989, she is ranked as No. 1 in women's sport-climbing, but her spectacular fall prevents her competing in her 4th World Cup final in Leeds. 1991 sees the end of her marriage and a move to Provence. As part of the North Face climbing team she summits a 4,000-foot rock-face and her highest peak. With no urge to move into mountaineering realms, in answer to the question posed to her by a Vietnamese fisherman, "What are you looking for up there?" she concludes, "I would do more with less," and "the greatest sense of fulfilment in my life is connected to people."

So much for content. In style the writing is lean, economical and functional.

The book is at its best when describing other characters. For me the most amusing reading lies in the portrayal of climbing cliques and cultures, and her clear depiction of what it takes and means to climb 33 pitches non-stop. The photography divides into two: beautiful, professional, colour climbing shots and more playful black-and-white shots probably begged, stolen or borrowed from friends. These give a slightly more informal glimpse into what is unsaid in the text. A weakness in the book is the lack of appendices and bibliography. The former could for example have documented the chronology of Hill's and others' achievements.

I would certainly recommend the book to both climbers and mountaineers, particularly for the character vignettes. No climbing knowledge is needed to read the book as technical information is clearly and effectively explained. It isn't classic-read material, principally because of the lack of style and warmth. So perhaps not the one and only book to take on that 3-week adventure. Would I buy it - yes, in paperback for half the price. Not available! So borrow it (from me!).

Jean Robinson

Dougal Haston: the Philosophy of Risk, Jeff Connor, Canongate Books 2002, 232pp, ISBN 1 84195 215 X, £16.99.

Inside the cover of this book is the claim: "For all those who wonder what motivates men and women to risk their lives in the mountains, this portrait of a driven, tortured personality provides the answer." Unfortunately, for this reviewer it provides only a few sketchy clues.

All accounts of major climbs by the participants themselves describe the thrill, the adrenaline rush, sometimes the fear. Often the description is so graphic that the armchair reader finds it hard to put down, as for example in *Touching the Void*. A biographer, on the other hand, has to select from the material the subject left for him, and Haston, admitted by his peers to be one of the finest mountaineers of his time, is not a great writer. The author, however, could have made more use of Haston's own book *In High Places*. For example, the statement that "the story of the first ascent of the Eiger Direct is well known," is followed by almost nothing on the climb. We are merely told "Haston produced one of the most bravura performances in the history of alpinism." Beside the physical skills and challenges, there is for most climbers the sheer scale and beauty of the mountains. It seems that Haston is probably unique in his lack of response to them.

Certainly extracts from his diaries support the description of Haston as 'driven', though hardly 'tortured'. But while his personality - heavily self-centred, always looking to increasing challenges - has aspects in common with other top climbers, he seems to me to be unusual and often disagreeable in his attitudes to society and other people. For example, after killing one pedestrian and injuring others while driving, his girlfriend commented: "Dougal seemed more concerned after the accident with what was to happen to him, rather than what had happened to those hikers." And from his diary, at the time of the televised ascent of the Old Man of Hoy: "I find the present company so facile, so boring, so insular." However, his

noted taciturnity, and his determination not to allow personal matters to disrupt an expedition, meant that he fitted in successfully and was a major contributor to many.

It was a tragedy for climbing when Dougal Haston was killed, at 36, by an avalanche. He was skiing off-piste; the pistes were closed because of the risk of avalanche. Whether he took an unreasonable risk was much debated at the time, but one friend said "I always thought he would push it too far and die on a mountain."

Frances Macrae-Gibson

The Evidence of Things Not Seen, W H Murray, Baton Wicks 2002, 352pp, ISBN 1 898513 24 1, £25.00 hbk, £12.99 pbk.

This is an autobiography, completed shortly before he died in 1996, and rounded off by his wife Anne, by one of the early doyens of Scottish climbing, and climbing writing. The author is probably best known for *Mountaineering in Scotland*, but wrote many established mountaineering classics and also several novels.

Murray was heavily involved in World War II, and owed his survival to the honorable conduct of a German tank-commander in the Western Desert (a 'fellow' mountaineer). He became a prisoner-of-war and lived to experience other aspects of the German character at the hands of the Gestapo. It was during these years that, in the face of great practical difficulties, he wrote *Mountaineering in Scotland*, a diversion which helped him to retain his sanity. With time on his hands meditation also became an interest. After the war he decided that banking was not for him; he thought about entering a monastery, but after a trial period decided (fortunately for us) to stay outside in the (?) real world and make his way as a writer.

The central body of the book is devoted to three major Himalayan expeditions: the 1950 Scottish expedition to Eastern Garwhal & Kamaon, four months in the footsteps of Tilman and Shipton; the 1951 Everest Reconnaissance expedition, deputy leader; 1953 Api/Namba West Nepal expedition, at the same time as the successful Hunt/Hillary/Tenzing expedition to Everest. He sums up his thoughts on these expeditions thus: "The richest Himalayan experience comes in exploratory travel and climbing, not in the siege of a big peak." In the 60s and 70s he led several treks for Mountain Travel, where everything was laid on: "It was enjoyable, but it was not the same."

Then there are chapters on Tom Patey (on the Stac of Handa), Ben Humble, Rob Roy MacGregor, Conservation (the saving of Glen Nevis) and the Unna Rules. A most enjoyable book, especially for armchair walkers and climbers; a mixture of first-hand vivid description and philosophising; evocative of the days of tricouni-nailed boots, wooden-shafted iceaxes and coir ropes; hardly a piton in sight!

John Gibson

Mountains of the Mind: a History of a Fascination. Robert Macfarlane, Granta Books 2003, 306pp, hbk ISBN 1 86207 561 1, £20.00, pbk ISBN 1 86207 654 5 £8.99.

For once, the blurb is not too far off the mark: this book "is at once an enthralling cultural history of the Western love affair with mountains, an intimate account of his own experiences in the world's mountain ranges, and a beautiful meditation on how memory and landscape intertwine." True, the world-wide account actually boils down to a dozen or so brief and often imprecisely located episodes in the author's climbing career; but if several of these happen to occur in the Cairngorms, the Laggan hills or even Ben Nevis, few Club Members are likely to complain. More far-flung experiences are reported from Switzerland, the Tien Shan and the Rockies. These pages, scattered amongst the total of 300 or so in the book, provide a personal commentary, for author and reader, on the broader theme of the book.

This theme is the changing attitudes (of Europeans - Americans, Asians, etc. do not get a look in) to mountains over the ages. These attitudes developed over the centuries: from simple fear of the unknown and the dangerous, to growing recognition of the evidence amongst mountains as to geological time. Somewhat later, glaciers came to be appreciated both for their strange formations and for their movement: obvious, slow, but (*pace* global warming) inexorable. Then came the 'Pursuit of Fear' - of precipices, of avalanches, of cold, of altitude - as an objective to be sought during leisure time, and most recently escapism or at least escape from the city or from the modern world. This is not expedition mountaineering; the author himself, and many of those whom he cites - Petrarch, John Evelyn, Edmund Burke, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Charles Darwin, Mark Twain - are concerned with personal revelations, usually when alone. Even so, rather little of the book is concerned directly with beauty or even moral philosophy. Instead, mountain perceptions are linked to wider worlds, of religion, or science, or class, nation and family. In fact (though Macfarlane does not put it this way), there are influences both ways, from mountain experiences towards the re-forming of attitudes to nature, lifestyle and personal conduct, and from individual (or national, or class) mentalities towards explaining the 'fascination' of ascending to, and descending from, the heights. All this has been done before, of course: for example by Arnold Lunn in *A Century of Mountaineering* in 1957, and in many an introductory or final chapter in expedition or biographical accounts. But as described above, Macfarlane applies the personal touch, takes a broad view, and is not concerned to record every notable mountaineering event or personality. Here are no Hillarys, Messners, Hastons or even Pateys; instead, as well as the above notables, we get Mr Bean and the Rev. MacCorkendale dying together on Mont Blanc, Lords Tennyson, Kelvin and Curzon, and (somehow or other) Boswell and Johnson on the Buller (*sic*) of Buchan.

The long (50-page) penultimate chapter is simply entitled *Everest*, and is almost entirely about Mallory, who died in 1924 near the summit, on his third attempt. To my mind, this chapter fits oddly with rest of the book, unless one is interested in late-imperialist and very British romanticism. However, other than using photographs to illustrate landscapes, perhaps it is difficult to explain the mountaineering experience to non-believers better than with "Because it's there".

The earlier chapters of the book, and the final 5-page peroration *The Snow Hare* (on Beinn a'Chaorainn (*sic*) near Loch Laggan), combine happily some fine and personal writing, and a broad swathe of history, science and philosophy. The author, who is not yet 30 but has lost three fingers to frostbite, is a Fellow of English at Emmanuel College, Cambridge. And/but his prose is not pedantic (even though earlier pages contain sillion, traumaturgy and majuscule!). For those who think and feel as well as do, the book is a splendid read.

Ken Thomson

The Hillwalker's Guide to Mountaineering, Terry Adby and Stuart Johnston, Cicerone Press 2003, 252pp, ISBN 1 85284 393 4, £14.00 pbk.

This book, written by a mountain guide, Stuart Johnston, and his erstwhile hill-walking client, aims to equip those who wish to progress from straightforward walking in the hills to more difficult scrambling and mountaineering, without going the whole hog of taking up rock climbing. It begins by examining the differences between a walk, a scramble and a rock-climb, and explaining the grading system for scrambling. The second part (130 pages) covers 'Skills for the Hills': chapters on general equipment, navigation, mountain weather, techniques for safe progress, both unroped and roped (50 pages are essentially an introduction to rock-climbing), winter hazards, equipment and techniques, and first aid. The writing is generally clear, and the text well laid-out and illustrated. However, it is difficult to know to what extent mountain skills can really be learned and digested from a book. But to be fair, there are a couple of pages encouraging novices to take Winter Skills courses, or a beginner's rock-climbing course. For those of us who still venture to the hills in our older clothes, some of the material on equipment is revealing: "the days when one pair of boots was purchased for all seasons and all routes are on the way out," and "a rucksack liner or dry bag is essential." What happened to the old dustbin bags? But most of the advice is sound, if some of it perhaps a little obvious.

The third part of the book, taking up 90 or so pages, is 'Mountaineering in Britain', descriptions of 12 classic scrambles, including the Fiacail Ridge, Curved Ridge, Aonach Eagach, the round of Coire Lagan, and Tower Ridge.

An odd book, then, a cross between a guidebook and a training manual. Perhaps compulsory reading for Mountain Leadership Certificates? Maybe a good start, but no substitute for learning from experience.

Lydia Thomson

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