The Cairngorm Club Journal

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THE CAIRNGORM CLUB JOURNAL

Edited by Alister Macdonald

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EDITORIAL

The Independence referendum has been and gone. Scotland remains divided with its constitutional future uncertain. On the ground the march of the wind turbines continues, more than 4,300 of them, many in the wrong places. Our landscape is suffering from an energy policy which "passeth all understanding".

However, the Club is in better shape than the country as a whole and the Journal reports a fair level of activity. Despite the increasing number of blemishes the hills remain a valued temporary refuge from the so called real world.

Graham Ewen, our Honorary President, died in November 2013 (page 276) and has been succeeded by Ruth Payne (page 258). Adrian Scott has stepped down from the role of President. He is an enthusiastic climber and one who has done much to encourage new members and to bring walkers and climbers together. Additionally, he organised the 2014 Dolomite Meet and continues to serve the Club as Training Coordinator. Our new President is James Friend (page 256).

The Club accounts show a healthy balance and important decisions lie ahead. To get them right is the responsibility of the Club Office Bearers and Committee members, all of whom deserve our support. The Editor's policy of producing a Journal regularly every other year is, among other things, intended to bring members and Journal closer together. Soon it might be realistic for the Club to consider modernising the Journal format, or otherwise.

I am grateful to all the contributors. The quality of what I receive continues to impress me, but I am sure more members could disclose some special expertise, or a few inner thoughts and otherwise unknown experiences, to the benefit of us all. I particularly thank the Club Secretary, Ken Thomson and Evelyn Massie for their help.

Alister Macdonald

Mountain Rescue - Its Origins in Scotland

Eric Johnston

Climbers and hill-walkers have the reassurance nowadays that if they have an accident or get lost there are expert rescue teams which will come to their aid. This was far from being the case in the years following the war. Gill Shirreffs, who knew that I had played a small part in mountain rescue in the bad old days, kindly introduced me to some of the leaders of the current mountain rescue teams and it was suggested that a brief account of how mountain rescue developed locally might be of interest.

In 1946 a Mountain Rescue Committee was formed by well known climbers including Jack Longland, covering the whole of mainland UK. They gave advice and raised funds and eventually First Aid Posts were set up at various locations including the Spitall of Glenmuick, Derry Lodge and Braemar Police Station. At that time RAF Kinloss had the only trained mountain rescue team in our area and climbing clubs were asked to make their own rescue arrangements in liaison with the Police. The Cairngorm Club took responsibility for our area and Bob Mitchell was appointed leader. If the Police heard that someone was missing or that there had been an accident, they contacted Bob and he duly contacted other Cairngorm Club team leaders who each had a list of Cairngorm Club and Etchachan Club members who lived near to them. The team leaders then roused their team, arranged transport (not always easy in those days), a departure time and then set off. The Police waited by the phone. The teams were basically search parties without wireless or rescue equipment. This worked reasonably well for a time as there were no major rescues. George Roberts who was also a Cairngorm Club member succeeded Bob Mitchell in 1958.

During this period there were a few minor searches in our area but nothing very serious. The most uncomfortable one I can recall was on the January Club Meet to Lochnagar when, after returning to the bus on a wild day, we were told one of our party was in difficulty after a tumble and we had to get back into our sodden clothing and boots and set out to help. Fortunately we soon made contact and all was well.

However, there were also two fatal accidents involving Club members. On a Club excursion to Bheinn a` Bhuird, Donald McCulloch, who had just graduated in Medicine, was killed when a cornice collapsed under him. Later, when climbing with friends in the Club, Doris Rhind, a Science teacher and the sister of a colleague of mine, was killed on An Teallach.

My own first experience of going out with a mountain rescue team was on Skye, where the experienced rescue team leaders could quickly form teams of searchers from the climbers in Glen Brittle. It was thus that I found myself in a team with Eric Shipton who was staying at Glen Brittle Lodge. This was before he headed the reconnaissance expedition which found the route which led to the ascent of Everest in 1953. Shipton, who had climbed with Tensing and later with Hillary on the reconnaissance, was expected to lead the successful party to Everest but was replaced by Major John Hunt who, later when Lord Hunt, was a regular visitor to Derry Lodge with a group of schoolboys. Indeed when we met there I copied his practice of strapping a compass to my wrist like a watch, but outside the anorak, with an altimeter on the other wrist – but I digress !

In 1951 there was a major climbing tragedy when four climbers were lost near Ben Alder. The wife of one of the climbers who died was the only survivor. The party of five were all young, fit and very experienced. On the 29th of December they left Glasgow on the afternoon train for Corrour Station, arriving at about 7pm and then set out for Ben Alder cottage on Loch Ericht, a distance of 18km. They spent the night in a bivouac beyond Corrour Lodge and according to the survivor had a comfortable night. The weather deteriorated and after some time struggling towards Ben Alder cottage they decided it was wiser to return to Corrour Lodge where there were estate workers' houses where they could find shelter. The four men were reduced to crawling in the snow and died of exposure. The woman struggled on to reach one of the estate houses. Estate workers cut branches from birch trees and used sacking to make stretchers to transport the bodies to Corrour station which illustrates the lack of rescue equipment at the time. The local Chief of Police issued a statement which amounted to a warning to inexperienced climbers and showed that the Police had no real practical experience of climbing. This tragedy also led to speculation about the powers of

endurance of men and women in extreme conditions and it is generally accepted now that a woman is better insulated to protect the body's core from the cold.

Regrettably, nothing was done to improve mountain rescue and it was 1959 before another mountain tragedy occurred which roused the authorities into action. This was again at the New Year, on 1st January 1959. That day five men were lost walking from Braemar Youth Hostel to Glen Clova Youth Hostel via Jock`s road, a distance of some 18 miles. They were members of a Catholic Church youth group and some of them had crossed this route in summer. It appears they attended Mass in Braemar before setting out on their journey. They were reasonably well equipped but were carrying fairly heavy loads including sleeping bags, primus stoves and food, but did not have ice axes. It is clear they set out too late on the short winter day.

The group were to meet up with friends at Glen Clova Hostel but youth hostels did not have telephones in 1959 so the alarm that they had not arrived was delayed. I received a phone call from George Roberts late that night and alerted my team and we set off by car for Braemar at about 4 am. We walked from Braemar well before dawn, very much a search party without radio or any rescue equipment. At Glencallater Lodge we split in to two parties with Leslie Hay leading one which followed the usual route along the north side of Loch Callater, while I led the other along the south side of the loch towards Corrie Kander. I had a theory that they might have walked over the frozen loch but we found no sign of footsteps. I remember my party included Harry Buckley of the Etchacan Club and, reassuringly, a doctor, Sandy Lyall of the Cairngorm Club. Conditions were reasonable, but with a strong wind on higher ground. When we reached the Tolmount area we found footsteps heading towards the high ground between Tolmount and Tom Bhuide which indicated that the party was heading towards the White Water which eventually plunges steeply down a gully towards Glen Doll. The correct route ran parallel but north of this. Jock`s Road has a section where there is no clear route although there are a few rusty fence poles and it can be tricky even in good weather. The conditions on the day the missing party set out deteriorated with poor visibility and a gale force wind. We joined Leslie Hay`s party and eventually reached the plateau and decided there was no point

Figure 1 *Photograph from the front page of the Press and Journal, 5th January, 1959. "The body of one of the lost walkers is brought down Glen Doll. The figures of the rescue team dark against the grey waste of falling snow and hillside" Photographer Gordon Bisset. Reproduced with permission.*

continuing as it would soon be dark. We returned to Glencallater Lodge and eventually to the main road at Auchallater where we were met to our surprise by a barrage of flashing Press cameras indicating the public interest.

Similar search parties had set out from Glen Clova, including a team from RAF Leuchars, but without success. That ended our involvement but the search for the missing men continued mainly from Glen Clova, (Fig.1). A body was eventually found near Jock`s hut at the head of the White Water and other bodies were recovered over a period of days. The fifth body was not recovered until mid-April.

The Jock`s Road tragedy received wide publicity and a realisation in mountaineering circles that mountain rescue must be put on a formal basis and not left to a few volunteers. A Mountain Rescue Committee of Scotland was formed, independent of the UK body. The North-East Counties Constabulary formed a rescue team made up of police volunteers and they received training from the RAF Kinloss rescue team. One of the police volunteers was our John Duff who was later stationed at Braemar and helped form the Braemar Mountain Rescue team. At about the same time the AMR Team and what was to become the Aberdeen Mountain Rescue Association were formed, the latter with generous financial help from the Order of St. John. (See following article). The Cairngorm Club volunteers continued to help on rescues for a short period under George Roberts, but soon became superfluous as the trained and expert teams developed and thereafter any contribution made by the Club to mountain rescue was financial.

A footnote to the Jock`s Road tragedy. At the time I was the Club Meets Secretary and had followed my usual practice of writing to the Factor at Balmoral requesting that the gate on Danzig Bridge be left unlocked. This would enable the Club to use the bridge on the annual January Meet to Lochnagar if the road up Glen Muick was blocked. The Factor at the time was the Earl of Caithness who was a good friend of the Club and he readily agreed. However, a few days after the tragedy I had a letter from him suggesting that the Meet be cancelled because of the terrible weather and the risk of further accidents. I gave a very diplomatic reply and the Meet went ahead successfully as planned.

The Aberdeen Mountain Rescue Team - 50th Anniversary

Dawn MacKinnon

AMRT was formed in 1964 in response to a growing awareness that there needed to be a more structured approach to the problem of organising and conducting search and rescue operations in the area of the Cairngorms, Deeside and Donside.

The Team has developed a professional approach to mountain rescue and one which ensures that members of the Team are highly skilled as both mountaineers and mountain rescuers.

The Team trains every Thursday night and one weekend in three. It has two bothies which are used for training weekends and when on call outs. One is at the Spittal of Muick and one at Derry Lodge on the Mar Estate. The use of these bothies gives the Team a base close to the area of operation when called out to rescues in the Cairngorms.

Members of the Team come from a range of backgrounds, for example doctors, oil industry workers and teachers. Each one of them shares a passion for the hills and mountaineering and a dedication to mountain rescue services. Training is rigorous and comprehensive, a necessity for each and every Team member to ensure complete readiness for operational duties. Over the past fifty years there have been many changes in equipment and technology but the resolve to answer a call to rescue, whatever the conditions, is unchanged. Every one of the Team members is a volunteer and they all have jobs, families and outside interests, so giving their time freely makes them a very special bunch.

AMRT is on call 24/7, 365 days a year. Called out by Police Scotland to assist in search and rescue anywhere within their operational area, the Team could be involved in searching for mountaineers and walkers in the mountains or for missing people in and around Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire. There have been some headline grabbing rescues such as the Cairngorm disaster of 1971, the light aircraft crashing into the waters of Loch Muick in 1992, the search for a missing child in Aberdeen in 1997 and the F-15C fighter jets on the summit of Ben MacDui in 2001.

Aberdeen Mountain Rescue Team 2014.

Shortly after the formation of AMRT, it was decided that a parent body should be established to assist in providing funds and support for the Team. Since its establishment in the late sixties, Aberdeen Mountain Rescue Association has developed very close links with the Team, and indeed a number of Team members sit on the Association's Executive Committee. In the mid 1990s the Association changed its name to the Aberdeen and St John Mountain Rescue Association in recognition of the support which the Association and the Team had received locally from the Order of St John.

AMRT continues to be the best that they can be at what they do. There is a unique combination of 'older' members of the Team who bring with them a wealth of experience and the 'young' guns who are just coming into the Team, or have only been involved for a few years. This mixture of knowledge and enthusiasm will ensure that AMRT continues to be a dedicated, exceptional collection of people who will give their utmost to ensure that if required, they are ready to help anyone who needs them.

We have had a busy year, celebrating the past five decades of search and rescue operations with our Annual Sponsored Walk in June, followed by a day in Union Square in July. In August we organised a talk by Mark Beaumont about his adventures. In September we had a reunion with as many former team members as we were able to get in contact with and enjoyed an informal evening in Braemar followed by a day at the Derry Bothy. Our final event was an anniversary ceilidh in November. Although these events are primarily fundraising activities, they also allow us to raise the profile of the Team in the surrounding area and enable us to show the public who we are and what we do.

Glarus and Moine

Alister Macdonald

Flims is an Alpine town little known to British walkers and climbers, so why did I search it out and go there? First, when reflecting on where I might spend a few days walking in the Alps, I thought it would be interesting to see the mighty river Rhine in its more youthful stages, where it was just an ordinary small river winding its way along. Perhaps it is not well known that the Rhine is credited with two sources from which flow the Vorderrhein and the Hinterrhein, in the Swiss Canton of Graubunden (also known as Grisons). These two rivers join at Reicheneau, west of Chur and after bypassing that town the fully formed Rhine flows north into the Bodensee (Lake Constance). It exits the lake heading west as the High Rhine but soon becomes the familiar Rhine which flows north and, after a total journey of more than 750 miles, it enters the North Sea through a complex delta near Rotterdam. Flims, I learned, is close to the Vorderrhein. Then I also learned that Flims is the site of a mighty rock slide which occurred 9000 years ago. It blocked the Vorderrhein which subsequently cut its way through, creating the Ruinaulta gorge. Better and better I thought. And finally I learned that Flims was a good base from which to see the celebrated Glarus Nappe, the most important geological site in the Alps and something I had long been keen to see. The towns of Glarus, Elm and to the south, Flims, all provide a base for walks enabling a close up inspection of the Nappe, which is central to this article.

Flims comprises two villages straggling along the upper slopes of the Voderrhein valley, Flims Dorf and Flims Waldhaus. They form a pleasant but not particularly picturesque small town which actually sits on the upper part of the stabilised rock slide, now a mixed forest about forty square kilometres in area. To the north, above Flims, are the Glarus Alps, attractive Alpine scenery.

To see the young Rhine, the Vorderrhein, in its innocent stage of meandering in a pastoral setting, I went west from Flims to the village of Falera. This classic Alpine village of great charm is located by a spur projecting out over the Vorderrhein valley and upon which there is both a very fine church and, on a grassy slope, an array of

Figure 1 *The Tschingelhoren, with the shallow angle Glarus fault clearly visible. The dark rock above the fault line is 250 - 300 million years old and below the fault lies lighter coloured rock which is 35 – 50 million years old. The hole in the wall, the Martinsloch, is visible below the fault.*

megalith circles, which is exceedingly rare in the Alps. So interesting were the megaliths and the church that they competed with the viewpoint offered by the spur. However, the view of the Vorderrhein meandering its way along the valley below was greatly enjoyed, and photographed.

To see the Vorderrhein cutting its way through the gorge to the east it was necessary to walk through the forest, now well established on the gently undulating surface of the rock slide, and access a viewing tower built to project over the gorge. The sight thus obtained was impressive, raw and savage. The river meanders have undercut huge ugly screes. Chaos was the word which came to mind after savage, and it applied particularly to the upper sections of the walls of the gorge, which provided a cross section of the original rockfall. Yet despite a dreadful instability apparent in the gorge-scape, the railway line and bridge, which could be seen in miniature way below, looked safe enough, as indeed they are, conveying the Glacier Express from Chur to the east to Andermatt and beyond to the west.

Now for the Nappe. Standing in Flims with your back to the forest and the Vorderrhein, the view north up to the mountains is pleasingly Alpine. On the right lies a massive limestone wall which accommodates a celebrated Via Ferrata climb, and on the left forested slopes descend gracefully. Straight ahead lies a broad ascending valley, narrowing with increase in height. In the far distance an array of spectacular pinnacles, the Tschingelhoren, can be seen. The highest mountain, the Piz Sardona (3056m) is in the vicinity, but not dominant. To get up to the interesting high ground without wasting energy I used the first chair lift, straight off the main street, followed by a second lift and finally took a somewhat antique looking cable car to Cassensgrat (2637m). A tiny restaurant at the top station tempted me to try the goulash, which was excellent, after which I started exploring. The domed top was stoney and naturally barren but a splendid 360 degree viewpoint. It was the start of numerous walks, some quite demanding, others less so but they shared a dramatic landscape. I headed north west to get a good view of the Tschingelhoren, (Fig.1). This is a wall which rises from screes and thrusts upwards half a dozen or so pinnacles. Running across the base of the pinnacles and well above the scree line there is a sharp

line incised in the rock wall. Anyone would regard it as a fault line and indeed it is, one which has been studied for over 150 years. I descended a scree path into the corrie-like amphitheatre at the base of the Tschingelhoren to take a closer look.

We are here concerned with mountain building and the folding of the earth's crust which that entails. The word nappe, table cloth in French, gives a clue as to how the process was first modelled. First clear the table and then place your hands flat on the table cloth. Move them slowly together and the cloth wrinkles and then folds. Then as the folds grow they topple over to one side. Translate that to the earth's crust and you have the beginning of an explanation for crustal folds. In the early days of the science of geology it was quite reasonably assumed that young rock always lay on top of older rock. However, examples were discovered which appeared to contradict that assumption, as in the Glarus Nappe. This was a serious problem, but on reflection we can see how the table cloth model, with its toppled folds, provides an explanation of how old rock can come to overlie younger rock. Furthermore, it was established that the earth's crustal folds and nappes could be subject to a shearing process, in which the top of a set of nappes is ripped away, laterally, and moved tens of kilometres before coming to rest on top of mis-matching folds. Such processes took place very deep in the crust where the high temperatures and pressures alter the mechanical and chemical properties of the rocks. Over time erosion then does its stuff and all is revealed, well sufficient for geologists in the 19th century to piece the basis of this story together. The clear fault line running across the Tschingelhoren is a spectacular example of a low angle thrust fault along which nappes have been displaced horizontally, some 30 to 40 km. The upper section comprises a dark Permian rock called Verracano which is 250 – 300 million years old. It lies on top of rock which is only 35 – 50 million years old. Sandwiched between the two is a thin layer of material which functioned as a lubricant, the Lochsitencalc. The fault arose about 25 million years ago, ie in the Oligo – Miocene Epoch, during the building of the Alps. The plane of the fault slopes gently up towards the south and there are many exposures throughout the 300 square kilometres of the Unesco World Heritage Site which the Swiss have secured to preserve the area.

The Tschingelhoren is also notable for the Martinsloch, a hole about 15 metres in diameter, visible in the photograph. It is quite irrelevant to the important geology close by, but it does demonstrate that the wall is a very thin partition and provides walkers with an intriguing focal point as they ascend the scree path to the Segnas Pass (2627m). I was not organised to cross the pass so I turned and began my return to base.

It was an interesting walk down to the Plaun Segnes Sut, an alluvial outwash plain into which, on the eastern side, cascaded a splendid waterfall. On the west side rock slabs arose which provided a climbing school with a convenient set of graded pitches. Beyond there was a grassy alp to be traversed which led down to the bottom station of the cable car and the top station of the chair lift. When I was half way across the alp the weather changed abruptly as dark clouds gathered on the tops and a rainstorm could be seen sweeping along the valley below. The first crack of thunder startled me and I should have been ready for it. The rain hit hard and cold. The lightning was quite frightening and I tried to remember what to do with my metal walking pole. At least the handle was insulated. By the time I had gone through the pros and cons of this and that course of action to protect myself, with several lightning strikes uncomfortably close, I reached ground beneath the car cables. They would screen me, I thought, and so arrived at the chair lift top station in a more relaxed frame of mind. A few walkers were already waiting there, looking cold and miserable in their skimpy Alpine summer shorts. We had to wait for the storm to pass and the chair lift to re-start. Snuggling in my Scottish summer kit of Gortex and woollies I enjoyed the ride down and started to think again of the history of the famous Nappe and thrust fault I had just seen.

In the 19th century the Swiss geologist Arnold Escher explained the "old rock on top of young" phenomenon seen in the Glarus Nappe more or less correctly, as above, but changed his mind in favour of another model, which was unfortunately wrong. The correct explanation was eventually put forward by Bertrand and Tornebohm. Here I have provided only the simplest of summaries because the Glarus Nappe complex is indeed just that, complex, and research on important details continues (Amateur geologists see www. geopark.ch and Swiss J. Geosci. **101**, p323 -340, 2008).

Nappes are not rare. Mountains are made of them including those close to home. In the 19th century the North West Highlands of Scotland were intensively studied because, among other things, the phenomenon of "old rock on top of young" was thought to be present, especially by James Nicol of Aberdeen University. Contrary to the established view he was convinced that the Moine schists overlay younger Durness Limestone. A major study by geologists of the Geological Survey of Scotland was initiated in 1883 and concluded that it was along a thrust fault, the Moine Thrust, that the Moine schists had indeed moved many tens of kilometres, from east to west, coming to rest on top of the Durness Limestone.

The SNH site of Knockan Crag some 13 miles north of Ullapool on the A835, provides an excellent exposure of the Moine Thrust and the shear zone along which movement took place. You can also hear a nice recorded conversation between seated effigies of the two geologists, Ben Peach and John Horne, who were most prominent in developing the radical new understanding of how the earth's crust behaves. Every walker and climber should make a pilgrimage to Knockan Crag.

It is difficult to grasp the originality of the folding, thrust and shear processes which Peach and Horne proposed to explain the surface geology which they had painstakingly mapped. However, it was easy to see objections to the idea. Where did the energy for such colossal events come from? Did the lateral displacement of the crust cause the earth to shrink in diameter? We now know that the earth's crust is made of discrete units, tectonic plates, and that geothermal convection currents below the crust drives the plates into each other, wrinkling the crust into folds and nappes. Fresh crust spreads out from the middle of the ocean floor so the earth does not shrink. The Glarus Nappe arose from the collision of the African plate with the European plate in the creation of the Alps. In the case of the NW Highlands the story is more ancient and complicated, but the Moine Thrust and the other associated faults were also the result of tectonic collision.

Ben Avon Tors and Associated Landforms – Revisited

Martyn Batchelor

I couldn't quite believe it at first: had I written the article "Terra Incognita" which appeared in the 2013 CC Journal (Vol. 22 No 110), and used the pseudonym Hugh Spencer? I too had first climbed Ben Avon as a boy, walking from Corgarff (August 1960) – and it was my second Munro, and my first had been Lochnagar with the Aberdeen Grammar School hillwalking club on 30 May 1960. In 1965 I progressed to Aberdeen University to study Geography, and my degree dissertation was centred on the very area so well described by Hugh Spencer – the "periglacial landscapes" of the Eastern Cairngorms.

On re-reading "Terra Incognita" I thought that it raised various questions, particularly in relation to the tors – how and when were they formed, how did they survive the ravages of the Ice Age(s) the erosional effects of which are so obvious in the immediately adjacent glens and corries, and are they still evolving in the present day?

I resisted the temptation to revisit the many articles and texts cited in my Geography dissertation. However, I did remember that a former tutor, David Sugden (latterly Professor of Geography at Edinburgh University) had written an article entitled 'The Cairngorm Tors and their significance', published in The Scottish Mountaineering Club Journal in 1983 (Vol. XXXII No.174) obviously aimed at the climbing and hillwalking fraternity. His fairly succinct explanation of the alternate theories remains valid today and is referenced in more recent publications.

The two original basic theories may be summarised:

1. Pre-glacial origin due to weathering under a warmer humid climate where chemically enhanced groundwater permeated down joints and decomposed the parent rock.

2. 'Periglacial' origin in polar regions <u>not</u> ice-bound, with downslope movement of material aided by saturation resulting from seasonal thawing of frozen ground – known as 'gelifluction' or 'solifluction'. Exposed bedrock, more resistant to freeze-thaw processes, particularly on hill and ridge crests, takes on a tor-like form.

The former theory tends to be more favoured, acknowledging the jointing pattern still discernible in the tors, including the 'sheeting' (exfoliation or pseudo-bedding) of the granite parallel to the tor surfaces. However the tors have obviously been subjected to intense and prolonged frost or freeze-thaw action, still evidenced today in the peripheral 'etching' or rounding.

Undoubtedly this occurred particularly in the later and immediate postglacial phases when the upper slopes and plateau surfaces were exposed above the valley and corrie glaciers. Exhumation and exposure of the more resistant outcrops has been aided by solifluction of the more degraded material downslope.

The unique landscapes we see today on Ben Avon and throughout the Northern Cairngorms have developed on granite originally intruded into the area 400 million years ago, and subsequently exposed and eroded. The granite tends to be a coarse-grained amalgam of feldspar, mica and quartz which was subjected to intense pressure and fracturing, resulting in an extensive jointing pattern still apparent today. Much of the closer jointing has been exploited as a result of a succession of very differing climates, possibly including deep chemical weathering under more sub-tropical conditions in the pre-glacial period. The decomposed granite has largely been removed by erosion to produce the extensive plateau areas typifying the Cairngorms at present. Areas with wider jointing patterns tend to have been more resistant, and ultimately have remained as the tors and associated rocky outcrops, subsequently further modified. Certain more massive structures encased in well-decomposed material remain buried, and are yet to be exhumed. They can be seen part-exposed in some corrie headwalls and incipient corries e.g. Sgor Riabhach to the south of Big Brae and south east of West Meur Gorm Craig.

However, it is the Ice Age remodelling that first began 2.5 million years ago that is primarily responsible for today's landscape. Successive glacial and inter-glacial periods have tended to obliterate many 'interim' glacial features, with the landforms discernible today being attributable primarily to the last major glacial period beginning 35,000 years ago. This is considered to have achieved a maximum ice cover over all the Cairngorms and much of upland Scotland in excess of half a kilometre thick around 22,000 years ago. The

elevated flatter plateaux will have attracted a very slow moving so-called 'cold base' ice sheet effectively frozen to the bedrock and with minimal erosive effect on pre-existing landforms. This contrasts markedly with the far greater erosive power exerted by the faster moving ice channelled along the pre-glacial drainage network. Here meltwater at the base allowed more abrasive material to be incorporated into the underside of the ice sheet, eroding the more typical glacial troughs, which are today's glens and straths.

Thereafter a slow amelioration of the climate saw a reduction of ice cover and retreat to a valley and mountain corrie stage. A deterioration around 13,500 years ago, referred to as the Loch Lomond re-advance, saw a temporary re-establishment of upper valley and corrie glaciers, but the ice finally disappeared around 11,500 years ago.

The adjacent plateau areas then exposed were subjected to prolonged periods of intense cold. This resulted in frost-shattering and granular disintegration with general downslope movement of material due to the constantly recurring freeze-thaw action. A more limited cold period between 1550 and 1850 AD, generally referred to as the 'Little Ice Age', saw the re-establishment of certain corrie glaciers or permanent snow beds. Extensive perpetual snows also remained on the plateaux for many years and are described as such in various publications from that period.

After 11,500 years ago, the remaining ice occupying the valleys and corries had started to disintegrate in-situ as well as retreating 'up-valley' releasing vast quantities of meltwater containing sands and gravels deposited as mounds and terraces. A vast array of these features occupies the entire valley floor immediately south of the confluence of the River Avon with the burns emanating from Slochd Mor. The suite of terraces are at varying levels with particularly steep sides reflecting their final 'ice-contact' with the phased disappearance of the decaying ice. The flat-topped terraces and mounds are also pitted with hollows or 'kettle holes' indicating where stranded ice blocks finally melted.

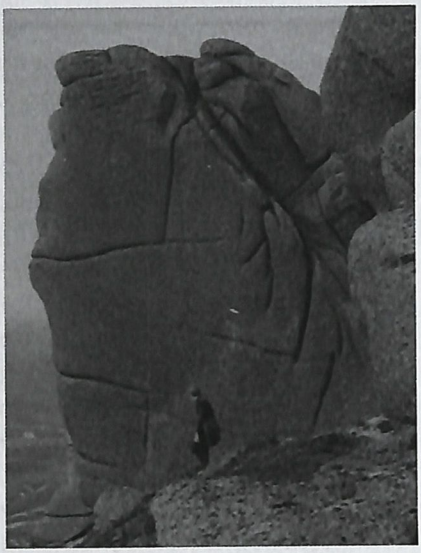

Figure 1
The west flank of Sron na h-Iolaire

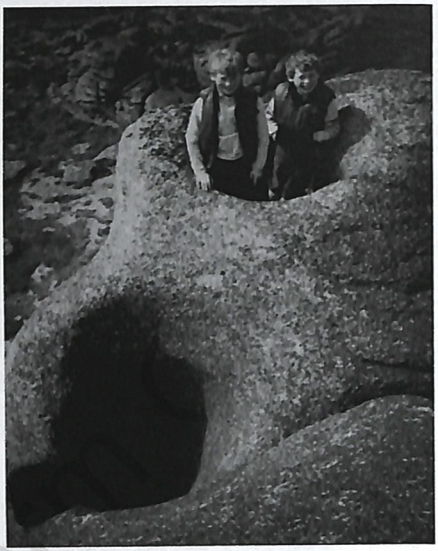

Figure 2
Pot holes on Clach Bhan

Overlooking this depositional landscape, on the steep cliff-lined slopes of Sron na h-Iolaire flanking the major glacial trough of Slochd Mor, tor-like rock protuberances extend from the top of the cliffs above about 750m, (Fig.1). In addition, discernible tor-like outcrops occur on various slopes generally above 700m, particularly those on the north spurs of East and West Meur Gorm Craig and Clach Fiaraidh so well described by Hugh Spencer. Massive tors at Clach Bhan, on the west shoulder of Meall Gaineimh and on East Meur Gorm Craig are either on the plateau or plateau edge at over 850m. The most impressive and highest example is Clach Bun Rudhtair, (The Needle Tors) at 900m protruding over 15m above the steep north east spur of Stob Bac an Fhurain. It is reasonable to infer that the lower limit for the tors and outcrops, which mostly coincides with the lower limit for the frost-shattered block-fields and un-vegetated granular material, equates to the surface level of the valley glaciers in the later phases of the last glacial period.

Other massive tors exhibiting wide-spaced jointing patterns are more randomly located on the flatter plateau areas, and include the main Ben Avon summit (Leabaidh an Daimh Bhuidhe) and Clach

Choutsaich both at over 1100m and Clach an t-Saighdeir at over 950m. It is appropriate to consider the origin of the block-fields and expanses of gravels in part in relation to the degradation and 'etching' of the tors both in the immediate post-glacial period and possibly also in the present day. Many of the tors exhibit an undercutting around the base, as well as extensive rounding and enlargement of the joint network. This includes erosion of the so-called 'pseudo-bedding' parallel to the tor surfaces, together with weathering pits (pot-holes) in the upper surfaces. Having visited Clach Bhan in mid-winter and photographed the extensive rime-ice encrustation across the whole tor surface, it is fair to conclude that even present day water penetration into the rock joints with subsequent expansion upon freezing, will result in the creation of further granular detritus. Winter winds, regularly in excess of 100kph and gusting considerably above that figure, and temperatures as low as -15°C are recorded at the Cairngorm summit weather station only 15 km to the west. The combination of these factors provides ideal conditions for present day intense frost weathering with consequential granular disintegration and creation of surface detritus, albeit on a minor scale. Both the present day and relict frost-weathered debris has been further modified and moved downslope. This process referred to as solifluction, creates hummocks and patterned ground on flatter surfaces with stone stripes, lobes and small terraces on slopes.

Often this granular debris has combined with coarser blocks to form lobes up to 3m deep, the larger blocks acting as 'retainers' on the downslope side. The larger lobes are considered to be inactive 'relict' features, with the finer granular material which is still active often upraised as a crust on elongated ice-crystals or needles known as 'pipkrakes'. On these sloping ground terraces, when the ice melts, this can lead to a collapse and net migration of detritus downslope. These features are particularly noticeable on the NE slopes of Meall Gaineimh where the stalkers path winds upwards toward Clach Bhan through a whole zone of turf-banked terraces. They are often sloping on the upper surface, usually only up to 30cm high, 1m deep and 3m wide. Here the terrace retainer is usually low wind-clipped turf stripes comprising heather *(Calluna)*, bearberry *(Arctostaphylos)* crowberry *(Empetrum)* and dwarf mountain azalea *(Loiseleuria)*. On

more exposed slopes these terraces are often at an oblique angle, possibly reflecting the intensity and direction of the prevailing wind. The wind itself can act as a significant erosional element, damaging the turf 'retainer', producing a pattern of vegetation with bare gravel 'treads' or steps, and leading to further downslope movement of material. It is also responsible for creating extensive so-called 'deflation' surfaces, large un-vegetated expanses on the flatter high plateaux.

Hugh Spencer mentions the apparent downslope movement of a huge block on the northern spur of East Meur Gorm Craig. Its 'inverted' weathering pits confirm the disintegration and collapse of even the largest tors over time. There are many other smaller blocks in the vicinity some referred to as 'ploughing' blocks or boulders, often found in association with bare furrows or debris slides. The blocks appear to be supported by a 'bow wave' of granular material at the downslope side with a deeper groove immediately upslope of the blocks.

The weathering pits or potholes are fascinating in themselves. Some are shallow dish-like forms up to 30cm in diameter, but others particularly those on Clach Bhan and Clach Bun Rudthair are over 1m in diameter and 1.5m deep. On Clach Bhan one particularly large pothole exhibits a partially eroded side wall, leaving only a narrow rim of granite. It is recorded that as late as the 1860s local pregnant ladies were transported up the Meall Gaineimh path by pack pony to sit in the potholes in the belief that the pains of labour would thereby be lessened! The origin of these potholes is generally attributed to a combination of water, ice and rock particles or granules, with wind swirling the mixture. In winter a rim of ice forms around the side of the pothole and freeze-thaw will provide more granular material over time. Indeed, in the bottom of some dry potholes in summer it is possible to find fine granular material and rock crystals (Fig.2).

I would like to thank Hugh Spencer for providing such an interesting article and rekindling my personal interest in the area. Regrettably, my knees and I cannot envisage returning to Ben Avon but I have advised my younger brother that I would like my ashes scattered at Clach Bhan - you can imagine his response!

The Highland Cross

Claire Whitehead

It was deep in the middle of winter when I finally put my name on the entry sheet for the Highland Cross. I had known of the race for years; it is a unique event that manages to combine raising huge sums of money for charity with being a competitive and gruelling event. It is a 50 mile race from Kintail to Beauly, the first 20 miles being run, or walked, and the following 30 miles are cycled on public road. Many famous names from past and present Scottish athletics have competed in it.

I had been a spectator for several years as my husband Dan took part. In the summer of 2013 I was several months pregnant with our 4th baby when I stood in the pouring rain watching Dan finish. "I'll do that next year" I thought to myself, as always swept away by the competitive atmosphere at these events. As an athlete it's always hard standing at the sidelines, and inner thoughts always turn to setting new challenges. "I can do that" I thought.

In the months before the race I trained, and raced a bit, hill running being my main sport. Time isn't usually an issue; despite having 4 children we always manage to squeeze our training in. For me there are other problems which affect my ability to train, a weakened core from bearing 4 children and a lack of recovery time after training sessions. As June drew nearer, I realised I was going to have to compete "on a wing and a prayer". Although I'd done a few long runs, and was gradually building up a bit of consistency with my training, it was far from ideal. The race is based on teams of three, in my case I was with my husband Dan and Adrian Davis. I was not the only one with training problems as Adrian had barely run due to a knee injury.

As is often the case in our family, our plans were made and then changed at the last minute. The initial idea of taking the whole family over to Beauly to spend the night in our campervan before handing them over to my mum on Saturday morning prior the race was luckily rethought. My mum asked the simple question "why don't you leave the boys at home and I'll come to your house" and suddenly life looked a whole lot more straightforward. Instead of

packing up for 6, I could concentrate on what I would need for the 20 mile run and 30 mile bike ride. Knowing I always struggle to eat before and during competitions was my main concern. How was I going to get up on Saturday morning and eat my porridge with a stomach that felt like lead? The best I can do is eat plenty in the days leading up to an event to ensure my muscles are well fuelled, so the pre-race breakfast is just topping up the energy levels. The discovery of Shot Blocs has really helped me too. These little energy sweets may be dismissed by some as expensive Jelly Babies, but to me they are an easy to ingest, slow releasing carbohydrate life-saver. I packed my bag with several packets of them.

It is logistically challenging getting to the start of the Highland Cross, Kintail, over on the west coast of Scotland, with all the necessary kit. A convoy of buses transports the 700 odd participants from Inverness and Beauly. From the start point walkers set off early in the morning, followed by the runners. But the first challenge is to survive the bus journey without getting travel sick. Dan and I hopped on one of the new looking coaches only to find it almost full. We squeezed into seats at the back and I looked at Dan and shook my head. No way would I survive sitting at the back of this coach with no fresh air and no leg room. We quickly squeezed back out and went to the very end of the line of buses to where an old bus was sitting with big old fashioned seats and windows that opened. We sat down right at the front and enjoyed a relatively smooth journey during which I watched Dan effortlessly eat his peanut butter and jam sandwich as I choked mine back, telling myself I needed the energy.

The changeover from the foot section to bikes is in the middle of nowhere, or so it feels, at the end of Glen Affric. The bikes have been taken to the changeover by lorries, and laid out ready for the competitors coming in. When your bike is packed onto the lorry you have to make sure all your cycling kit is with it in a bag, and both your bike and bag have to have your race number attached. When you are ready to start the race, you hand over a bag with all your pre-race warm clothing to a lorry which transports it back to Beauly where you collect it at the finish. Amazingly, this all seems to work well and all you have to do is get your head around all the permutations of what clothing you want to have available and where.

As the race starts on the west coast, crosses some very high ground and finishes on the east coast, there is a high chance of passing through many changes of weather. In 2012 Dan left Kintail in sunshine and soaring temperatures to arrive on his bike in Beauly in pouring rain, needing first aid attention for near hypothermia. With this in mind I tied my light, waterproof jacket around my waist as I loaded my pockets with Shot Blocs and an old favourite, Nairns rough oatcakes.

The Highland Cross is a really friendly affair, and you meet people from all walks of life. As I walked up the road to the start line I met my friend Des, who presents the Adventure Show. Uh oh, I thought, pity they're filming when I'm not in great shape. Who wants to see themself on TV not quite on top of their game? I kept that thought to myself though, and we chatted about the sunshine and our hopes for fine weather. I then met people I race regularly against, people I haven't seen for years, friends who were there just to make it to the finish line, and even an old friend from university who, when I last saw him, was more prone to hanging about in the Union pub.

The start of the race is on a winding landrover track that snakes up Gleann Lichd. The route then swings north east, up Eionngleann, climbing some 320m and then passes by Alltbeithe in Glen Affric. As the race began I could quickly see that I was off the pace of the leading lady. My legs were lacking in running miles. I decided to focus on my own race and just start steady and see how it went. Despite having studied the map intently many times prior to the race, all details of what lay ahead seemed to have vanished from my mind. I recalled something about a climb after about 3 miles, a bothy after about 8 miles, then some tea ladies and then the torturous yellow brick road, 7 miles of undulating track to the changeover point. Looking back that's roughly what I remember, interspersed with lots of pain. The best bit of the whole race for me was the long climb which comes after the first section of landrover track. This is on nice single path tracks and I was able to pass runner after runner. My strength has always been in my climbing and it was so satisfying to pass people who had shot off up the flat track at the start of the race. But as the track topped out at over 1000ft and I began to descend, I could feel a niggle in my hamstring which quickly intensified into a pain that inhibited my ability to stride out. It's hard not to focus

solely on the pain when every step sends out a shooting red hot rod of pain up the back of your leg, but it's amazing how your body eventually dulls down the pain signals when it realises you're not going to stop, and other things began to take over in the worry stakes. Was I not going to catch "Horny Dave" from university who used to be a gangly unfit lad? Where was that other packet of Shot Blocs? Was that them I heard falling out of my pocket? Turning and running back up the hill to retrieve them was demoralising but not as bad as facing 10 miles without them. And if that was the tea tent ahead, did that mean I still had 7 whole miles to go?

Running along the yellow brick road was one of the most endless, painful experiences I have endured. Apparently I was not alone in feeling this. The Highland Cross run is notorious for leaving one's legs really knackered, something to do with the combination of fast running at the start and the end with steep climbing and descending in the middle. I heard this year's winner Joe Symonds say his legs were seriously hurting those last hard miles. Somewhere along the way I caught up with our 3rd team member Adrian. He was limping along and decided to chum me on the last section. He is a cheery kind of a chap and kept up a string of chatter along the way. I had by this point lost my sense of humour about the whole event and wasn't really answering. At one stage I remember choking as I tried to eat an oatcake, not easy to eat and digest without water and I'd tried to eat it earlier, between water stations. Adrian was looking at me, worried as I choked and struggled to keep running. I didn't even have the energy to explain to him what was wrong. To add insult to injury, the 3rd lady passed me at this point.

Finally we reached the changeover. All I can really recall of this is happily getting on my bike thinking "no more running". The bike ride starts off downhill all the way to Cannich. I quickly passed the lady who had caught me at the end of the run, which was a good feeling, and I wondered if I could make any inroads on the 1st lady. Although I have ridden my bike a lot, I am relatively inexperienced in racing. As male competitor after male competitor passed me, I failed to realise that if I put in a short burst of speed to get on their wheel, my ride would be so much faster as we could work together. I struggled on on my own as single riders and groups passed by, until finally about 8 miles from the end I caught the wheel of someone as

we headed up a short rise. We then worked together to the finish line and those last few miles flew past. If only I had managed this at the start of the ride.

At the finish line, Des came up to me and asked how I'd found the race. I felt happy to be finished but knew I'd been below my best, so there was not the elation you sometimes get when you know you've put in a good performance. I was frustrated with my bike ride, knowing I could have gone harder if I'd been more tactically smart.

However, Dan raced well to finish 5th, and Adrian had pulled away from me on the bike ride and finished 10 minutes ahead. We secured 2nd Open team prize, which felt satisfying. As we drew out of the car park to head home, our thoughts were already turning to the 2015 event.

Some results of the 2014 Highland Cross

First Gent	Joe Symonds 3h:19m:17s
First Lady	Claire Gordon 3:57:18
First Veteran Gent	**Dan Whitehead** 3:39:24
First Veteran Lady	**Claire Whitehead** 4:11:18
First Open Team	Nevis Cycles
Second Open Team	**Bike Station, Ballater**
First Mountain Rescue Team	**Aberdeen Mountain Rescue Team**

Conversation With An Eaglet

Eric Jensen

I was deeply unsettled. The referendum on Scottish Independence was looming and I just had to get away. North-west Sutherland beckoned and at short notice I arranged accommodation at Bettyhill. From books and scientific papers I had previously worked out the location of several golden eagle home ranges, so here then was an opportunity to examine them further.

My passion for *Aquila chrysaetos* was kindled in 1967 on reading Seton Gordon's second book , "The Charm of the Hills". (I wrote to

Mr. Gordon and received a kind reply; we exchanged about 15 more letters and I finally met him in 1975 at the Invercauld Festival Theatre, Braemar, where he delighted an audience with magic lantern slides of the golden eagle). For about 20 years goldies became the prime objective of my outings to the Scottish hills, where I witnessed most aspects of golden eagle activity, from hunting, to mating and rearing young. But until that September I had not actually conversed with one!

In "Eagles, Hawks and Falcons of the world" Brown and Young state that the golden eagle is generally a silent bird, only occasionally uttering a loud, clear, yelping call. In human language "tsewk" describes the sound fairly well. The description of golden eagle mating given in Watson's "The Golden Eagle" states that the female emits a "characteristic but quiet whistling call" during copulation. The only golden eagle mating episode I have so far witnessed occurred in the late 1970s in Glen Esk. It was a sunny, windless, mid-March day and the only sounds to be heard were a tumbling stream and, as my nature diary faithfully records, one of the birds was uttering a loud, intermittent scream-like call.

Whilst at Bettyhill, I visited six golden eagle home ranges. Two of these were towards Foinaven, three were in the vicinity of Ben Hope and Ben Loyal, and one was further east. Some days I saw only eyries; on other days adult birds were also in evidence. Coincidentally, single adult goldies which I encountered in two separate home ranges were each being attacked by a peregrine falcon. However, the highlight of that eleven day trip was the discourse I enjoyed with a juvenile golden eagle, an eaglet.

Two years previously I had visited a particular hill in the company of Hella Alexander and Vilma McAdam. After only a short walk from where we had parked the car, a beautiful, adult golden eagle sailed out to greet us from a steep hillside above some birch trees. It circled above us for a short time before spiralling upwards, and then setting course to disappear across the hill. Two years later - avoiding the Referendum hype - I returned to the same locality for the purpose of searching the far side of that same hill.

The ground was very wet and the moorland vegetation remained tall. It was difficult going for several kilometres as I worked my way round the hillside. Eventually, a small valley came into view and I

made my way up it to check some rock exposures. These were inspected for eagle signs with negative results. A little further on a small corrie appeared. It had much steeper rocks and on scanning them with binoculars I spotted a bulky eyrie in the middle of a small precipice.

By lying against a boulder on the moor I steadied myself to focus on the pile of sticks. The heather stems in the upper part of the nest looked brown and fresh compared with the grey stems below and white down feathers were adhering to the nest perimeter. Clearly this eyrie had been used earlier that year. But there was no sign of an eagle - yet!

Looking further up the valley I saw some scattered rock outcrops and decided, for the sake of completeness to view them more closely. Ten minutes later I was standing opposite a low cliff and scanning the rock, looking for whitewash, which might have suggested an eagle roost.

Suddenly I heard it, "Tsewk, tsewk, tsewk" . I recognised at once the call of a golden eagle, but where was the sound coming from? I scanned all around but nowhere could I see the bird. The call continued for a few minutes and then I could not resist replying. I turned towards the direction from which the calls seemed to be coming and mouthed my best "Tsewk, tsewk, tsewk". There was an immediate response which caught me somewhat off guard !

The small cliff was echoing my call back into the valley where I stood. It was actually very helpful as it helped perfect my imitation ! The originator of the "tsewk" seemed to become intrigued by the echoing sounds. Then, a handsome golden eagle flew into sight. Its dark chocolate colouration with prominent, white, wing patches and broad tail band confirmed that it was an eaglet of that year, and had almost certainly fledged from the eyrie viewed ten minutes earlier.

The eaglet circled round about 60 metres above the ground. It was clearly looking down at me and calling at the same time. Of course, I responded! Wouldn't you? This went on for several minutes and the eaglet then decided to land at the top of a nearby slope. For five further minutes we continued to converse with one another, although our vocabulary was somewhat restricted. Neither of us seemed to be bored with the conversation, though!

Suddenly the eaglet sprang into the air, opened its huge wings, swung round and glided out of sight. Silence prevailed and for five more minutes I stood perfectly still just enjoying the very recent, precious memory. Then a feeling of intense loneliness overwhelmed me. I turned towards the rock face and commenced "tysewking" afresh. After a couple of minutes, back flew the eaglet, calling down to me and circling as before. I was euphoric. My " friend" had returned!

It was to be short lived though and the eaglet soon flapped off towards the head of the valley. This was in the direction of a very bright sun and the eaglet was quickly lost to view. After some 45 years of studying the magnificent golden eagle, the very spirit of the hills, I had finally managed to converse with one: my intimacy with the species was complete.

⬅ *This photograph of a juvenile golden eagle was taken by the late Neil Cook, who for many years was senior ranger on Balmoral estate, and is reproduced with kind permission of Denise Cook, Neil's elder daughter. Neil was a superb photographer and naturalist and he was also engaged in falconry. Falconry friends, who owned and flew golden eagles, would arrange for Neil to look after their eagles, which would often be released during falconry sessions to catch prey in Glen Muick and elsewhere.*

The photograph shows one such bird, a juvenile, which during snowy conditions has caught a mountain hare. In true raptor fashion the eaglet is tearing at the hare whilst mantling its prey with its great wings.

Tres Amigos Climbing Tres Tres Mil Metre Mountains plus a Metric Corbett in the Sierra Nevada

Brian Davey

Los Tres Mil mountains are the names given to all the 3000 metre peaks of the Sierra Nevada in Andalucia, mainland Spain's highest mountain range.

The Integral de los Tres Mil is a peak bagging expedition to climb all of these mountains, similar to the quest to climb (walk) all the Scottish Munros. In honour of Sir Hugh Munro I have taken the liberty of renaming these mountains in Spain Metric Munros and in honour of John Rooke Corbett I have called all the peaks between 2500 and 3000 metres above mean sea level Metric Corbetts.

As part of my mission to climb all these mountains, on 18th July 2013 I set off with two friends from the pretty ham curing (Jamon Serrano) pueblo of Trevelez (1,486m) in the Alpujarras (Sierra Nevada foothills). Our ambition was a two day peak bagging expedition to climb 15 of these eastern peaks, having already climbed the higher western ones. However, 3 Tres Mil mountains plus a Metric Corbett turned out to be a more realistic target for our venture.

Our route from Trevelez early that cloudless July morning took us from the Barrio Alto in the highest part of the village past the delightfully sited Hotel Fragua on a good but fairly steep downhill path called the Camino de Granada, to the Rio Trevelez valley floor. Coming in the opposite direction we encountered 3 struggling mules each heavily laden with 6 bales of straw. The next day at the same place it would be 3 peak bagging amigos struggling with their backpacks along this track, back up to the pueblo with parched tongues.

The number 3 seemed to have a recurring theme throughout this expedition with 3 amigos, 3 Tres Mil, 3 mules and later in the high mountains we encountered 3 speedy *Capra pyrenaica hispanica*. These Southeastern Spanish ibex or mountain goats, which inhabit the Sierra Nevada, have long horns and are known locally as cabra montes. Unfortunately for us the ibex were travelling too fast to give us enough time to focus cameras for a good picture of them.

Our goal on the first day of walking was the Refugio Postero Alto (1900m) on the north face of the Sierra Nevada range. To reach it we first had to ascend to the Puerto de Trevelez (2798m), one of the Sierra Nevada's most ancient and important foot passes, which links the southern foothills of the Alpujarras with the very old city of Guadix on the northern slopes. Judging by the state of the path and the absence of walkers it is apparent that this path is little used today, understandable since the higher levels must be snow covered in winter while the lower stretches running parallel to the Rio Trevelez are very wet even in July. However, with sunny blue skies and nice warm temperatures the watery path did not bother us much as we splashed steadily up the well irrigated green valley serenaded by countless birds in the lush and shady vegetation.

After about 4 km from Trevelez the valley narrowed and we passed the tributary Rio Culo de Perro, the Dog's Backside River, which flows down from the Siete Lagunas, seven small delightful lakes which lie in a corrie at the southeast foot of Mulhacen (3482m), the Iberian Peninsula's highest mountain. Further along the valley, after about 4 hours of walking, we stopped under some steep shady crags near the confluence of the Rio Juntillas. When we had finished a leisurely lunch the serious ascent began, up a faintly marked path through deep grassy meadows grazed by contented looking long horned cattle. In the distance, high above us, a valley notch in the ridge skyline plus a rough compass bearing seemed to lead us towards the Puerto de Trevelez. With no marked path to follow we laboriously climbed up this steep barranco only to discover, to my great disappointment, that on reaching the high col above the barranco we still had approximately another 2 km to traverse before arriving at the true Puerto.

Here to the north a superb view stretched out below us: the Marquesado forest, a vast plateau with its immense solar and wind farms and various pueblos plus the ancient city of Guadix. Also visible, although we did not recognize it at that time, 900m below was our accommodation for that night in the Refugio Postero Alto, built in 1996 in a forest firebreak to resemble a mining village with a number of dormitory modules clustered around the main building. Before descending the steep well-marked zig-zag path down the Loma de Enmedio (Middle Ridge), a quick assessment of our next

day's quest presented nothing too ominous looking but of course we had to first re-climb 900m to the col before we could embark on the next stage of our expedition. The descent to the Refugio was easy but a bit hard on the knee joints despite our walking poles, so after 10 hours of walking that day on what we had estimated would be a 7 hour journey, we arrived at our destination very tired but contented and more than ready for a cool beer.

Early next morning, well fed and rested with fresh supplies of food and plenty of water, (at least 3 litres each), we set off again for Puerto de Trevelez having decided that a direct assault on Picon de Jerez (3121m) from the Refugio looked too steep and strenuous. My 100 euro offer for a ride on his horse, humourously made to a Spanish cowboy who overtook us on his way up to his cattle herd in the high sierras, was rejected with a smile, but nevertheless we eventually reached the pass on Shank's mare, (Fig1).

A cool, moderate, southerly breeze and a temperature of 15 C at the Puerto made for excellent walking conditions despite a blazing sun in a clear blue sky. This was in contrast to the 25 C measured on the thermometer attached to my map case at the start of our walk from the Refugio. In the near distance the Metric Corbett, La Piedra de los Ladrones, (The Rock of the Robbers) loomed up in front of us and with a brisk pace and an easy scramble I was soon standing on top of this impressive big lump of rock at 2944 metres above sea level.

Figure 1
Cowboy in the high Sierras.

A quick drink and snack had us on our way to our first Tres Mil, Cerro Pelao (3144m), the Bald Hill, with its small stony cairn. From this central peak spurs lead off northwards to Picon de Jeres (3090m), the Great Peak of Jeres, and southwards to the higher summit of Horcajo de Trevelez (3182m), The Yoke of Trevelez. This was very pleasant walking with tremendous views in all directions despite the thin atmosphere at this altitude and the fact that we had to retrace our steps back to Cerro Pelao, having ticked off Picon de Jeres. Our original target of 15 Metric Munros stretched out invitingly to the west before us but we knew this was impossible given the time available. Our third Tres Mil, Horcajo was easily climbed and it was an excellent vantage point to visually survey the large snow fields now rapidly melting on Mulhacen (3482m), Alcazaba (3366m) and Veleta (3398m), the big 3 mountains of the Sierra Nevada, (Figs.2&3). Meanwhile a glorious golden eagle surveyed us, soaring some 100 metres above the summit. Having left it some barra de pan from our lunch, we departed for our long trek back to Trevelez.

Figure 2
Summit of Horcajo de Trevelez, (3182m).

Our plan was to descend down the east ridge of Horcajo, then pick up the proper path that we could not find on our ascent to the Puerto de Trevelez. Underfoot there was much stony scree with a

few grassy summer pastures or borreguiles below the melting snowfields, grazed by long horned cattle along with their calves which we passed at a respectful distance. The correct path was eventually located but again, as on the ascent, it became indistinct and eventually disappeared in steep deep grassy slopes. Far below, the Rio Trevelez valley beckoned, but it was a hard struggle to get down there and when we finally arrived at the valley floor a change of socks was necessary to remove the unbearable torture of hundreds of needle sharp grass seeds which were sorely pricking my feet and ankles.

Figure 3
The three highest summits in the Sierra Nevada, Mulhacen (3482m), Alcazaba (3366m), and Veleta (3398m).

The final trek was a fast downhill splashy march fuelled by another quick drink and snack. This trek was achieved in only 2 hours, less than half the time we had taken for that same stretch on our ascent. The speedy time was probably driven not so much by our energy levels, but by that waiting drink in a Trevelez pub and the prospect of a dinner party that night back at our home base in that wonderful white-washed Moorish village of Mecina Bombaron. Altogether it was an excellent, enjoyable though strenuous expedition, in great company, accomplishing Tres Tres Mil metre mountains and a Metric Corbett.

Knoydart Overnighter, June 2014

Sue Chalmers

The Knoydart peninsula evokes respect, even awe, in hillwalking circles. The area has a reputation for remoteness and for a certain independence of spirit. Returning from fighting in the Second World War the "seven men of Knoydart" staked a claim to a few acres of their own land, only to be taken to court and dispossessed by the then owner, the Nazi sympathiser Lord Brockett. After many twists and turns, the estate finally came into community ownership in 1999 when it was purchased by the Knoydart Foundation, a partnership of local residents, the Highland Council, Chris Brasher Trust and the John Muir Trust.

When I joined the Cairngorm Club in 2010, I found the the prospect of going on a weekend meet to the White House at Barisdale rather daunting. With a few more years of hillwalking under my boots, I was delighted to have the opportunity to discover Knoydart on the club overnighter in June 2014.

Eleven of us assembled at around midday at the quayside in Mallaig, (Fig.2). The weather was reasonable but, mindful of the MWIS forecast of "extensive or persistent cloud, base between 350 and 550m coastal areas … chance of cloud-free Munros less than 10%", we didn't expect that to last. Our departure for Loch Hourn aboard "The Venturer" was enlivened by a pipe band (which was

Figure 1 *Easy going.*

Figure 2 *The Overnighter party at Mallaig. From left to right; Adrian Scott, Michael Culley, Ivan Hiscox, Gordon Stalker, Bruce Manning, Ken Thomson, Neil Chalmers, Matt Parkes (guest), Debbie Fielding, Benn Hitchen and Sue Chalmers.*

really there for the local food festival). There was some anxiety about how we would disembark on to the peninsula but, in the event, we easily clambered out on to the rocks on Fraoch Eilan which was not in fact an island, but connected to the shore by a strip of sand. As we walked beside Barisdale Bay, the sun was shining and we dared to hope that MWIS had got it wrong, (Fig.2).

After twenty minutes or so, the parties went their separate ways with Gordon Stalker heading for his Corbett of Sgurr a Choire Bheith ("peak of the corrie with birches") and Adrian Scott and Benn Hitchen for Sgurr na Ciche ("peak of the nipple"). The rest of us headed for Ladhar Bheinn (pron. Larven, meaning "prong hill") via man-high and tick-harbouring bracken until we rounded the shoulder into Coire Dharrcail.

The climb up to Stob a Choire Odhair was tough-going but frequent attempts at wild flower identification distracted some of us. "Sedges have edges, rushes are round and grasses are hollow right up from the ground", said Debbie, and she should know as she's an ecologist by profession. Whether or not our identification attempts were accurate, the sight of so many beautiful flowers added greatly to this part of the walk.

By the time we reached the summit of Ladhar Bheinn at around 18:00, (Figs.3&4), differences in age and fitness were showing and we split into two groups. Neil Chalmers, Ken Thomson (upon whose account of the expedition this article has drawn considerably) and I proceeded at a more leisurely pace, stopping to brew up on the way down to Mam Barrisdale. Here we made the decision to continue to Luinne Bheinn (rather than retreat to Inverie) and we reached the summit cairn at around midnight. We bivvied high up on the ridge and the voices we heard in the darkness turned out not to be a figment of our imaginations but those of the the faster, younger party bivvying at the col just below us.

It was a dry and calm night so I slept soundly, and it was exhaustion after the day's exertions, rather than lack of sympathy, which caused us to ignore (apparently) Ken's howls of pain caused by leg cramps. After leaving our bivvy site at around 05:00, we reached our final summit of the weekend, Meal Buidhe by 08:00. Then it was all downhill and into the Camusrory estate in eager anticipation of a cup of tea in the the bothy whilst we waited for our

Figure 3&4 *Ladhar Bheinn summit ridge.*

ship to come in. We were disappointed. The rather unwelcoming occupants of Camusrory denied all knowledge of a bothy and made it quite clear that the jetty where we hoped to be picked up was private. We set off for it anyway in the hope of meeting up with the rest of the party but found only midges.

Ken walked back down the path and encountered Camusrory estate owner, Rupert Soames, complete with cigar, and then Adrian and Benn, fresh from Sgurr na Ciche, and finally the rest of party hiding from the midges in bivvy bags and midge-nets on a promontory near the pier. So we all joined them and waited in slackening wind and gathering midgies for the boat, distracted only by the sight of the proprietor's boat being manoeuvred into a position

which made it impossible for "The Venturer" to use the jetty. Thus we had to clamber over yet more grass tussocks, bog and bracken to embark off rocks.

There was more than one nodding head on the boat back. After a quick change of clothes at Mallaig, we boarded the minibus and fell asleep again, except of course for our valiant drivers, Ken and Adrian.

So another memorable overnighter came to an end. The establishment of the Knoydart Foundation ensures that this remote and beautiful landscape will continue to be enjoyed by all who venture there for many years to come. It is disappointing that the Foundation's neighbours do not share the same generosity of spirit. Nevertheless, it had been, as usual, a weekend of good company, the odd navigational error (mine) and a great sense of achievement. I, for one, am looking forward to the club's next Knoydart meet in April 2015.

Clinging to the Cables – Dolomites Meet 2014

Members of the Party

We circled round Venice Marco Polo Airport for half an hour and then seemed to begin to land. Instead, the stormy conditions dictated that we fly to Bologna. We should have been forewarned as we had experienced turbulence as we flew over the Dolomites. We had seen snow on the jagged peaks below as well.

Corvara (1568m) was our destination. It is in the Dolomites, roughly half way between Bolzano and Cortina. We did eventually fly back to Venice where we were joined by other members of the party for the onward journey by bus or car. We were to stay in Corvara for the week of 9th July to 16th July, 2014.

The party comprised Adrian Scott, Elizabeth Scott, Alec Macmillan, Alex Barbour, Derek Beverley, Eva Foubister, Fiona Cameron, Frances Macrae-Gibson, Han Papavoine, Hazel Witte, Kees Witte, Michelle Ward, Peter Bellarby, Roger Cookson, Rod Campbell and Susan Taylor. What follows gives a flavour of what we were up to, whether it was clinging to the cables on the many via ferratas or walking on the excellent paths. Peter starts off the account.

We woke next day to see what a splendid setting Corvara has with its backdrop of the soaring cliffs of Sassongher. Figure 1 shows a photo taken by Derek. Eager to get going, the via ferrata party headed for Ferrata Vallon – Piz Boè. Nice and easy to begin with, using gondola and chair lift to gain height. We walked up the valley, Il Vallon, towards the via ferrata. Adrian took the lead – he had been here the year before on a recce, hadn't he? But he was a bit puzzled. Then it was realized that the lower part of the via ferrata was covered with snow. Encouraged by the two others we saw ahead, we found a route up the side and joined the via ferrata. The plan had been to make a circuit of Pizes della Vallun and go down the easier Lichtensfelser Steig via ferrata. Easier it was, but getting to it was not, as we had to descend steeply down a considerable snow field. Rather foolishly I was wearing running shoes (usually good on via ferratas) rather than boots so I had made it rather difficult for myself. I should have taken more notice of the snow we had seen from the

Figure 1 *Sassongher*

plane. It seems there was rather more snow around than usual at this time of year, but we completed the intended route.

The following day was a good demonstration of the large range of opportunities there are round Corvara to suit all tastes. Most of us took the bus to the top of Grödner Joch, a pass to the west of Corvara. I've used the German name but you can use the Italian name or the Ladin name if you want. Ladin is a local language. Some went up the Gran Cir via ferrata, reaching the summit of Gran Cir. Some of us went up the somewhat more difficult Piz da Cir V via ferrata with its finish up a tower to the summit. The guide book says there is room for 10 on the summit but that really would be a squash. Figure 2 shows the party on the summit. Then we had to down climb the tower. The Gran Cir party had the satisfaction of reaching a higher summit than ours. Others enjoyed walking down from the pass towards Corvara with variations as will be seen as Fiona takes up the walkers' story.

Corvara, dominated by the majestic Sassongher peak, tempted me back two years running. In 2013 Eilidh Scobbie and I spent a week in Corvara, botanising, attempting water colour painting and lift assisted walking, some steep, rough and challenging. Unknown to us,

Adrian and Liz Scott were also there and had sought out a perfect venue for a club holiday.

Figure 2 *Summit of Piz da Cir V.*

This time there were 16 of us, and those of us no longer able to 'do' via ferratas were able to enjoy hearing the exploits of the lucky climbers. Our Hotel Ciasa De Munt was situated in the centre of the village, with buses, lifts, a swimming pool and low level walks all to hand. Fornella Pizzeria which served a large variety of cuisine was our evening meeting place. Tales of achievements flowed, then plans for the days ahead and reminders of local events, for example the market, music in Colfosco Church, and a First World War exhibition. This had a very local flavour, which made us pause to think how life was turned up-side down in this remote valley, as it was 'given' to Italy. (Italy joined Britain and France in 1915 to fight Austro-Hungary. The terms of the secret London Pact included the transfer of a large part of the Southern Tyrol to Italy after the war).

Having found our bearings on the first day, including the Boë lift and a very steep walk to our coffee stop at the Crëp de Munt rifugio, on the second day we all caught an early bus to Passo Gardena, the col leading to Val Gardena to the west of Corvara (you see the language problem here as Peter used the German version of the

name). Together we set off for the foot of the Piz de Gier via ferrata routes a warm-up for some, a first attempt for others and a chance to admire (and remember) for me. I was also reminded of my attempts at water colour painting in 2013 when I had succeeded in making a striking twin-peaked outcrop look like a giant rabbit!

As preparations for the climb took some time, the delightful flora soon grabbed the attention of the lower level party. There was coffee and the first of many apple strudels at Jimmy's Hut followed by a variety of walks, some back to Corvara along the balcony via the Eidelweiss Hut, some using lifts into the lower valley, and some taking the bus. Thus an excellent day with an impressive plant list was completed! In the evening at the hotel and Pizzeria we enjoyed tales of derring-do on the rocks above.

Next day we tried the west side of the valley using the Col Alt lift. The walks looked simple on the plan, and stunning meadows, welcoming coffee stops and superb views whisked the day away. We were lucky to catch the last lift down.

A walk north into Stern (German name – La Villa in Italian) allowed us to ascend using the Pic Ila lift. Intriguing wooden bird carvings in the windows of the Hydro station were an unexpected delight! At the top of the lift an adventure play park, aimed at children of all ages, came briefly between us and another floral extravaganza. Choosing what looked like an enticingly short but wild variation to our proposed route, we found ourselves in literally deep trouble! Our path dropped very steeply into a boggy, wooded ravine! It began to rain! We had missed the last lift down but found a long woodland path which eventually took us back to Corvara. Thanks to mobile phones we were able to let our friends know why we were delayed, and were delighted when three of them came out to meet us. The Pizzeria was an equally welcome sight!

A day at a higher level on the west of the valley had us searching scree slopes for rarer alpine plants, with lunch at the Franz Kostner Hut. By leaving the beaten track we found a variety of soldanellas (snowbells) in damp hollows, rather late in their season. Buses could have been taken for exploration further afield, but we had run out of time. Hopefully we will be back.

Back to Peter. Saturday saw the via ferrata party out in force on Sassongher. It seems impregnable from Corvara but with the help of

a bus to Kolfuschg and the Col Pradat gondola lift we reached a path going behind Sassongher. We were able to double back to Forcella Sassongher which is on the far side from Corvara. From here we reached the summit, partly on path and partly using via ferratas. Just before the start of the via ferrata there is a spectacular gully that plunges downwards between point 2563m of Tors della Sassongher and Sassongher itself. Figure 3 shows the route on the upper slopes. The panoramic views from the summit, including the Marmolada, were really impressive and worth the effort in getting there. It was back to the Forcella where there was much debate about which path to take. We wanted to make a round trip, but the path we wanted to take seemed to be heading for impossible difficulties. Take courage, my friends! The path looks well used so it can't be impossible and that, indeed, was the case. It was a very pleasant walk to Utia Gherdendenacia where refreshments were had. Down in the valley at La Villa, we still had time left, so most of us used a gondola lift on the other side of the valley to extend the walk, but it was a rush to get to the last gondola going down to Corvara.

Figure 3 *Kees on the screes...(.with apologies), Upper slopes of Sassongher.*

The last day of the trip was the opportunity for a climax or two. Figure 4 shows a photo of some of the pinnacles below the Col de Stagn on the Club Alpino Italiano route 636, from the Kaiserhütte Refugio to Lêch de Boè, taken by Kees, Hazel and Han. It entailed a steep scramble in places, with dwarf pines lining the route and sightings of the beautiful pink-flowered *Potentilla nitida* and white alpine butterwort to cheer us on.

Figure 4 *Pinnacles below Col de Stagn*

Rod and Roger went up Brigata Tridentina. Rod tells the story. This is supposed to be one of the classic via ferratas of the Corvara area. The problem with being a classic is that many people are drawn to it and, on a via ferrata, in anything approaching reasonable weather, this means queues. I guess that one reason for it being a "classic" is that you can see the spidery bridge between the top towers from the road thus allowing you to impress your fellow bus passengers by pointing out that you have "done that one".

This route was the last one of the week for us, the alternative being an ascent of the snowy West Ridge of the Marmolada (only for the brave). The week had been very successful so far, given the

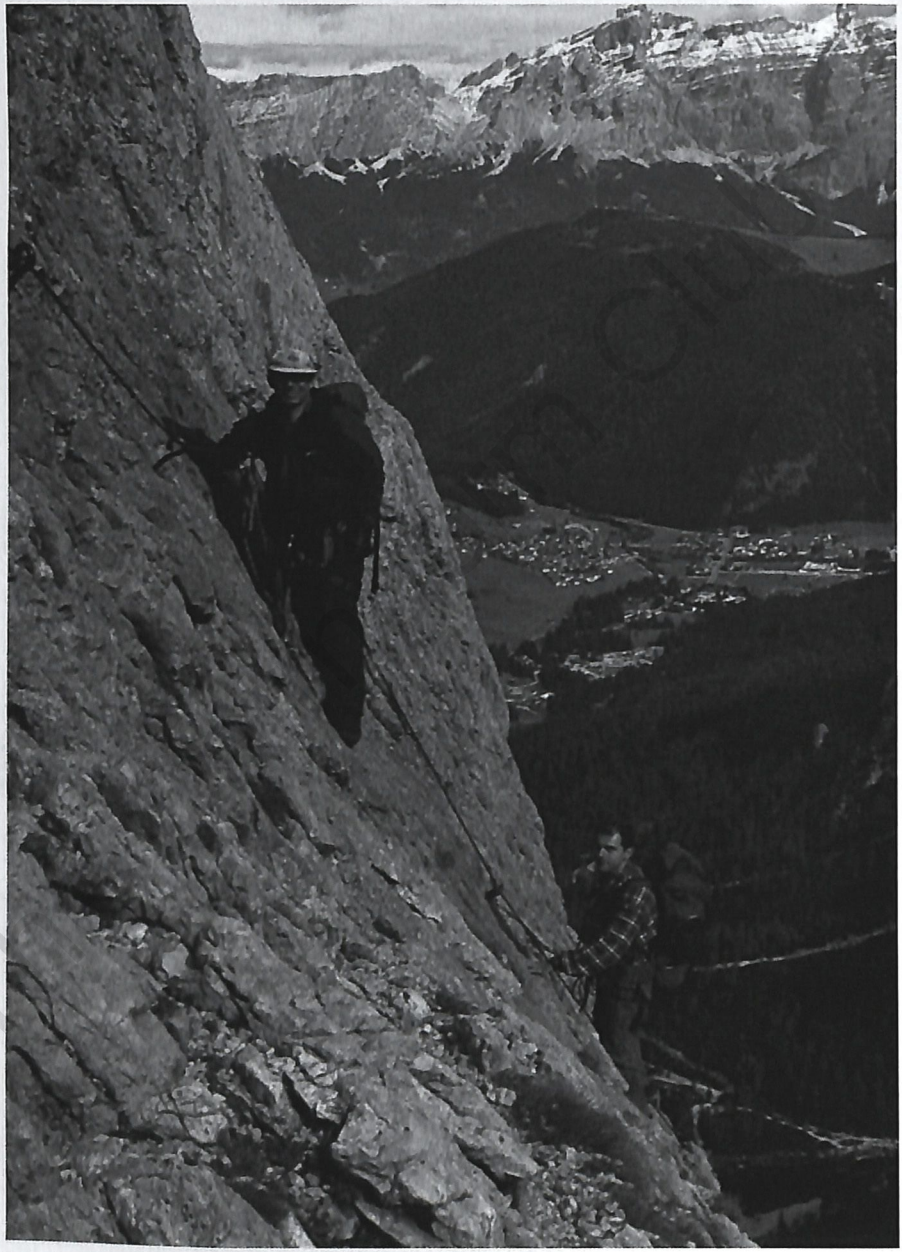

Figure 4 *Climbing Brigata Tridentina.*

slightly iffy weather, with five via ferrata routes ticked and a day off walking the coffee and cake trail.

Using the bus transport from Corvara (about 20 minutes), Roger and myself arrived mid-morning at the start, about a couple of kilometres below the Passo Gardena on the the Corvara side, to find people already heading for the route. It starts with a long traverse, with stemples (iron steps) and cables, about ten minutes from the car park. There was then a ten minute steep walk up to the start of the route proper which is where the queuing began. The assembled throng was like a mini EU with mutual recriminations and queue jumping, but all in good humour.

We then followed a rising traverse on good rock with some quite steep and exposed climbing with excellent views down to Corvara as can be seen in Figure 5. Then it was round the pillar into the bowl below the refuge, eventually reaching the famous bridge, Figure 6, which proved to be the main bottleneck. Most parties insisted on posing for photographs, selfies, asking for photos to be taken and some having attacks of the collywobbles.

Figure 5 *The bridge on Brigata Tridentina*

After that it was a simple walk up to the excellent Rifugio F. Cavazza al Pisciadu (2585m), shown in Figure 7, where a bowl of gulaschsuppe and an apfelstrudel made my day. I remember that there were quite extensive snow patches at that height but not enough to cause a problem.

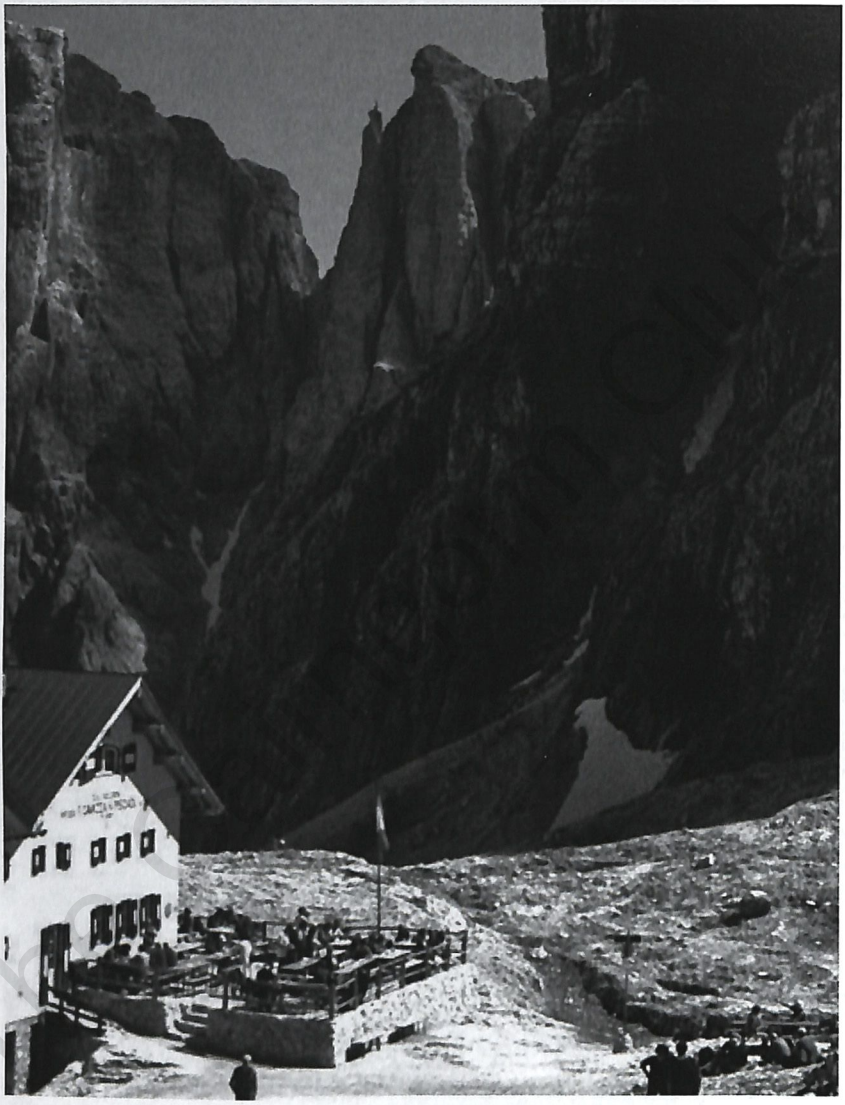

Figure 6 *Rifugio F Cavazza al Pisciadu.*

We chose the long descent all the way to Corvara as we had arrived by bus and we had plenty of time. The descent was a little tricky in parts with some protection before it reaches the pleasant main valley path through the woods to Corvara. We were back in Corvara by

about 4pm, so it was a 6 hour round trip which was about right, given the queues.

The Cicerone guide gives the route a difficulty grade of 3, with a seriousness level (this seems to depend upon the possibilities of escape from the route) of B, an ascent of 750m with 400m of via ferrata and a return time of 5-7 hours. It can be done by any able-bodied person with a reasonable level of fitness who does not suffer from vertigo!

Adrian recounts another last day adventure. Michelle, Peter and myself wanted to climb the Marmolada by the via ferrata on its west ridge (grade 4 – don't believe the guide book). We spoke to Guide 1 (5 o'clock shadow), the cable is buried; come back in August. Guide 2 (designer stubble), normal route no problem, west ridge – not possible – no one has done it this season – you will need

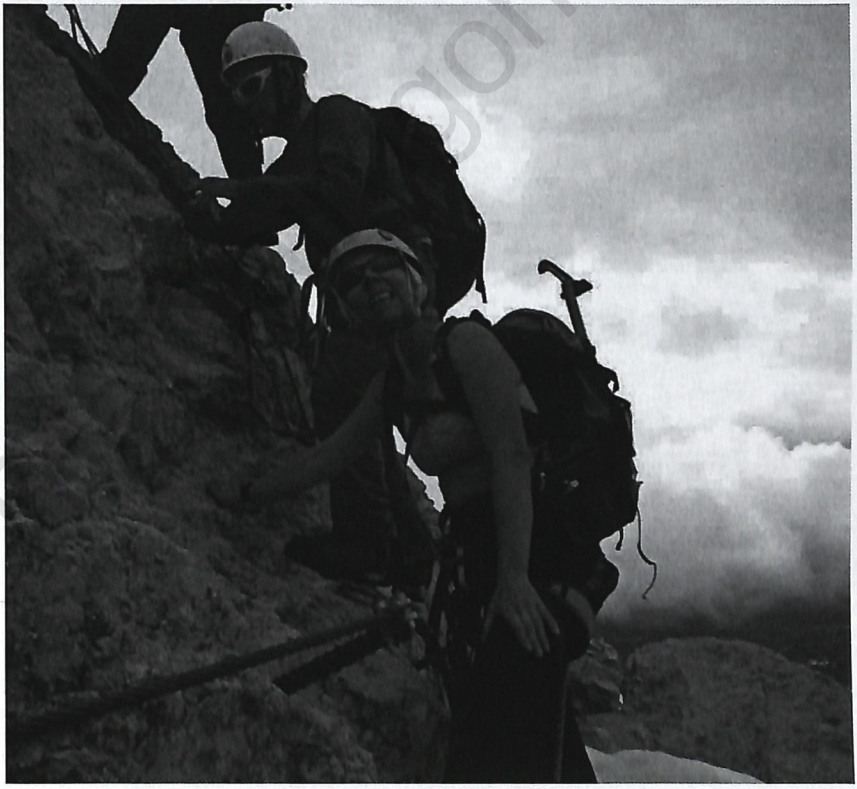

Figure 7 *Climbing the west ridge of Marmolada.*

additional ropes – we could ring the hut and ask about the snow conditions – blah blah. Guide 3 (full set of ginger whiskers) – let's go. You might need to wear crampons. So choose your guide by the amount of facial hair.

We were collected from our hotel at 07.20 and driven to the 'chariot chair lift' for the first lift of the day 09.00. This is a stand-in lift which does not stop or slow down at the end stations. You have

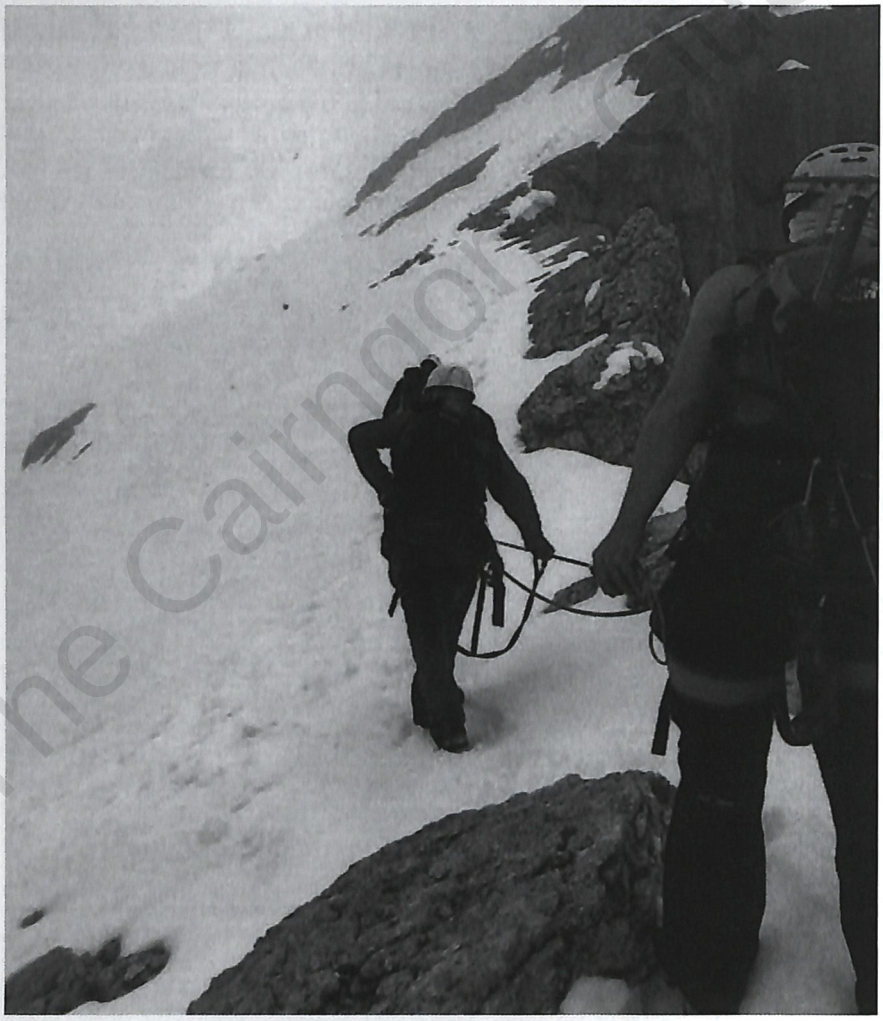

Figure 8 *Cables buried under snow, west ridge of Marmolada.*

to run and jump in. We walked from the top station (mostly downhill) for about an hour and a half mostly across a snow covered glacier until we gained a break in the ridge where the via ferrata started. We were ready for it. There was 850m of ascent, 400m protected by via ferrata (where it surfaced above the snow). Figure 8 shows us climbing the via ferrata and Figure 9 a section where the cables were buried.

So we reached Punta Penia, at 3343m the highest point of Marmolada and the Dolomites. Amazingly, there is a hut a few metres below the summit which serves refreshments. Coming down the normal route we passed several parties coming up. Worryingly the first pair's rope had two extra butterflies tied in the rope and no one attached! Missing somebody? Michelle showed that it could be fun falling into a crevasse, Figure 10.

Figure 9 *Michelle.*

Peter summarises. Our thanks go to Adrian who ably organised the trip and was the leading Bergführer. The meet was greatly enjoyed by all, so much so that there is demand to go back to the Dolomites in 2015.

Sadly Roger Cookson died whilst attempting Aconcagua early in 2015. We greatly enjoyed his company. He was a great guy; we will miss him.

Ecuador

A Land Full of Surprises for the Climber

Greg Walters

There was a bright flash and I paused for a moment from the relentless crunch of cramponed feet biting in to the hard packed ice. What on earth could that be, I wondered. My head torch was not switched on but there was no need. The light from the full moon lit up the route right up to the summit some 5 hours distance from where I stood. There it was again. It came from below. I turned and studied the landscape set out below me. A carpet of cloud spread out far west to the Pacific lowlands whilst to the south the night lights of Riobamba sparkled like some distant galaxy in the night sky. Once more there was a flash……

Nine months earlier I had rung up Chris, my good friend and climbing pal of many years, and said it's that time again, we need to go and explore what the world has to offer us. Ecuador I said. Why? he said. I believe they have some hills of interest. OK he said. And that was that. So it was in the middle of January 2015 that we exchanged a dismal, dreary UK winter for the warm rays of a South American summer sun. Our first surprise on stepping off the plane after a 12 hour flight from Amsterdam was gasping for breath. The capital city of Quito is one of the highest in the world, nestling in the foothills of the Andes at an altitude of 2800 metres, quite a shock to the system for one used to living at 30 metres on the shores of Staffin Bay on The Isle of Skye.

So the next three days in Quito were spent sightseeing, resting, eating and drinking a huge variety of fruit juices. We discovered a French bistro five minutes walk from our hotel that offered a five course lunch for $8 each. There was a Columbian restaurant like something out of a Tom Clancey novel, where the music was loud, the girls flirted with everyone, the men with moustaches sat in dark corners and the food portions could feed an elephant for a week. Wherever we went people smiled and were helpful, despite our lack of Spanish. But the most important part was that we were

acclimatising and having fun.It was, however, with some relief that we left the hustle and bustle of Quito and began our climbing expedition in earnest. Chris and I were part of a climbing expedition organised by a UK company using the expertise of local agents based in Quito. They handled all the logistics, thus enabling the twelve climbing members of the team to concentrate solely on the climbs that lay ahead. Apart from Chris and myself there was the usual motley assortment of climbers in our expedition; a barrister, two doctors, a seven summiteer, two computer boffins, a rather odd man from Denmark, an engineer, an ex Army engineer and his chatty wife. Additionally, there was the usual support team of guides, cooks and porters, so we were well set for the adventures that awaited us. On that sunny morning we headed north in our coach along the Pan-American Highway to the city of Ibarra to begin the arduous task of acclimatisation to altitude in readiness for the assault on Ecuador's three highest peaks, the volcanic summits of Cayambe (5790m), Cotopaxi (5897m) and Chimborazo (6310m).

Each new day brought with it a mixture of sensations, from the aromas of the wonderful food cooked for us to the trials and tribulations of getting up to the next summit (are we there yet?). Our expedition guide, Benno, was a cheerful chap of Swiss descent who would wax lyrical on the delights and splendours of each of the mountain areas we were trekking through. He was a man of great charm and patience, but with a ruthless streak of "cuckoo clock Swiss efficiency". He was largely responsible for the success of our expedition and getting us to the summits of Ecuador's "triple crown". Our first hike involved trekking around Mojander Lake at just over 4000m. The coach took us up a rickety road to a parking area, which helped a lot. The region is the remains of a volcano which reminded me very much of the Cuillin Ridge on Skye, with the added attraction of a huge lake to walk around. Benno, in his great wisdom, thought it would be good fun and fitness building to go off the trail a little and complete a full circuit of the lake via a lakeside marsh – not one of his best decisions. Our overnight stay was in a charming hosteria called Pantavi - yet another surprise. To get there we drove through a mountain village, down a road lined with very run-down houses, scrawny dogs and the relentless echo of samba music blaring out of open windows. We stopped outside a giant pair of closed wooden

doors. Stepping through the side gate we entered a world of colourful gardens, tree lined paths and the most delightful single storey bungalows. The food was a gourmet's paradise and the company delightful. It was a five star hotel in the most unexpected of places. We would return here later in the week and to other similar hosterias during the rest of the trip.

The next three days saw us trekking through the Cotacochi-Cayapas nature reserve, camping and sleeping at altitude to enhance our acclimatisation. We crossed passes at just below 4000m, descended into deep valleys and climbed once more through the cloud forests to ascend Olias Chico (4005m) and then camped deep in the foothills of the Andes next to Yanacocha Lake (3870m). It was a truly wild and spectacular setting, surrounded by peaks stretching up to 5000m. Our final day saw us descending through the paramo (knee-deep grass), past several Inca and pre Inca ruins to Chachimbito were we wallowed for 2 hours in the hot volcanic springs to ease our aching muscles and bones.

After nine days of acclimatisation we were ready for the first big test, the ascent of Imbabura (4616m), a true test of our readiness to tackle the monster volcanoes that lay ahead. A 3am breakfast saw us at the start of the climb at dawn, 6am. We were just south of Ibarra, the temperature a warm 10 C at just over 3000m and a big day lay ahead. By the time we have finished it will be 4pm and we will have ascended/descended 1600m. The route up followed a good steep track through the paramo to a crag, followed by a traverse across steep ground to the ridge. What followed was unexpected, a long ridge traverse, then a down climb using fixed ropes. Another steep climb followed, up to a very narrow ridge, then along for a kilometre. Finally there was a scramble across very exposed rock to the summit. If you imagine climbing up the slopes of Ben Macdui followed by Snowdon's Crib Goch, descending the Hidden Valley in Glen Coe then climbing up and along The Cuillin Ridge all in one day, you have a pretty good idea of this preparation climb! And at altitude and in mist!

Another delightful surprise awaited us at the end of this tortuous day. We were to spend the night in the home of local indigenous Ecuadorian families. It was a wonderful experience. No English from them and no Spanish from us but it's amazing how you make

yourself understood. Food was plentiful and the fruit juices to die for – eat your heart out Tesco. In the morning we helped to make and bake our own bread for breakfast. It was just wonderful. We were well recovered and ready for Cayambe. The journey to Cayambe involved transferring from the coach to 4x4 vehicles for the journey up to the refuge at 4000m. It was a hairy drive over poor dirt roads and across switchbacks with very airy and steep drops down into deep gorges, not for the faint-hearted. The refuge had recently been refurbished with good bunkrooms. The afternoon was spent up on the glacier learning/practising snow and ice climbing techniques. It was an interesting experience because for the first time it became very obvious who was capable and more importantly who was up for it. The weather was calm and the views to the summit clear, which was the complete opposite to what we found at midnight when we began with our Alpine start.

The two great issues with Ecuadorian volcanoes are steepness and weather reliability. The big three volcanoes are cone shaped, particularly Cotopaxi. This means a slope angle of 38 degrees that is relentless in its severity and unending in its demands (slopes greater than 38 degrees become unstable in this environment with the inherent dangers that accompany such terrain). There is no escaping the slope, no flat ground for a rest, you just plod up hour after hour in your own world of pain and anguish. Then there's the weather. A clear night is a bonus but due to the proximity of the Amazon Basin to the east and the Pacific Ocean to the west, moisture in the atmosphere can and does cause havoc with navigation.

So it was with a sad heart and despondent demeanour that we set off to climb Cayambe at midnight in what might be best described as 'typical Scottish clag'. The guides had difficulty in route finding which did my self-confidence no good at all. It was mixed ground with a rocky ridge to get through for the first couple of hundred metres followed by an iffy glacier traverse with crevasses to avoid. We were roped up in pairs, each with a guide. Eventually we hit the right track and make steady progress through the night. My partner (one of the IT boffins) struggled with the altitude and ice techniques and although he eventually made the summit, it was to be his only one this trip. Just before dawn we saw the summit, above a huge cliff of overhanging deep blue ice. It was the time of day I hate the most.

It was not quite light enough to see properly, the temperature was at its coldest and I was knackered. Still, despite everything we made the final push, traversing around the cliff, then a final steep climb up on to the flat summit. I could say it was a real pleasure to be here but I would be lying. I could hardly see anything due to the clag. The guide told me that there was a crater with great views. Mmmm ! It was 7am and time for a few photos, then back down. We arrived at the refuge at 11am, had a quick hot drink and food then departed for the delights of Quito. One down, two to go.

It was nice to spend a little time in Quito, no more so than to sleep in a big comfy bed for a couple of nights. Time was also spent doing the usual housekeeping that is necessary to get your house in order. However, the afternoon was most enjoyable spending time at 'The Equator' 20 kilometres north of the city, in a tourist trap called Mitad del Mundo. It is said that a French Expedition calculated that the Equator ran through the spot where the monument stands. However, they miscalculated by 240 metres, a fact I had great pleasure in pointing out to my friend Chris, who is a Frenchman in disguise.

Two days after we arrived in Quito we were on the coach heading south along the Pan American Highway through the 'Avenue of the Volcanoes' to Cotopaxi National Park, and then on a dirt road to the Jose Rivas refuge at 4800m. The Volcano Cotopaxi stands out from the surrounding valley, tall and proud and in your face. It's a perfect cone with very straight 38 degree slopes shooting into the clouds and beyond. We sat and relaxed outside the refuge, watching the sun set, casting a million shades of yellow, red and orange upon the snow capped mountain. Cotopaxi lifted her skirts for a brief moment and we were tempted by a quick glance of the summit before once more mist concealed that special place where we would stand tomorrow morning. So it was with a mixture of excitement and trepidation that we all hit our bunks at about 8pm for a little sleep before the 11pm rise for food and another Alpine start, and another Ecuadorian surprise.I can never sleep before a climb. It doesn't matter if I am in a tent, refuge or car. More so at altitude, so I just relaxed and listened to my music, with the rhythmic interruptions of the grunts, coughs and snores of the strange man from Denmark, fast asleep in the bunk next to me. At midnight and we stepped outside, to another day and another surprise. It was snowing! Whatever happened to the moonlit,

windless route to the summit? The coach took us up to the end of the road, at just under 5000m. Only 900m to go you may think, that's only a Scottish Munro, easy peasy! Well, the snow got heavier, the wind strengthened and visibility was pea soup. No matter, Benno was happy enough and my guide had a cheesy grin from ear to ear. So off we went, a trail of disgruntled clients wishing they were still all tucked up in bed back in Quito.

There is no escape from Cotopaxi, it's straight up and steep. As the night progressed the snow eased a bit but the temperature dropped. Visibility was poor and we stopped every 45 minutes for food and drink. My guide was still grinning but my partner from Cayambe was beginning to struggle. As we progressed further up the mountain his pace slowed to a crawl and at times his legs performed a strange dance that would not have been out of place on Strictly Come Dancing. At last, as dawn approached, we reached the false summit. Visibility had improved, the falling snow had eased and it was really cold. I looked around and saw groups of climbers huddled together for warmth and protection from the elements. It was the point of no return. From here it was a push to the summit, 200m gain in altitude and an hour of absolute hell away. I saw many climbers turn around and disappear down the hill. My partner unclipped and joined a descending group. He slapped me on the back and wished me good luck. I needed it. I moved closer to my guide and he was still grinning. He handed me a hot cup of tea like some magician pulling out a rabbit from a hat. How did he do that? We were joined by one of our expedition who had left his guide and was waiting to join a team going down. His hands were inside his jacket, up in his arm pits, and at the same time he was dancing about like some demented ferret. "I can't feel my hands" he said. "Well put your gloves back on", I said and after some pushing and shoving my guide and I manage to sort him out. Then to our amazement he declared his wish to continue, to which our guide agreed.

Off we headed to the summit, a journey of some considerable discomfort, up even steeper slopes, through knee deep fresh snow, whilst now almost dragging our new companion to the final destination. After an hour the ground suddenly flattened out for the first time in seven hours. I could see the sun peeking through the mist. The wind was up, throwing around the fresh snow but we were

on the summit. The guide is still grinning! As we stood around taking the obligatory photos the rabbit has appeared again but this time I found it a little difficult to raise my cup to my mouth; my jacket was completely frozen and required some effort to work it free, (Fig 1). It was minus 20 C and the guide continued to grin! Later that afternoon as the coach headed south, I took a last look at Cotopaxi. No cloud, no swirling mists, just a solitary cone shooting up from the valley. She stood proud and elegant, just like yesterday, with the snows glistening in the afternoon sunshine. She smiled at me knowing very well that she gave me the toughest ascent of any mountain that I have climbed. If only…I turn away and slump once more in my seat. We must be cursed. Will we ever get lucky with the weather? I fell into a deep sleep as the coach took us away south to Riobamba and the monster that awaited us – Chimborazo.

Figure 1 *On the summit of Cotopaxi.*

From wherever you sit, stand or walk, Chimborazo looms menacingly over you. It is a huge lump of volcanic rock capped in snow and ice and interlaced with numerous glacier fingers oozing their way down the sides of this cone shaped monolith. After breakfast our drive took us first north, then west, around its lower flanks. We gradually increased our altitude until our coach could barely make progress in the thinning air, spluttering and coughing out its poisonous fumes in a futile attempt to make its way even higher. We reached the park entrance and signed in as usual before making our way even higher along another dirt road, which took us to within a short walk of the refuge Edward Whymper (at nearly 5000 m). Here we reached our camp site and made preparations for yet another Alpine start later that night. (Fig 2).

Figure 2 *High camp on Chimborazo.*

It was 10pm as I made my way out of my tent, and I stopped and glanced around. There was no need for my head torch. There was a full moon that lit up the campsite and, more importantly, the route up the west ridge and beyond. There was no wind, no rain, no snow, no

cloud, just a perfect, still, cold night, with the whole of the southern sky blinking at us. Once more Ecuador had produced another surprise (remind me to raise a glass to the weather gods back in Quito!). An hour later five others from our party and myself were standing over the slumped figure of another of our companions. He was disorientated and muttering about his head. He had lasted 30 minutes and 50 metres of increased altitude before his guide gently carried him away, back down to the camp. He was not the last.

Chimborazo is a technical mountain of mixed ground which requires 100% concentration at all times, otherwise it will spit you out and dump you back to where you have come from. The first two hours were spent tramping up to the west ridge then along to the 'The Castle', which is a large outcrop of gnarly rock covered in ice and knee-deep snow. The route over it required some delicate footwork and there were airy moments along its narrow ridge. A period of descent and re-ascent followed, crossing two couloirs including some very steep slopes, to reach the main western flank that eventually took you up to the summit. As I looked up to this flank I was reminded of Christmas. There were two other routes that merged ahead of us, and the head torches of the roped parties above us looked remarkably like the fairy lights cascading down the sides of a Christmas tree. A hour later we joined the lights and began the laborious task of climbing the beast that is Chimborazo, straight up the 38 degree slope to the summit, some six hours away.

Again there was another flash of light and this time it lit up the whole of the western sky above Chimborazo. Looking down to the Pacific lowlands I witnessed a tropical thunderstorm battering the coast far below. It was then I realise that we were so high up that we were above the clouds and exempt from nature's fury. It was 3am. Another flash appeared directly in front of me, but this time there was no rumble of thunder, just the dulcet tones and smiling grin of my guide who enquired as to my well being. "I'm fine", I told him and after a brief pause to wonder at the power of nature we pushed on to our goal. It was 7.50 in the morning. My legs were aching and my whole body felt the fatigue of a ten hour ascent up to the top of this magnificent volcanic mountain. But I was very happy, with a smile that was even wider than the permanent grin on my guide's face. I felt the warmth of a beautiful sunrise on a perfect day with no

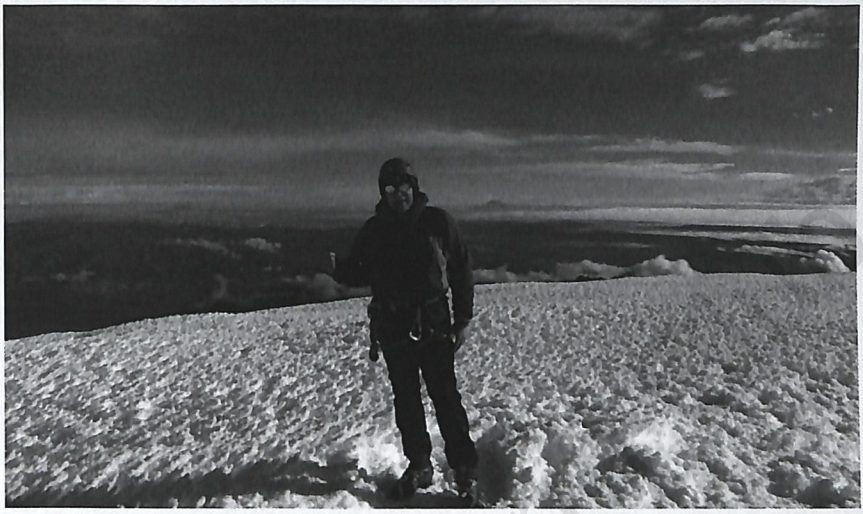

Figure 3 *On the summit of Chimborazo.*

wind, snow or cloud to obscure the wonderful panoramic view that unfolded before us. I could see the summits of Cayambe and Cotopaxi standing proudly above their carpets of cloud (so that's what they look like!). On mornings like this I understand why we do these mad things; not because they are there and need to be climbed, but for that inner sense of wonderment and peace that you feel standing on the roof of the world, (Figs 3&4). And a wee bit of satisfaction that you had made it.

Figure 4 *Cotopaxi and Cayambe from the summit of Chimborazo.*

We lingered for a while, grinning and hugging, as you do. I glanced east towards the Amazon Basin, a strange and mysterious land that Chris and I will visit in four days time. What a bizarre thought – from 6310 metres to 120 metres. Five hours later I was safely returned to camp, lying on my back with my feet in the air, having just fallen off my chair whilst still clutching that precious bottle of beer. And standing over me with arm stretched out was that wonderful grin.

The author is a Club member and involved with the Skye Mountain Rescue Team. He and his wife Suzanne, also a Club member, run a Bed & Breakast at Achtaleen, Staffin, Skye.

My First Munro

Peter Howgate

To misappropriate Jane Austen, it is a truth universally acknowledged, that hill walkers in Scotland, whether Scottish or not, will remember their first introduction to Scottish mountains, and the ascent of their first Munro. In my case the two events coincided and it is not so much that I will always remember the occasion; rather I will never forget it.

It was June 1949. I was 19 and had been hill walking for about 3 years, and rock climbing for about a year and a half in Snowdonia and the Lake District, mostly with my climbing partner, Brian. He was my senior by a year or so and had more experience of rock climbing, having been introduced to the sport by his big brother. We were working lads, living in Liverpool, and as the five and a half days working week was the norm, our regular climbing tended to be a hectic affair between Saturday lunch time and back home again on Sunday evening.

We had heard about the big mountains in Scotland and Murray's *Mountaineering in Scotland* which had not long been published, further fired up our enthusiasm to visit them, with the Cuillins of Skye our objective. This was to be our first proper climbing holiday. We didn't have our own transport and couldn't afford the train, so having synchronised our holidays and scrounged the Saturday morning off, Friday evening saw us on the outskirts of Liverpool waving our thumbs at traffic travelling north. A succession of lifts got us to Glasgow next morning and then to Glen Nevis youth hostel by Saturday evening, with the expectation of continuing to Skye the following day. However, in our Sassenach ignorance we had not allowed for the isolation of Skye on the Sabbath at that time. Never mind, there was a great big mountain across the glen and we would fill in the day by climbing that.

The weather was darkly overcast when we left the hostel. There was no bridge across the river then and we duly took off our boots and socks and waded across it. Following the path, and instructions from people at the hostel, we duly found our way to the Allt a'Mhuilinn and the C.I.C. Memorial Hut. By this time it was raining,

as it was for the rest of the day, and the clouds were right down to the base of the cliffs. Our intention was to climb Douglas Boulder and Tower Ridge, but which of the ridges and buttresses we could see below the mist was the Boulder? Brian had been given a new nylon climbing rope for his recent 21st birthday and also a copy of Abraham's *Climbing in Britain,* published in 1909, which he had brought with him more for light reading and historical interest than as a guide book. We tried to reconcile the drawing of the ridges and buttresses in the book with what we could see below the clouds and set off to what we hoped was Douglas Boulder and Tower Ridge.

To a couple of climbers used to the detailed descriptions in the Lake District and Snowdonia climbing guides, Abraham's account of the routes on the Boulder were very vague and indeed somewhat confusing; hardly more than start at the bottom at some point and climb to the top. When we got to the bottom of our chosen cliff we did just that, Brian in the lead, up into the murk above. Again as climbers used to the well-scratched climbs in the Lakes and Snowdonia we were a little disconcerted at first by not finding any nail marks, but we pressed on. The climbing turned out to be not too difficult and it would have been a particularly enjoyable outing on a good day. On this occasion there was a little added frisson of excitement engendered by not being sure where we were and expecting to encounter something beyond our capabilities. We didn't, and ultimately reached the top of the buttress and found the situation somewhat resembled the description in Abraham's book. We were then more sure that we were on the right route and unroped for the climb ahead. The mist was all around us and we couldn't see far, but we were aware that we were among impressive rock scenery, and the seriousness and length of the following scramble up the ridge was real mountaineering. In due course we came upon the steep face of the Great Tower, but the brief description in Abraham's book had prepared us for this and we found the ledge to circumvent it on the left. There was snow still lying in the chimney! We were supposed to be on our summer holidays – but it was lying at an easy enough angle and we were soon back on the ridge to see the dramatic final section of the ascent, a true ridge, narrow, running straight, and with steep drops on each side. We cautiously traversed to a notch, the famous Tower Gap, and though it was not all that deep, given the

exposure, we roped up to cross it. A short section of the ridge followed and a further scramble brought us to the snow-covered summit plateau. We stood and looked at each other, two wet, bedraggled, and humbled climbers. As was common at the time we were wearing government surplus clothing and my jacket was a parachutist's smock, originally camouflaged, but dyed navy blue to hide the pattern. The dye was running in the rain and the water dripping off my fingertips was blue. But we had done it, and the tension we had felt since we set off on Douglas Boulder eased and we just stood and looked at each other and burst out laughing.

We found the summit cairn to claim the ascent then turned for the slog down the mountain to the Youth Hostel, breaking out of the cloud about halfway down. This time we didn't bother to take our boots off to wade the river, Brian stopping in mid-stream to wash the blue dye out of his new rope. Next day we used up much of our meagre financial resources to buy return tickets for the train to Mallaig, then took the ferry and bus to Glen Brittle where we booked into the Youth Hostel. Food rationing was still very much in force and we had sent on parcels of food to be picked up there. Next day we set up our tent in the corner of where the present camp site is, but then we had it to ourselves until a party from the St Andrews University Mountaineering Club joined us at the weekend.

After pitching the tent we left immediately for Coire Lagan. This time we had the SMC Guide to the Isle of Skye, essentially the pre-war edition with an appendix of new climbs. I still have it, rather tatty now, but with dates in the margins of when we climbed the routes. That edition gives only general descriptions of climbs, but we must have been impressed by that of the Western Buttress of Sgurr Sgumain – "... it affords 1600 feet of continuous rock-climbing ...", and went for that. It was raining slightly as we approached the climb, but the rain stopped as we started up the rock, the sun appeared, and we had bright sunny days for the rest of our stay. It was a great climb and a good introduction to climbing in Skye. We had no weather forecasts but knew that Skye could be a very wet place, so we tried to pack in as much climbing as possible while the good weather held. Neither of us had watches, but that didn't matter with the long June days; we got up when we wanted, went out, and came back when we'd had enough. We were surrounded by rock and ridges, and for a

couple of budding climbers we were like kids with the run of the sweet shop. We climbed Sgurr Alasdair by Collie's Route, and followed the ridge to Sgurr Mhic Coinnich, crossed over to Loch Coruisk via Coire a Ghrunda and back over the Dhubs, gained the Cioch by the Cioch Direct, up Sgurr Dearg by the Window Buttress and on to the Inaccessible Pinnacle, climbed up the West side, down the East ridge, and up the South Crack, and traversed just about all the peaks at that end of the ridge. In the middle of the second week we packed up the camp, walked over the Bealach a' Mhaim and established another nearer Sligachan, from where we climbed Sgurr nan Gillean by the Pinnacle Ridge, and explored the northern peaks and ridges, including the climbs on the Basteir Tooth. In all this time we mostly had the Cuillins to ourselves; we rarely met other people on the ridges, and I think we met only one other climbing party other than the members of the St Andrews club. On our last climbing day, with the weather still holding and conditions dry, we climbed Waterpipe Gully; a great end to our holiday.

We packed up the camp that evening and slept overnight in our sleeping bags by the side of the road at the bus stop to make sure we didn't miss the bus next morning. We reversed our travels of two weeks previously by bus, ferry, train, and thumb back to Liverpool, our last lift leaving us near to where I lived. We had run out of money by that time and we walked to my home where I had to borrow some money from my mother for Brian's tram fare to his home on the other side of Liverpool.

That holiday in Scotland left a deep and abiding impression in my mind, exciting and eventful. The experience led to successive summer holidays among the Scottish mountains – including another visit to Skye – and eventually to my seeking a job in Scotland to be nearer them. Joining the Cairngorm Club soon followed, and, as they say, the rest is history. The Big Ben was my first Munro, and I picked up a few more in Skye on that holiday with Brian, though I don't think we knew what a Munro was at the time. I have been fortunate to climb many more since, though sadly not all, but, as I wrote at the beginning, I can never forget the first.

Aonach Eagach Ridge Forty Five Years On

(Sub title - In Praise of Glucosamine & Chondroitin)

Steve Chadwick

Forty years Ago Today
Sergeant Pepper taught the Band to play,
(with apologies to the Beatles).

Well that's not exactly the words, but it kind of fits. Forty six years ago two callow youths who had climbed no more than a season's VS rock in the Peak District, bought crampons and wooden shafted Salewa axes and headed north from Sheffield one Easter, hitching rides to Glen Coe. For us it was the first time north of the border, we had absolutely no experience of a hill of any size and no experience of snow and ice!

We hitched our way North and camped in Glencoe, just below the road at a place known as "The Meeting of Three Waters". This was not far from the cottage where Hamish MacInnes then lived, just down the road from what is marked on the OS as Alt na Ruighh. Bad weather descended, as it often does in Glen Coe, and frustration in youths is a bad thing. Eventually we had just one day to go, so when our last day dawned snowy with wind thrumming the tent guys of our Vango Force 10, we determined to do something.

We geared up and set off through driving snow to the approach of the Eastern end of the Aonach Eagach ridge, without any description of the route. We had heard it was long and interesting. After an ascent we knew we were at the start of the ridge when to go north was to go down and to go east was obviously the wrong way. So we turned left into the snow and the howling wind.

To be honest, I don't remember much of the route. Visibility was not good and we never saw more than 20 to 30 metres in front of us which was probably just as well – had we been able to see what lay before us, we might not have gone on. I do remember, just after the first top, we came to a drop which we could not see the bottom of, so we abseiled off into the unknown.

I have memories of a pinnacle or two, covered with snow, and a….. step wall which I climbed, clearing snow with my Dachstien mitted hands. We took most of the ridge direct as the flanks on either side looked way too scary, even for young lads high on testosterone and ambition. The heart beats strong in youth.

We finally reached easier, more continuous ground and thought that the hardest must be over, but through the snow our route went on and on, as we headed up to the last Munro. It was then that we met some, to us, old dudes, who had come up direct from the valley just for the Munro. They looked at us with some incredulity as we appeared from the East, out of the snow, and asked if we had just come along the Aonach Eagach ridge? We answered honestly that we thought we had, but we hadn't been able to see much. One guy kind of smiled and said "You must me mad."

There followed some thirty years of fixated climbing, and, living as we did in Gairloch, the temptations were many, and grasped with enthusiasm. I was then posted to Africa for nearly 20 years, and in a blink, I am back based in Aberdeen, complaining to the locals about clearing frost from my car windows. They would say "This is Nuffin! Last year we heed snaw frae November tae February!"

So what can I do, a solo old fart, back in a town he does not know, and where nobody, bar a few old climbers, knows me. Maybe I can at least walk the hills again, even if I can't climb.....Let's try.

I need companions and I like people, so I applied to the Cairngorm Club, and went on a few meets. There was a meet in Tyndrum.....and a seed of an idea kindled in my mind. Wouldn't it be fun to climb the Aonach Eagach again! How hard could it be? Memories are very suspect things; they only remember what they want to. They forget the length of the way and the void yawning either side of your feet that you could feel, even if you could not see. So I paid Marj my £32 and tried to organise a partner, but none was forthcoming. So as a last resort I called an old acquaintance Alan Kimber, who runs a West Coast guiding establishment. Did he have someone who could go with me? He did, and plans were made. In the event, an old climbing partner, Drew Yule, from my 1970 Dundee Bedalbane Rock and Ice days called me and said he could come.

We all met up at the Clachaig Inn car park and sorted out cars. My guide was Spike Sellers, a soft spoken, very competent guy, who

has a positive, if laid back, view of life. As we reached the coll at the start of the ridge, Drew pulled out as he was not feeling well, so Spike and I set off, through light winds and a fresh dusting of snow.I won't bore you with climb details. I'm sure many of you will have climbed the Aonach Eagach, and know it well. All I can say is **don't trust rose-tinted memories!**

Was it really that long? Were there so many pitches to short rope? Was the descent such a never ending knee strain? Yes, is the answer to all of the above! So 8 ½ hours later a very stiff man reached the Glen Coe roadside, but it had been a great day; thanks Spike! That evening we all swopped tales of the days on the hills, as you do. The chat was amiable and happy. We had all climbed our goals, and basked in that glow of a good day.

Thanks to Marj Ewan, Colin Brown, Stan Urbaniak, Jim Bryce and Judy Middleton for the crack and company. I calculate that if I wait a further 46 years to climb the Aonach Eagach again I will be 112, and if still alive I will probably be using a Zimmer frame.

A Pilgrim's Tale

We are the Pilgrims, master; we shall go
always a little further:

James Elroy Flecker

Duncan Macrae

Celebrities, when interviewed, are often asked the question, "What is the book that changed your life?" Not being a celebrity I was never asked that question. However, as is my practice, I am going to tell you anyway!

The book was entitled "Always a Little Further", by Alistair Borthwick, first published in 1939. I read the book while a young Boy Scout in 1949 and I was immediately hooked – line, sinker and all. Borthwick's story (no character is fictitious) relates how he and his chum, having camped a few times on the outskirts of Glasgow, decided to embark on their first ambitious expedition to Arrochar and

the Cobbler. Here they met a guy by the name of Hamish who regailed them with dales of derring-do on big mountains to the North and West. Borthwick and his chum were as hooked as I was, and this started them off with a string of adventures and climbs on the best known Scottish mountains, meeting a succession of interesting and eccentric characters along the way. Incidentally, I also met Hamish on my first ambitious expedition to Skye in 1953, more of which later.

Alistair Borthwick's story must have implanted itself in my subconscious because my own story mirrors it closely.

I shall start at the beginning. I was a keen member of the 27th Aberdeen Scout Troop at High Hilton Church. I first went camping with my " Be prepared" pals in 1949. It was a time of severe austerity and food and money were scarce, particularly in our council housing estate. Ration books were still in use. At the time I was delivering newspapers for the princely sum of 5 shillings a week (25p). I was paid on a Saturday morning with two half crowns, one of which was given to my widowed mother; with the other one I could buy all my food for a camping week-end.

Six or seven of us would meet on a Saturday morning with our ex-WD steel framed Commando rucksacks and bicycles at the Post Office adjacent to Hilton School. The Post Office was notable, being run by Willie Rennie, a local hero who had played football for Aberdeen and Scotland. Hilton School no longer exists but the standing stone which stood in the playground still does, complete with tricouni scratch marks.

We would wobble our way the eight miles or so to Templars Park, loaded with packs and tents, and many of us wearing kilts, a sight to behold! In order to vary the scenery we would travel by the Old Bridge of Dee and South Deeside Road one Saturday and by the North Deeside Road, crossing the Dee at Milltimber, on the following Saturday. Our annual summer camp, a week in July, was the highlight of the year. We would head off into darkest Aberdeenshire and camp in such exotic places as Tough, Tarland, Ballater and Ballogie. The journey was by an open sided lorry, carefully packed with each Patrol's gear, six tea chests of pots, pans, ropes and all sorts of other camping stuff, plus seven ex-army bell tents (one for the latrines). Additionally there were the scouters'

"Stormhaven" and "Niger" ridge tents plus Troop equipment. On top, there were 40 or so Scouts with their rucksacks and kitbags, clinging on. "Health and Safety" had not been invented in those days!
Such camping experience led to a succession of hikes and minor ascents. There was a one day hike from Templars Park to Cairn-Mon-earn, overlooking the Slug Road. Then there was the Cairn Kerloch hike, followed by the ascent of Clachnaben. Finally we tackled Scotland's most easterly Munro, Mount Keen.This was on a two night camping expedition over the Easter weekend of 1953. Starting from Ballater on a Friday night, I, along with three fellow Scouts, ascended Cairn Leuchan to the south. We slept on the bench seats and wooden tables in the so-called ski huts. It was a cold, frosty night, well below zero. Next day we followed the path, invisible at times, to descend into the head of Glen Tanar. We climbed Mount Keen and then camped in grassy Corrie Bruach on its northern slope. It snowed heavily all night but next morning we dug ourselves out and walked to Glen Tanar and Aboyne. Life was getting more interesting!

In the autumn of 1952 I had left the Grammar School and started an apprenticeship as a ship draughtsman with Hall Russell & Co. Shipbuilders and Engineers, Aberdeen. I did not realize it at the time but I was also to serve a parallel apprenticeship as a rock climber. Shipyards have always been a breeding ground for hill walkers and climbers and Hall Russell was infected with them. During that time my work mates introduced me to snow and ice climbing in the Great Eastern Corrie of Lochnagar. It was my first ascent of what became my favourite mountain and I stopped counting after 120 ascents. The climbers at Hall Russell included Kenny Winram, probably the leader of the pack, but I climbed mainly with Raymond Ellis, Dod Adams and Fraser Henderson. These guys disappeared overnight in the mid and late 50s, going to Canada, Australia and New Zealand, respectively, partly as Scots do and partly to avoid National Service.

I thought National Service was a good idea and volunteered in late 1959. I had my first visit to England courtesy of the RAF. I trained as a "medic" and tried, in vain, to be posted to the Mountain Rescue Units at either Leuchars or Kinloss. Instead I was posted to Singapore and whilst based at RAF Changi Hospital I made occasional trips up-country as a medic attached to the Jungle Rescue

Team in Malaya, (the "emergency" had not yet started). While in Singapore I bought a Snipe Class sailing dinghy and learned to sail.

Following de-mob in late 1961 I returned to my drawing board at Hall Russell but soon secured a position in Hong Kong, and married my ever patient fiancée of some six years. In June we travelled to Hong Kong where I plied my trade as a Naval Architect for the next 25 years. The Chairman of the company I worked for was none other than Mount Stephen Cumming, the man who achieved the first ascent of the Cumming-Crofton route on the Mitre Ridge of Beinn A Bhuird in 1953.

At this point the Editor has limited me to three concluding topics.

Skye, 1953. This was my first ambitious expedition. Mother had passed away a few days after my 17th birthday and I was now my own keeper. My climbing companion was Philip Barron, a fellow Scout and still a Grammar School pupil. Through my contacts with the Hall Russell climbing mafia I had a rough idea of how to proceed. First, a visit to the HQ of Aberdeen Journals in Broad Street, not to visit the office but to make clandestine contact with one of the van drivers. For a packet of 20 Senior Service cigarettes Philip and I would be picked up at the Fountain in Woodside at 11pm on Friday night, and driven to Inverness. Litle did we know that we had to throw out bundles of papers at every agent from Woodside on! Eventually we crossed the sea to Skye and started walking from Kyleakin. A travelling fishmonger who was heading for Portree offered us a lift, which we gratefully accepted. We should have refused. At every croft and homestead along the way we had to stop to sell fish, but eventually two tired would-be mountaineers were deposited at Sligachan. We camped at the bridge and watched the sun set over Sgurr-nan-Gillian with some trepidation. Next morning we rose early, struck camp and as we started packing our sacks a funny thing happened. It started getting dark! Had the universe gone crazy? Neither Philip nor I owned a watch and it took some time to realize that we had managed to sleep around the clock. Despite this set-back we set off for Glen Brittle. As we turned off onto the Carbost road a motor cyclist stopped and asked us if we wanted a lift. We were both amazed and confused. One motorbike, three men, two full rucksacks....was the guy out of his mind? Well, we accepted the

lift and the kind Englishman dropped us off at the Glen Brittle Hostel, leaving us to continue our way to the camp site. It was dark by now and we turned, not left into the proper site, but right where the river enters the Loch. Loud snores emanated from the scattered tents. On the following morning we found that our neighbours had departed for the rock and for the next two days they ignored us completely. There was hostility in the air. They certainly knew what they were about, equipped with nylon ropes, vibrams, skippet bunnets and thick Glasgow accents, but with no friendy words. Then one day a member of the tribe tripped over and uprooted a guy-line on our tent. When I remonstrated I was asked, " Where are you from anyway?" "Aberdeen", I replied. A pregnant silence followed, then the call went out "They are not English, they are from Aberdeen". Suddenly we were overcome by kindness. Our neighbours had noticed that we had little food and no easy means of procuring more and we were besieged with tins of food, including Pemmican and other delicacies. Our neighbours were, of course, members of the Creag Dhu Mountaineering Club, from Clydebank, led by no other than the Hamish from Alistair Borthwick's book.

Philip and I did not do any serious climbing on that visit. We scrambled up and down long scree chutes in heavy mist and summited Sgurr Alasdair and Sgurr Mhic Choinich. The classics, Window Buttress, the Cloch and the Inaccesible Pinnacle would have to wait until next year. And Philip went on to become a world renowned liver transplant surgeon, living in Ottowa.

*Shallow Gully, Lochnagar, 1958/59.*I was attracted to Shallow Gully, not because it was the last major gully on Lochnagar to remain unclimbed in winter, but because it was first climbed by Miss N. Bruce and H.A. Macrae (no relation). What kind of Macrae would allow himself to be led by a lady? Time for.... things to be put right! On our first attempt in 1958 Fraser Henderson and I failed. I came off at the crux but the belay held. I fell about 30 feet and fractured two ribs. A year later, in February 1959, conditions were perfect and we tried again, and succeeded but it was not easy. The climb took 9 hours, ending in clear bright moonlight, (there were no head torches in those days). We missed the last Strachan bus back to Aberdeen and spent Sunday night in a hayloft at Balmoral. On the Monday we were docked half a day's pay, but it was worth it!

Envoi I last met Hamish McInnes at a reception at the Palace of Holyrood some years ago. My younger son Kenneth was receiving his Duke of Edinburgh Gold Award for mountaineering and Hamish was doing the presentations. I asked him if he remembered Glenbrittle in 1953. He replied, very politely, that he did. The infamous had by this time dropped the "in". When I retired aged 50 and returned to my beloved Scotland, I felt I was too old and rusty for rock climbing. I bought a small yacht, a Westerly 22 built in 1965, and based her at the Lochaber Yacht Club, Fort William. For many years I sailed "Kelpie" around most of the West Coast Islands with some of my old climbing mates as crew. The island we missed was St. Kilda, but you always have to leave a target for the future!

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The Glamour of High Altitudes

John Buchan

An article for the *Spectator* magazine first published in 1904,with an introduction by ***Roger Clarke***

Introduction John Buchan is today best-known as a writer of popular fiction and the author of *The Thirty -Nine Steps* (1915), his most famous novel. This established the genre of the spy thriller and influenced subsequent espionage writers such as Graham Greene, Ian Fleming and John Le Carré. His literary work is also notable for its historical novels and biographies.[1] In addition, Buchan had a distinguished career as a public man of affairs. Born in Perth in 1875, his early education was in Glasgow before graduating from Oxford with a first in Classics and qualifying as a barrister in London. He then joined the so-called 'kindergarten' of bright young men

[1] The popularity of *The Thirty-Nine Steps* has endured and it has never been out of print since it was first published a hundred years ago. It has also been filmed several times, first by Alfred Hitchcock in 1935, and most recently for BBC television in 2008.

assembled by the High Commissioner for South Africa, Lord Milner, to administer the reconstruction of that country after the Boer War. He spent two years in South Africa, returning to Britain in 1903, when he resumed his career as a barrister specialising in foreign taxation before joining the Edinburgh publishing firm of Nelson's as chief literary advisor at the beginning of 1907. During the First World War he was appointed Director of Information, responsible for Government propaganda and press relations both at home and abroad. After the war he became Deputy Chairman of Reuters news agency in 1923. He also had a career in politics, which began as President of the Oxford Union, continued as Conservative candidate for the Peebles and Selkirk constituency before the First World War (although he did not have the opportunity to fight an election), and eventually came to fruition when he was elected MP for the Scottish Universities in 1927. A political insider on close terms with Prime Ministers Baldwin and Macdonald, though never a member of the Cabinet, his political career culminated in his appointment as Governor-General of Canada in 1935, when he became Lord Tweedsmuir. He died in Canada in 1940.

Underlying these public aspects of Buchan's career is his lesser-known work as a journalist, beginning in the mid-1890s and continuing intermittently until his appointment to Canada in 1935. His most prolific period was between 1900 and 1914 when he was on the staff of the *Spectator*, eventually becoming its assistant editor. At this time the *Spectator* was one of the most influential weekly magazines in Britain, aimed at an elite readership such as statesmen and politicians, academics and the professional classes – the leading opinion-formers of the day. Buchan wrote a large number of articles and book reviews for the *Spectator* (around 800 in total) covering a wide variety of subjects: literature and poetry, history and biography, philosophy and religion, politics and society, imperial and foreign affairs, travel and exploration, mountaineering and other sports.

The article reprinted below is Buchan's first on the subject of mountaineering for the *Spectator*. It was originally published on 9 January 1904 (pp. 45-46) and has not been reprinted since. Mountaineering as a sport had been steadily growing in popularity over the previous fifty years since the formation of the Alpine Club in 1857. The highest peaks of the Alps and other mountain ranges in

Europe had been climbed, and expeditions were now being organised in attempts to conquer the greatest peaks of more distant continents, such as those in Central Africa, the Andes and the Himalayas. But the increasing popularity of the sport in Europe had brought its own problems. The *Times* had published a leading article on 1 September 1903 (p.7) following the recent deaths of an English vicar and a local guide in a fall, which commented on the increasing number of Alpine accidents and the reasons for them. This article by Buchan, which may have been prompted by a very recent *Times* report on 5 January 1904 (p.4) of another accident to an Englishman in the Alps, discusses the problem of Alpine accidents in similar terms to the *Times* leader. The following year Buchan protested against the continuing development of tourism in the mountains of Europe, which he called the 'vulgarisation' of the Alps (*Spectator* 19 August 1905, pp. 249-50); and later he commented on the Access to Mountains Bill, which attempted to reach a compromise between the public's right of access and the landowner's right of protection in respect of the hills and mountains of Britain (*Spectator* 23 May 1908, p. 820).

Buchan's own experience of mountaineering at the time of writing this article was rather limited. He had enjoyed hill-walking in the Borders and Highlands during the holidays of his childhood and youth, but his first serious climb was not until the spring of 1898 when, during a walking tour with his school and university friend, John Edgar, he ascended the same Buachaille Etive that he mentions in this article. However, given his inexperience, their route was almost certainly 'an easy scramble from Glen Etive' rather than a difficult direct climb.

After Oxford Buchan did some mountain scrambling in the Drakensburg and the ranges of the Northern Transvaal during his time on Lord Milner's staff in South Africa, but he did not take up the sport seriously until his return to London in October 1903. Then he found that he missed the outdoor life involved in his work for Milner on land settlement after the Boer War. He hinted at the contrast he was experiencing in this article: 'Few sports are more refreshing and invigorating', and 'the intellectual *ennui* which the life of cities induces is driven out by such manly absorption'. He resumed his climbing in Scotland, but his first visit to the Alps was

not until June 1904, five months after this article, when he went to Zermatt with his sister Anna. Afterwards, he wrote two articles on the Alps for the *Spectator* in July, which were therefore the first about those mountains which he wrote from personal experience. Two years later he visited Chamonix with Anna and was elected to the Alpine Club. But despite the attractions of the European mountains, his preference was for rock-climbing in Scotland, especially in the Cuillin mountains on the island of Skye, which feature in his 1919 novel *Mr Standfast*. He was to use his experience of the Cuillins in a subsequent article for the *Spectator* ('Rock-Climbing in Skye', 23 May 1908, pp. 831-32).

Buchan's serious period of mountaineering lasted until his marriage in July 1907, but he maintained an interest in the sport for the rest of his life, and was particularly fascinated by expeditions to climb the highest unconquered peaks. He even became involved in a proposal for an expedition to Everest, but the outbreak of war in 1914 put an end to the plan. Much later, towards the end of his life, while on a tour of the Arctic in July 1937 as Governor-General of Canada, he climbed Bear Rock at Fort Norman in the North West Territories by the most difficult route.

The full text of Buchan's article is reprinted below from the original magazine. Readers who wish to follow up Buchan's other *Spectator* articles mentioned in this introduction can do so via the *Spectator* archive on the internet. This provides full copies of the magazine dating back to Buchan's period and beyond, which can be read online free of charge. It may be accessed simply by typing 'Spectator archive' into an internet search engine such as 'Google'.

The Glamour of High Altitudes

Scarcely a month passes without news of some mountaineering fatality, and in the summer and at holiday seasons the number of accidents is yearly on the increase. Not only the higher Alps, but even the more homely hills of our own country, have a share in the melancholy list. The reason is, no doubt, the increased popularity of the sport among all classes. Formerly it was the perquisite of a few,

either people whose lot was cast in mountainous districts, or enthusiasts who could afford the money and time to seek a difficult and laborious form of pleasure. And being the preserve of a few, it was pursued with the caution and forethought which pioneering demands. But now that the mountains are better known, and climbing is a recognised science, some of the old caution can be relaxed, and, after the fashion of human nature, too much of it is dispensed with. People light-heartedly undertake ascents, neglecting the most ordinary precautions, and forgetting that mountaineering can never be a perfectly safe amusement. Even on the best known peaks, which are despised by eminent climbers as too staled for true sport, there is a chance of a thunder-storm or a fall of rocks, which may be the end of a practised mountaineer, quite apart from the dangers which must always attend those whose nerves or physique are unsuited for the game. But the popularity of mountaineering, in spite of the long tale of casualties, points to something perennially attractive in high altitudes, which makes even timid men forget the perils. It is part of the same attraction that the snowfields of the Arctic Circle possess for explorers, and that such a mountain expedition as Colonel Younghusband's Tibetan Mission (1) has for everybody with any imagination. Take any dozen young and active men, and ask them where they would prefer to be at this moment, and the odds are that the general answer will be, "On the road to Lhassa." A mission into lowland jungles or across an African desert, though it might have far greater political significance, would not take an Englishman's fancy like the attempt to enter the highest and most mysterious country in the world. It is part of our Northern heritage, which even the lowlander of the North shares with the mountain-dweller elsewhere. The old cry of Paracelsus still rings in the ears of youth:

"Shall I still sit beside
Their dry wells, with a white lip and filmed eye,
While in the distance Heaven is blue above
Mountains where sleep the unsunned tarns?"

What is the reason of the fascination? Partly, no doubt, the mere hardness and danger of it, the sense of achieving something by one's own courage and endurance in defiance of Nature, who made the

smooth valleys for men to dwell in and kept the hills for herself. Partly, also, that ingrained curiosity of man, which is perpetually seeking to look over hill-tops and discover the "something lost behind the ranges." Were there no climbing in the technical sense in it, mountaineering would have fewer votaries. There is a type of athlete to whom the climb is everything, and who is equally happy worming his way up some rock in Cumberland or Skye, where there can be no special object in getting to the top, as in pulling himself up to the needle of Skagastölstind or surmounting the last snows of Aconcagua. There is a great deal to be said for climbing for its own sake. Few sports are more refreshing and invigorating to the man who has the bodily and mental strength for it. The senses are quickened, the nerves are at perpetual tension, the whole nature is absorbed in one task, and the intellectual *ennui* which the life of cities induces is driven out by such manly absorption. There is also in a high degree the pleasure of conquest, which may be measured by the difficulty of the task rather than by the relative importance of the summit. But that climbing is not the whole of the fascination of mountains is shown by the feeling, common to all except a few enthusiastic young men, that a climb is best when it forms also the only or the chief way to the summit. Otherwise a quarry in Derbyshire, which may give as difficult climbing as the Dolomites, would have to take rank with a great peak. The famous Crowberry Ridge on the Buachaille Etive loses much of its charm when we remember that the summit can be reached by an easy scramble from Glen Etive; and Ben Nevis would be a better mountain were there not twenty ways to the top for those who cannot ascend the steep southern face. The real attraction is the summit, and the higher and lonelier the summit the greater the attraction. It is well if the way up is hard; but to all save athletes the way up is not the chief thing.

The real glamour of high altitudes is found, not in the means of attaining them, but in their intrinsic character. There we have Nature pure and primeval, a sphere in which worldly ambitions and human effort have no part, a remnant of the world as first created. Every healthy man has in him a love of the wilds and the savage elements, a feeling which is not at war with the pleasure in homely scenes, in towns and gardens and lowland meadows, but complemental in human nature. It is a relic in civilised man of the primitive creature

who first tried to adapt the earth to human needs, or, it may be, some trace of that infinite within us which cannot content itself with the work of our hands, and hungers every now and again for the bare simplicity of Nature. High mountains give us Nature in its most elemental form, - snow, rock, wind, and sky, an austere world in which man counts for little: and in the realisation of his insignificance there is much refreshment for the human soul. They have always been the chosen haunt of people who were not quite satisfied with life, not only estranged hermit souls like the author of "Obermann," but sane men who wished to get rid of the incubus of mundane cares and arrive at a clearer perspective. We have all in our own way written our hymns before sunrise, and –

"Heard accents of the eternal tongue
Through the pine branches play –
Listen'd, and felt ourselves grow young."

But the mountains have not only loneliness, they have height. The world is stretched out beneath them, with its rivers shrunk to brooks, and its towns little patches of smoke and colour. In a mountain view the ordinary world of men is brought close to the mind, but seems small and inconsiderable compared to the august spaces around. It is an illusion, but a priceless one, for by it a normal, healthy man can attain what the opium-eater gains from his disease, and look down from an immense height upon his fellows and their works, and achieve a supreme moment of detachment. In every man, as the saying goes, a poet died young; and not only a poet, but kings, prophets, and conquerors. But there are *revenants* (spirits) from that past, and the most prosaic of men may find them on mountain-tops, and return with a clearer vision and a sturdier heart. *"Éternité, deviens mon asile" ("Eternity, become my refuge")* was the cry of Senancour, (2). That way madness lies, for no disease so dominates and absorbs the soul as the disease of "immensity." But to a sane man there is value in that exaltation of the spirit which high altitudes give, when, so to speak, Nature lifts a corner of the curtain, and shows us a cosmos in which our life plays but a little part.

(1) Colonel Francis Younghusband was currently leading a Government mission to Tibet.

(2) Senancour was a French philosopher and writer (1770-1846) who left Paris in the revolution to seek alpine solitude in Switzerland.

POSTSCRIPT The Editor

There is a need, from time to time, to reflect head on rather than obliquely, on the philosophical and spiritual aspects of walking and climbing. Buchan's article achieves that, but entertains us as well. Perhaps because it was written more than a hundred years ago, it confirms that the attractions (Buchan's glamour) of high places are fundamental to the human condition. In Scotland that became understood, both for the toffs and the ship yard worker, quite early in the development of climbing.

The Cairngorm Club Journal was well into its stride when the *Spectator* article appeared but A. I. McConnochie, an outstanding editor, did not review it, which is surprising. At the time poetry and articles such as In Praise of Walking were reviewed along with selections from the Alpine Club Journal, for example the Alpine Death Roll for 1903. (The total was 136 and plant collecting more dangerous than climbing). The regular articles in the Club Journal at the time are of a very high quality and well worth reading. They are available in bound volumes which are kept in the Club Library, more a collection, which is housed in the Special Collections section of the University of Aberdeen Library, Kings College. The bound volumes are shelved and advance notice is not required, but nevertheless the practical advice is to telephone in advance; 01224 272598.The Website is www.abdn.ac.uk/library/about/special/.

Scottish Land Reform and Upper Deeside

Ken Thomson

Following the 2014 referendum on Scottish Independence, political attention has been able to focus on what can be done with the present and future powers devolved to the Scottish Government. High on the agenda of the ruling Scottish National Party is land reform in Scotland, an issue which has resonated over the centuries, from the establishment of feudalism, through the "Forty-Five", to the Clearances. However, for most of the last two centuries, the long process of rural depopulation left little appetite for change, except during the period of land settlement for soldiers returning after the First World War – an exercise of "*some dreadful inefficiency and mismanagement in the early years*" but with generally successful though mixed results (Leneman, 1989) in limited areas.

After the Second World War, the demographic tide began to turn, and has recently speeded up. A returning wave of population to at least some rural areas was due to a number of factors: increasing incomes and wealth, ever-improving national and international communications (now including electronic media), policy efforts at rural economic development, and in some places the post-1970s expansion of the oil and gas sector. Not all the in-migrants have wanted land to own or use – some merely look for a retirement or holiday home – but the arrival of all sorts of new residents and visitors, many with money and voices, was bound to put pressure on the established pattern of large estates, ever-enlarging farms, forests both old and newly established, and various services, from planners to the providers of water, toilets and parking places.

This article describes the evolution of the land reform debate in Scotland since about the year 2000, in particular as it affects mountain areas and Upper Deeside estates. The issue has many ramifications, including legal, economic and social and environmental ones, and not all can be covered here. The aspects which seem most likely to affect the environment and use of mountain and other "wild" areas include the purchase of extensive areas by rural communities, public access rights, the management of

such land, e.g. in relation to deer, hill tracks, etc., and land ownership limitations and taxation.

Land Reform Proposals

As well as questions of ownership, the term "*land reform*" encompasses a wide range of policy actions, including public access, designations such as National Parks and "wild land", farmland tenure, "community planning", the abolition of feudal tenure, and "community right to buy". In the late 1990s, a high-level Land Reform Policy Group, chaired by Lord Sewel (an Aberdeen University academic and a leading Scottish politician), made a series of recommendations to the Labour/Liberal Democrat coalition government. Subsequently, the following Acts have been passed, along with a number of others concerning land registration, fisheries, and crofting:

- The National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000, under which Parks were later established for the Cairngorms and the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs areas
- The Abolition of Feudal Tenure etc. Act 2000
- The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003, which established community rights to buy land both in crofting and non-crofting areas, a non-motorised "right to roam" responsibly over land (and inland water), and the planning of a network of "core paths" for public access
- The Agricultural Holdings (Scotland) Acts 2003 and 2012, which established more flexible farm tenancy arrangements but strengthened farm tenant security
- The Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004, which tried to re-establish conditions of trust between landowners and the Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) agency e.g. in the management of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)
- The Wildlife & Natural Environment (WANE) Act 2011, which strengthened a number of measures in relation to nature conservation, e.g. for deer management, and the duties of public bodies.

The general consensus seems to be that these Acts have had a generally beneficial effect, limited in some cases by a number of factors including legal and administrative bureaucracy, and

constrained public funding. One area of particular disappointment has been the scale of community land purchase, which by 2014 had reached a total area of about 200 thousand hectares (ha), mostly in 17 estates in the Highlands and Islands, out of the Scottish total of some 7.9 million ha. However, only 21 thousand ha (mostly the Assynt Estate) had actually been bought under the Act.

In July 2012, Scottish Government Ministers appointed the Land Reform Review Group (LRRG) "*to identify how land reform will*:

- *enable more people in rural and urban Scotland to have a stake in the ownership, governance, management and use of land, which will lead to a greater diversity of land ownership, and ownership types, in Scotland;*
- *assist with the acquisition and management of land (and also land assets) by communities, to make stronger, more resilient, and independent communities which have an even greater stake in their development;*
- *generate, support, promote, and deliver new relationships between land, people, economy and environment in Scotland*".

The original Group comprised Dr Alison Elliot, once a lecturer in psychology and a Church of Scotland Moderator, Professor Jim Hunter, a well-known writer on highland matters, and Dr Sarah Skerratt, a social geographer. In April 2013, the latter two were replaced by Dr John Watt OBE, Ian Cooke and Pip Tabor. A group of advisors included Robin Callander (of Birse, an expert on common and community land) and Bob Reid, an Aberdeen-based planner and one-time President of the Mountaineering Council of Scotland. Over autumn/winter 2012/13, nearly 500 submissions were made, and 5 public meetings were held (though none in the North-East). In May 2013, an Interim Report focussed attention on extending community land ownership beyond the North-West, a possible Land Agency, and public access. It also identified as "outstanding issues" the Crown Estate (which owns Glen Livet and 3 other estates, plus about half the Scottish foreshore), "common good land" owned by local authorities, land taxation, and ownership succession. The final report, *The Land of Scotland and the Common Good*, published in May 2014, did not follow up the Interim Report pointers with equal enthusiasm, partly on the basis of further evidence received, and partly – presumably – because other matters

attracted more interest. However, the LRRG did make some 60 recommendations.

Community Purchase

The main difficulties in extending community ownership of land seem to be landowner unwillingness to sell, lack of finance, and the complexities of the 2003 Act procedures. There are also problems in defining a "community" and ensuring its effectiveness as a potential buyer of land. The LRRG recommended that the Government should be more "*flexible*" in terms of legal structures for "*appropriate community bodies*" eligible for support, and that Ministers should approve 'actual' ability to purchase at any time rather than having to wait 'pre-emptively' for a potential sale. The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill now going through the Scottish Parliament reflects some of this by defining "*community planning partnerships*" and other bodies which may be Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisations (SCIOs), and might include a mountaineering club with a hut in the area. Rather than a "*substantial connection*" with the relevant land as now, only a "*connection*" would be necessary. It also specifies that a "community" can be based on "*geographical boundaries, common interests, or shared characteristics of its members*".

Finance (which was not in the LRRG's remit) seems likely to remain a major hurdle to community purchase of land: the Scottish Land Fund (see below) disburses about £2 million each year, but a single estate is likely to cost more than that, as with the recent £11 million (from an unknown buyer) paid for 12,000 ha at Auch near Bridge of Orchy. By comparison, Scottish farmers received on average over £500 million each year during 2007-13 under the Common Agricultural Policy, and there are substantial tax concessions to property ownership.

Public Access

The Group had rather little to say on this subject; it pointed to the 17,000 km of core paths created in Scotland since the 2003 Land Reform Act, compared to less than 100 km of formally asserted public rights of way. It considered that its evidence, though "*significant*" in number of submissions, showed "*little appetite for legislative change*". Concerns – which included blocked access,

damage by mountain bikes, and wild camping – could, it thought, mostly "*be resolved by better implementation of the Access Code*". It therefore simply recommended that Ministerial guidance (rather than the Code itself) should be "*updated*", and some improvement in dispute resolution. The Group also proposed that "archaic" common-law rights over public access to foreshore, inland water and seabed should be replaced by rights "integrated" with those of the 2003 Act: this might assist access to sea-cliff climbing, and canoeing.

Land Management

The Group was "*struck ... by the limited progress in addressing some of the issues over the management of wild deer in Scotland, particularly red deer, despite many years of debate over these issues*". The great increase in forested area (in lowland as well as mountain areas) has led to both more deer of all species, and increased pressures to cull – mostly in woodlands, and much of it by Forestry Commission Scotland. Its Final Report did not mention conflicts between deer stalking (or other hill sports such as grouse shooting) and hillwalkers or mountaineers, but rather focussed on "*environmental damage to habitats, economic damage to crops and the social costs which can result from deer-vehicle collisions*".

The Group proposed that "*improvements should be made to the current statutory framework governing the hunting of deer in Scotland to ensure* [that] *appropriate culls are carried out to adequately safeguard public interests*", e.g. by requiring owners to apply for consent to cull (with SNH taking over if a landowner "*chooses not to meet the standards required for sustainable deer management in the public interest*"), and setting clearer public-interest standards while culling. This might include issues of access to the hills.

Management of grouse moors was treated by the Group almost entirely in terms of the questionable environmental aspects of muirburn, and the awkward tensions for both private and public sectors between the economics of forestry and those of grouse shooting (which can have a capital value of up to £5,000 per brace). The Group "*anticipate*[d]" that the Government's emerging Land Use Strategy will have to try to resolve some of these conflicts by reducing landowners' flexibility in how they use their land, but a

number of issues remain under-explored, for example in terms of the shooting of mountain hares (a study is starting at time of writing), and the erection of electrified fences.

The Group was clearly unhappy with the current position as regards Scotland's water resources, and made a number of recommendations in this area, including the review and reform of riparian rights, and reform of the statutory framework for the sustainable management of Scotland's wild freshwater fish populations, both with the "public interest" as the main consideration.

Land Ownership Limitations and Taxation

Perhaps the most radical of the Group's recommendations related to limiting the area in any one ownership, and to land taxation. As regards the former, the Final Report specifically mentioned Deeside, where about 95% of the land area (of about 155,000 ha, or 2% of Scotland's total area) is owned by 20-odd owners with over 400 ha each. "*The Group considers that concentrated patterns of private land ownership in localities like Deeside inhibit the development of the rural communities in these areas*". It recommended that "*the Scottish Government should develop proposals to establish ... an upper limit on the total amount of land in Scotland that can be held by a private land owner or single beneficial interest*". It did not suggest any particular limit (or perhaps limits, or ratios), but considered it important to establish the principle of such a limitation, in pursuit of "*a greater diversity of land ownership*" (see remit), and sustainable development.

The main public-sector rural ownerships – the National Forest (651,000 ha), Government-owned crofts (95,200 ha), SNH (35,700 ha), the Crown Estate (35,500 ha), and Scottish Water (24,300 ha) – would presumably be exempt from any limit imposed for "public interest" reasons, since Ministers have direct control. However, such a limit might affect "third-sector" owners such as the NTS, RSPB and JMT, who own 78,000, 54,100 and 24,461 ha respectively in Scotland. These areas compare with the largest private ownerships (mostly trusts) such as the estates of Buccleuch (106,000 ha), Atholl (59,000 ha), Invercauld (49,000 ha including Torloisk on Mull), Seafield (40,900 ha) and Westminster (38,500 ha) (all 1995

estimates), and so might be caught by an upper limit of say 10,000 ha. However, the problem could be overcome by ensuring that third-sector owners have sufficient "public interest" or "common good" characteristics e.g. as a charity), or agree appropriate management with a Government authority.

The Group suggested that it be "*incompetent for any legal entity not registered in a member state of the European Union to register title to land in the Land Register of Scotland*". This would not prevent ownership by non-EU interests, but would improve transparency of ownership, which is roundly criticised elsewhere in the report, with several recommendations on improving land registration.

Potentially even more radical – because it would affect a larger number of landowners, and others – is the Group's proposal that the current exemptions of most land-based businesses from non-domestic rates should be "*reviewed*", as having "*no clear public interest*". 'Sporting rates' on fisheries and shoots could be "*tailored to each of the species involved*" in ways that would help to deliver the Land Use Strategy, though precisely how is not explained. Finally, Land Value Taxation – a long-standing fiscal ideal, based on the land itself rather than the properties upon it – is proposed as deserving of "*detailed study*", whose philosophy and evidence would no doubt spark widespread debate.

Following the LRRG report, the Scottish Government has undertaken a number of actions, including:

- *Land registration.* The General Register of Sasines dates from 1617 and is said to be the world's oldest property register, but it simply contains property deeds, from which ownership has to be deduced in an often complex and costly way. The modern Land Register provides a map-based register of title but covers only around 26% of Scotland's land mass, since registration generally takes place only on property sale, which of course is rare (or has never occurred) in the case of many large estates. Ministers aim to have all public land registered by 2019, and to have the Register completed by 2024.
- *Community right to buy.* In addition to those defined by postcode, "community bodies" may now be SCIOs and companies limited by guarantee. Ministers aim to have a million acres (about 400,000 ha)

in community ownership by 2020. Further changes are intended under the Community Empowerment Bill.

- *Scottish Land Fund.* A budget of £9 million has been promised for the period 2016-20, continuing recent awards. The Fund is administered by the Big Lottery Fund and Highlands and Islands Enterprise, and supports the community ownership and management of land in rural Scotland with grants up to £750,000, so far mainly in the West and in Fife.
- *Succession law.* Scots law has traditionally distinguished between "movable" and "immovable" (or "heritable") property, with the latter being land (and what is attached to it) which on death can be passed entire to (usually) the eldest son rather than having to be divided up amongst close relatives. Removal of this distinction has been discussed for several years, and may have long-term implications for large Scottish estates (and farms), although it would not apply to trusts, which never die.

A further indication of political interest in land reform has been shown in the House of Commons Committee on Scottish Affairs, which is conducting its own inquiry into land reform. An Interim Report published in March 2014 recommended much more, and more open, information "*on such topics as landownership, land values, land occupation and land use*". It also recommended the gathering of evidence on the effects of tax reliefs on land and property (which, along with agricultural subsidies, seemed to push up land prices and thus make community purchase of land more difficult), and "*on whether the ownership of estates through charitable companies set up by private owners is in the public interest and how governance of such organisations should be best organised*".

Land Reform Public Consultation Winter 2014-15

In November 2014, the Scottish Government initiated a public consultation on land reform, with the aim "*that Scotland's land must be an asset that benefits the many, not the few*", and in anticipation of a Land Reform Bill. It also listed its reactions to the LRRG's recommendations, in terms of administrative actions being undertaken, ongoing legislation such as the Community Empowerment Bill, consultation items, or matters "under

consideration" (which included an upper limit on single land ownership).

In the consultation, and otherwise, the Government rejected some of the LRRG's recommendations, including the production of "indicative maps" of the patterns of land ownership, the removal of the universal exemption of agriculture, forestry and other land based businesses from non-domestic rates, and a detailed study of the scope and practicalities of Land Value Taxation, although it plans to study alternatives to the Council Tax system. It did however propose a Land Rights and Responsibilities Policy - actually more a set of principles – as follows:

1. *The ownership and use of land in Scotland should be in the public interest and contribute to the collective benefit of the people of Scotland.*
2. *...clear and detailed information that is publicly available on land in Scotland.*
3. *The framework of land rights and associated public policies ... should contribute to building a fairer society in Scotland and promoting environmental sustainability, economic prosperity and social justice.*
4. *The ownership of land in Scotland should reflect a mix of different types of public and private ownership in an increasingly diverse and widely dispersed pattern ....*
5. *[A] growing number of local communities in Scotland should be given the opportunity to own buildings and land ....*
6. *The holders of land rights in Scotland should exercise these rights in ways that recognise their responsibilities to meet high standards of land ownership and use.*
7. *...wide public engagement in decisions relating to the development and implementation of land rights in Scotland ....*"

The consultation ended in February 2015 and attracted over 1292 responses, 1086 with permission to publish. The following organisations have made their submissions publicly available (all such responses are available on the Scottish Government website, but not in an easily searchable form).

Scottish Land and Estates (representing landowners and land-based businesses) "*strongly disagreed*" with the first Principle above,

i.e., that landownership should be "*in the public interest*" and "*contribute to the collective benefit*". They argued that any policy should also respect the rights of property owners, and not involve terms such as "fairness" (Principle 3) that are widely open to ambiguity and controversy, nor involve non-geographical "communities". They were concerned over extending bureaucracy and state powers, but were "*relaxed*" over the proposal to restrict ownership to individuals or EU-registered entities. They pointed out the many non-ownership barriers to rural development identified by various studies, and, as regards deer management, to ongoing changes with a review due in 2016. As regards sporting rates, SLE pointed to the "*low margin*" nature of shooting and stalking, to the voluntary contributions by estates to river and deer management, to the consequent loss of other taxation revenue, and to the high costs of establishing and administrating these rates.

The *John Muir Trust* wanted "future generations" to be mentioned in any statement of principles, and were supportive of non-geographical "communities of interest". They wanted 'high standards of ownership' to include the protection and enhancement of the environment and natural resources. They were concerned that the Scottish Government's interpretation of 'sustainable development' would be (and is) narrower than the well-known UN Brundtland definition "*"Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"*, and would lead to inappropriate development reducing the values of "wild land".

Veteran land campaigner Andy Wightman cited the European Convention on Human Rights: (1) "Every natural or legal person is entitled to the peaceful enjoyment of his possessions. No one shall be deprived of his possessions except in the public interest and subject to the conditions provided for by law and by the general principles of international law. (2) The preceding provisions shall not, however, in any way impair the right of a state to enforce such laws as it deems necessary to control the use of property in accordance with the general interest or to secure the payment of taxes or other contributions or penalties." This makes it clear that land ownership is subject to certain conditions. Wightman welcomed the possibility of re-subjecting sporting estate land to business rates but admitted that

it might not raise much revenue due to reliefs available to all small businesses, and argued that a simple valuation basis would need to be established.

The *Mountaineering Council of Scotland* responded that: "*policy should set out a minimum standard of stewardship that all land owners and managers should be expected to meet and a higher standard to which they should aspire*". It was "*concerned that the Scottish Government in its thinking privileges local communities over what may sometimes be much more numerous but widely dispersed communities of interest. This is of particular relevance to charities with a conservation aim which represent a substantial community of interest (their members and supporters). We would welcome greater recognition that multiple 'communities' may have an interest in an area and not only its current residents.*" It regarded deer numbers as ecologically damaging, but felt it "*reasonable that, should the present voluntary arrangement fail to deliver the reduction in numbers needed, there are alternative measures in place to enable the reduction to be delivered*".

Ramblers Scotland took a rather stronger line on deer management, arguing for a licensing system (presumably to shoot) that would force landowners to agree an annual cull level, with licence suspension and "government-led intervention" (by SNH) to bring numbers down. It also made a number of proposals for wider action in favour of public access, for example as regards level crossings, electrified deer fencing, and compulsory purchase for core path purposes.

At the time of writing (April 2015), these and all other responses are being analysed, but the Government has already announced that it will introduce a Land Reform Bill in the current Parliamentary session (which ends in 2016). This will include powers to act against landowners who pose "barriers to development", and end rates exemptions for shooting and deer stalking estates, with the revenue used to fund community land ownership. The details of the proposals, and of their effectiveness (e.g. against legal challenge) if passed, remain to be seen.

Upper Deeside Estates

The largest estates in upper Deeside are each briefly described below. Callander (1987) points to three main elements of landownership change during the 20th century, in Aberdeenshire as in Scotland as a whole: a reduction in the areas of the largest estates (in more fertile areas, often by sale to farming tenants), an increase in the number of small owners, and a major expansion in land owned by the state and public agencies such as the Forestry Commission. However, "*the longstanding pattern of large-scale estates continues to be clearly recognizable*", and in Deeside only the creation of Mar Lodge Estate has broken this continuity.

Mar Lodge Estate, which covers 29,340 ha is the largest remnant of the ancient Earldom of Mar. It was split from Mar Estate in the early 1960s, after which it was owned by the Swiss Panchaud family and then Mr John Kluge before it was bought in 1995 by the National Trust of Scotland with a substantial donation from a member of the Salvesen family. Containing 15 Munros, over 40% of the estate is covered by national and international nature conservation designations, and a "Concordat" has been signed between the Trust and SNH (its major grant-awarding agency) for the conservation, enhancement and public enjoyment of the estate, within a number of plans and agreements. For deer management purposes, it is split – partly by a newly erected fence – into the eastern woodland regeneration zone containing the Lui Beg, the Derry and the lower part of the Quoich, and the western moorland zone, where a higher density of deer is allowed.

Mar Estate is centred on Glen Ey, along with some land along the south bank of the River Dee near the Club's cottage Muir of Inverey, and covers some 10,000 ha.

Invercauld Estate has been in the ownership of the Farquharson family (now via a family trust) for many centuries and extends to approximately 200 square miles (52,000 ha), extending from Glen Shee in the south to the march with Inchrory, Delnadamph and Candacraig Estates in the north. The Estate is managed commercially, with properties by the Dee rented out for self-catering holiday accommodation. The land is mostly rented out in various moors, for grouse shoots, deer stalking and salmon fishing. A number of holiday cottages, shops and other commercial premises

e.g. in Braemar, are rented out on a long-term basis, and Ballater Angling Association leases Loch Vrotachan from the estate, and stocks it with brown trout.

Balmoral Estate was purchased by Prince Albert in 1852, and is now run by trustees. It extends to some 20,000 ha, including the 3000 ha *Delnadamph Lodge* estate in upper Donside, bought by the Queen in 1978 for Prince Charles and Princess Diana. Approximately 3200 ha of the estate are covered by trees, including Ballochbuie Forest, one of the largest remaining areas of old Caledonian pine growth in Scotland, with almost 1200 ha used for forestry that yields nearly 10,000 tonnes of wood per year. Approximately 50 full-time and 50–100 part-time staff are employed to maintain the working estate. *Glendoll and Bachnagairn* are recorded as covering some 5025 ha in 2010. The Ballater Angling Association is allowed to fish Loch Muick, mostly for brown trout.

Abergeldie Estate covers some 4730 ha, and is owned by the Gordon family. In 2010, it was recorded as being leased to the Balmoral Estate trustees, as often over the previous century and more. *Glenmuick Estate*, belonging to Sir Ian Okeover-Walker Bt. (Okeover is in Derbyshire; the Walkers once owned Slains), is a traditional sporting estate of some 5665 ha, with its own stalking, salmon fishing and grouse shooting. The House of Glenmuick is available for parties up to 20 people, and the Ballater Angling Association stocks (with rainbow trout) the small Chapel and Gasworks lochans. *Birkhall Estate*, south-west of Ballater, covers some 21,000 ha, and belongs to Prince Charles.

Glentanar Estate, of 11,800 ha, extending from the Dee southwest of Dinnet up to the summit of Mount Keen, was created in the nineteenth century by Sir William Cunliffe Brooks MP, who built or created many of its current features. In 1905 it was bought by George Coats (of cotton fame, later Lord Glentanar) and now belongs to his descendant Michael Bruce. The estate is highly diversified, and includes several visitor facilities, from holiday cottages and horse-riding to biking and fishing. It has strong nature conservation attractions such as wildlife photography on its grouse moors and in its semi-natural pinewoods, and has won many awards, including the Green Butterfly Award and certification by the Forestry Stewardship Council.

To the east of Glentanar estate lies the *Forest of Birse* estate 6141 ha, part of the extensive Dunecht Estates (over 21,500 ha) owned by the Cowdray or Pearson family in Aberdeenshire and Kincardineshire, along with the home Estate, Raemoir and Campfield, Dunnottar Castle, Edinglassie, West Durris and Bucharn. Run from Dunecht, the Forest of Birse has grouse shooting and salmon fishing. The *Dinnet and Wester Coull Estate* covered nearly 10,000 ha in 2010, and belongs to the Humphrey family. Other large estates near Deeside include *Abernethy* (10,000 ha), *Rothiemurchus* nearly 10,000 ha), *Glenfeshie* (17,000 ha), Invermark (17,500 ha), and Gannochy (6500 ha).

The impact on Upper Deeside Estates of land reform depends of course on the extent and degree of such changes, whether those recommended by the Land Reform Review Group, or the more modest ideas of the present Government – or indeed more radical suggestions. Landowning community trusts are rare on Deeside, the Birse Community Trust – established to safeguard an ancient "commonty" – being the main exception, and there seem to have been no major attempts to extend the network in the region. Public access has been largely problem-free, with most estates accepting the Land Reform Act regime although occasional instances of obstruction do occur.

Land management for sport shooting of grouse and deer on Deeside and neighbouring glens continues to conflict with hillwalking at various times and places, particularly as regards the proliferation of hill tracks – bulldozed or eroded – on some estates. It may or may not be helpful that the Scottish Government is instituting a form of "prior notification" by which planning authorities can – but need not – require such tracks to be approved before they are established. Electrified fencing, and the shooting of mountain hares, are other issues disliked by many hillwalkers.

As evidenced by the area figures given above, the introduction of a limit on the amount of land that can be in single ownership might affect several Deeside estates, depending on the maximum area defined. A figure of 4,000 ha would affect nearly all of those named above, but the impact would be reduced if the limit did not apply to existing land holdings, but only to those acquired in future land transactions. Some large estates, such as those of the NTS, or

Balmoral, might be considered (by Ministers, by SNH, or perhaps by a future Scottish Land Commission) to be managed sufficiently "in the public interest" as to exempt them from being divided up. Moreover, should such a limit become a realistic prospect, private landowners may be expected to take pre-emptive action, such as the artificial division of large estates amongst family members, or an appeal to the European Convention on Human Rights.

The perhaps more likely prospect of a more stringent tax regime being imposed on estates – either as part of higher rates of general taxation in a "Devo Max" Scotland, or via measures targeted at such land holdings – might have limited effects, but is more likely to affect estate values, whether for the purposes of taxation or sale, than on their physical extent.

Closing Comments

Land reform is being pursued in Scotland under the belief that greater diversity of landownership will improve the stake of communities and individuals in local development, and will "*deliver new relationships between land, people, economy and environment in Scotland*", for the "*common good*". As the Land Reform Review Group recognised: "*common good describes a comprehensive and complex concept which brings into its embrace questions of social justice, human rights, democracy, citizenship, stewardship and economic development*". It also accepted that "*public interest*" is "*politically identified at any one point in time*" rather than being a fixed legal concept.

The concept of the "common good" is clearly a basic political/philosophical one, concerned with the balance of private rights and state powers. In Scotland this question nowadays tends to revolve around questions of "fairness", between those with "too much" (land, wealth, income), and those with "too little" (income, housing, education, etc.). The issue cannot be resolved by appeals to efficiency or historical accident; much evidence goes to show that human beings (and some animals) are instinctively averse to perceived unfairness, and will choose not to co-operate, even to their own disadvantage, if imbalances of treatment are seen as excessive.

Nevertheless, the argument of economic efficiency cannot be ignored: would greater ownership diversity lead, in fact, to greater

economic prosperity, in terms of jobs and incomes, in relatively remote rural areas? That would depend on the resources, organisational skills and entrepreneurship of the new owners, and on demand for whatever they might try to supply. The demand for elite sports such as deer and grouse shooting, and salmon fishing, is being met by the existing estates. Community owners might continue these pursuits, but they seem unlikely to provide year-round steady employment at satisfactory incomes, and alternatives in terms of mass-interest and specialist tourism are more often cited. Although many existing estates cater for these demands, with e.g. visitor centres, guided trips and holiday chalets, new and smaller owners might do more in these respects. However, the constraints of the Scottish weather need to be acknowledged, and the possibility of overloading a limited market – as may have been shown in the case of hostels in Scotland.

More insidious threat may be the prospect that new and smaller-scale individual owners will seek to 'privatise' the countryside in ways that some larger estates, perhaps as more obvious targets for resentment, do not. In many places, retirement and second-home owners are the ones most likely to erect discouraging signs, and to attempt to divert footpaths or prevent roadside car-parking, precisely because they have acquired their properties with peace and privacy in mind. Landowner-sponsored and -supported surveys (e.g. Woolvin, 2013) suggest significant current streams of local income and employment which are dependent on "unprofitable" estates.

Community owners are more likely to try to attract visitors, but the problems of securing, and maintaining over time, consensus and drive amongst a mixture of land managers, working families and retirees in a local area should not be under-estimated, and has been the subject of a number of studies (Scottish Government, 2002).

Finally there is the inevitable conflict – though sometimes denied or underplayed, and certainly not addressed in the Land Reform Review Group's report, nor, arguably, in the Scottish Government's current proposals – between economic development and environmental conservation, especially in remote and "wild" areas such as the hills. Under Scottish legislation, even National Parks must "*promote sustainable economic and social development*" as well as natural and cultural heritage, and in these and all other areas

the Scottish Government's overriding "purpose" is "increasing sustainable economic growth".

These problems are not much linked to the Referendum outcome, since Independence would have little legal impact on the Government's ability to act, because the relevant powers are already devolved, often for many years (and more are on the way), or are constrained by European legislation. The current Scottish Government is moving cautiously, possibly for fear of upsetting powerful land-opening interests, or possibly aware of the major legal and conflictual problems of land reform.

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Invercauld Bridge.

Hill Walking Dogs - Some Thoughts From a Farming Perspective

Jo Durno

By way of background introduction:- as a family we have been tenants on the Crown's Glenlivet Estate since my late father-in-law took over the farm in May of 1953 when my husband was 7 years old. We have 2250 acres of heather hill, six miles away from the farm proper, which is used for summer grazing for our flock of Scottish Blackfaced sheep. There is an old shepherd's cottage on the hill which, prior to 1953, was the summer residence of the farm shepherd while the sheep were there but, with all the farm labour required at home, it became surplus to the farm's needs as my father-in-law drove daily to the hill to check up on the sheep. Many walkers pass through the ground and the cottage is now frequently used by them as a bothy while my husband (who now does the shepherding) enjoys his daily visit and the chance meetings with many interesting people enjoying the peaceful environment. The cottage is basic but he has tried to make it wind and water tight with some added comfort of redundant furnishings from home. The visitors' book clearly illustrates the pleasure it provides.

The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 set out the rights of all those who use the countryside of Scotland, whether for recreational purposes or as land managers who may make their living from that land by farming, forestry, fishing or other such use. Unfortunately, many in the media frequently refer to the "right to roam", which can lead to potential conflicts between the few who believe they have an absolute right to total freedom in the countryside, regardless of the needs of others, and the managers of the land in question. The right of public access is correctly qualified by the word "responsible", so both access takers and land managers have to take responsibility for complying with the Scottish Outdoor Access Code; it is a two-way arrangement. (www.outdooraccess-scotland.com) Most people who take their dogs into the countryside do behave with respect for their surroundings but a few cause difficulties not only for land managers, but also potentially for other recreational users including others with

dogs. The Code says "Access rights do not extend to... anyone responsible for a dog which is not under proper control..."

From a hill farming perspective the issues with dogs come from a number of concerns. Livestock worrying can be traumatic when untrained dogs are let off the lead to chase whatever catches their eye, whether birds, deer or farm animals. If the dogs do not respond to owners' commands to return, they need to be kept on the lead until such time as they learn the discipline. It is perfectly legitimate for land managers to shoot dogs found marauding stock or, alternatively, to prosecute the owner in a court case.

Livestock farmers will vaccinate and treat their dogs routinely for worms, not only as a matter of good husbandry, but also by being compelled to as members of food quality assurance schemes, so it is only right that dog walkers using our ground do the same for our animals' well-being. If a farm field which holds livestock is to be used for a public event, it must be closed off to stock for 3 weeks beforehand. This is for the protection of the people attending the event. Some irresponsible dog owners see no similarity between this and the consequences of leaving their dogs' excrement to the extreme inconvenience of other recreational users of the land. But being responsible only needs a little forethought and consideration for others. When out walking it is not difficult to carry a plastic bag to use for picking up behind the dog, to avoid the upset caused to others who may inadvertently step in the excrement, or worse, become infected with any one of a number of potentially harmful parasites. But it is not only dog excrement that is offensive. Taking rubbish home is not just about potential litter. Farmers have encountered used toilet paper blowing in the wind on the hill and, for example, have experienced a collie dog which chose to roll around in human excrement. It had to be scrubbed before getting back in the land rover for the 6 mile drive home. (*Guidance available in a leaflet called Where to Go in the Great Outdoors.*)

While I have no desire to terrify every dog owner so that they never take their best friends hill walking again, I think it is worth highlighting some of the potential hazards – diseases - confronting visiting dogs, (some of which also affect humans). Many are present on urban streets. They can be picked up from deer, rabbits', cats' and other dogs' faeces as well as from vegetation or drinking water both

stagnant and running. It is worth carrying bottled water for a short day out but if you take a stove remember to boil enough water for the dog too, for the following reasons.

Cryptosporidiosis is the disease caused by infection with the protozoan parasite *Cryptosporidium*. There are many species of the parasite, found in various mammals, birds and reptiles but fortunately not all of them cause disease. The oocyst or egg is the infective part of the life cycle. It has a very tough outer shell and survives well in the UK climate, particularly in mild and humid conditions, and can remain viable for over a year in soils, pasture and water, being resistant to water chlorination treatment and other disinfectants. One species, *C. parvum,* causes clinical disease in cattle but is generally found in calves less than 6 weeks old and is zoonotic. Usually mild in humans, the disease manifests with self-limiting diarrhoea, abdominal pain and dehydration. However, in vulnerable people e.g. the young, elderly or immuno-compromised, it is potentially very serious. At present there is no vaccination to prevent the disease in farm animals, and in the hill environment deer and other wildlife are outwith any veterinary management the farmer can provide.

Toxoplasma gondii is the most successful protozoan parasite worldwide and is capable of infecting all warm-blooded animals including humans. Members of the cat family are definitive hosts of the parasite and infected cats can shed the oocysts in their faeces. These can survive in the environment in moist temperate conditions for 12 – 18 months. Sheep pick up the oocysts from pasture or water and once ingested the parasite multiplies within the host and persists within tissue cysts in the brain, heart and muscle. In the naive pregnant sheep *Toxoplasma* can cause disease in both the placenta and the foetus, resulting in abortion or still birth. It is particularly important for women who may be pregnant or immuno-compromised individuals to avoid any contact with ewes and lambs around lambing time as they can suffer the same effects. Eating undercooked meat which might contain parasite tissue cysts is a major risk for these groups also.

Neospora caninum is a protozoan parasite found in dogs but worldwide it is recognised as one of the major causes of bovine abortion. It can only live and multiply within the cells of an animal. While similar to the *Toxoplasma* parasite, there is no evidence to

show that *Neospora* can infect humans. A naive dog becomes infected by eating meat already containing tissue cysts such as that from abortion cases, placentas, wildlife or water – easily done on the wild hill. Once infected, the parasite may establish itself in the gut cells of the dog where it will multiply and re-infect more gut cells. This leads to the production of parsasite oocysts which will be shed in the dogs' faeces around 3-9 days after infection. This will continue for 2-3 weeks after which time the dog's immune system usually manages to control the gut infection and the production of oocysts ceases. It is thought that the host animal does not shed significant numbers in the event of further infections. *Neospora* oocysts are usually only detectable in the faeces after the first exposure of the dog to infection so, generally, only young dogs are involved. The oocysts can stay infective for many months in cool and moist conditions but can be killed by heat, freezing or drying. Many wild animals have been shown to act as host for *Neospora* but only dogs are proven to shed the oocysts. Thus they are the only known infection route for cattle. As yet there is no licensed vaccine in the EU.

Toxocara canis is a Nematode parasite most dog owners will know as dog roundworm. Toxocariasis is caused by ingestion of the larvae of the dog roundworm *T canis* or the cat roundworm *T cati*. The soil of parks and playgrounds is commonly contaminated with the eggs of *T canis,* and infection may cause disease in humans that involves the liver, heart, lung, muscle, eye, and brain. Awareness of this has been promoted in the public domain by the growing knowledge of ocular larva migrans, a condition caused by the migration of larvae into the posterior segment of the eye. It tends to occur in older children and young adults. Regular worming of household pets, along with scrupulous attention to hand washing around food, is the best strategy for avoiding the infection.

Stagnant water in ponds, lochans or boggy land can be affected by algal blooms during long dry spells. In the case of humans, contact with blue-green algal blooms and associated scum should be avoided as skin rashes may occur if affected water is in direct contact with the skin and illness may occur if the water is swallowed. Do not allow dogs to drink from, or attempt to cool off in, affected water as the consequences can prove fatal.

I hope the above information is helpful to those who enjoy the company of their dogs in the great outdoors. Do not be frightened by the facts, but take sensible precautions to avoid illness in your dog, yourself and the people who follow in your footsteps, so all can continue to benefit from a pleasurable experience.

In summary; responsibility includes picking up after the dog, keeping to a regular worming programme, being aware of other animals in the area and behaving appropriately. Keep dogs under close control, using a lead when necessary near livestock and particularly when there are lambs or calves around. There is plenty of advice available from your vet practice or dog training classes and, for much more in-depth knowledge of the disease threats, the organization Moredun (http://moredun.org.uk/), founded by Scottish farmers, is the body at the forefront of research.

The Mar Estate

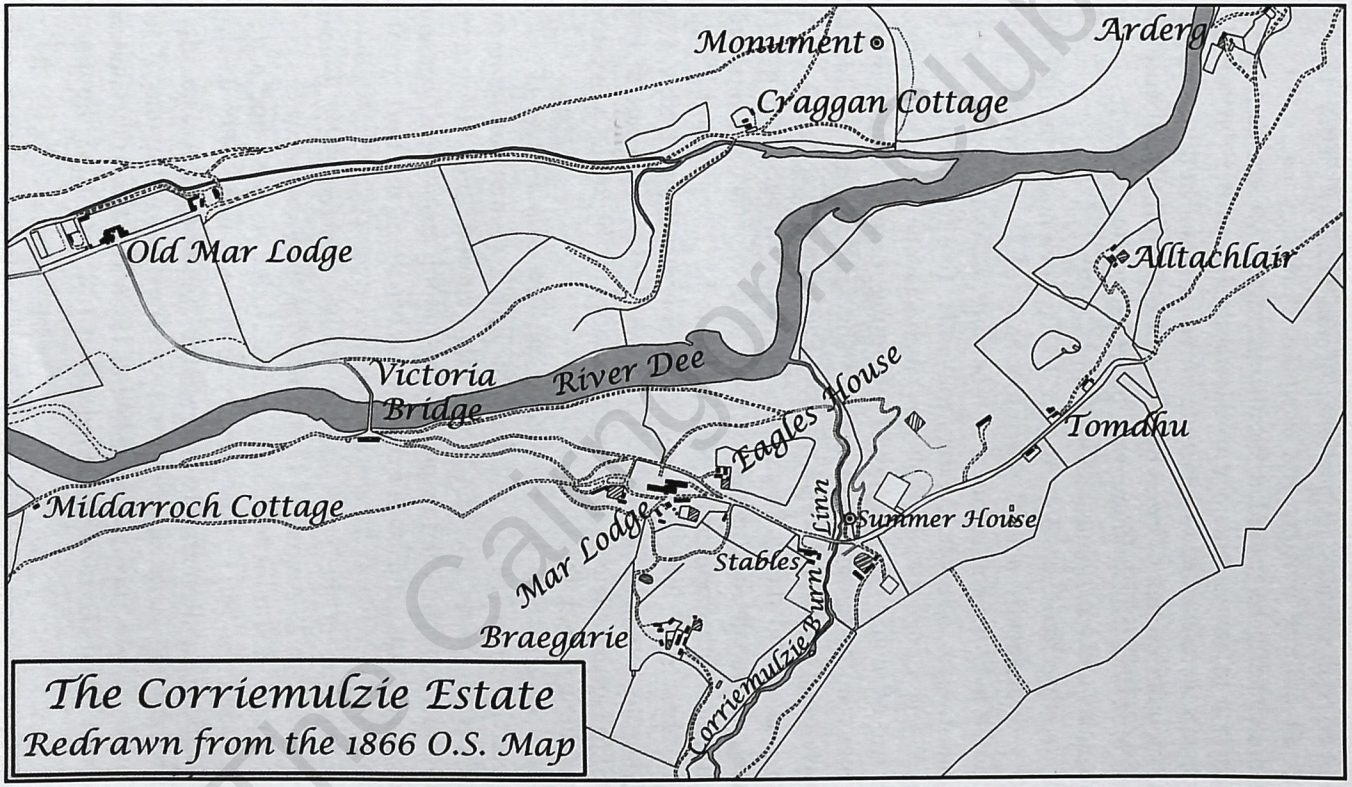
Editor's note: Graham Ewen, the late Honorary President of the Club, has written 9 articles for the Journal on the history of the Mar Estate. This is the final one, on the Corriemulzie Estate. After he started to write this article he became ill and died, but his long-time collaborator on the research of the Duff House Papers, Eddie Martin, has undertaken the task of completing the article.

Corriemulzie

Eddie Martin and Graham Ewen

The precise boundaries of the Corriemulzie Estate are difficult to identify beyond the fact that they were located on the road from Braemar to Inverey, bounded by Auchendryne Estate to the east and Inverey Estate to the west. In a Charter dated 28 September 1632, granted by John, Earl of Mar to an Alister Mackenzie, it is described as the town and lands of Corriemulzie, with the pendicle called Wester Arderg extending to four oxgates, the town and lands of Craggan extending to two oxgates and the shielings of Reflinchwood, Inveraltlat and Corronraw which were probably on the east side of Glen Ey. An oxgate varies in area and averages about 13 acres. The southern march was probably the ridge of Creag an Fhithich or, using the archaic phrase for a ridge, 'where wind and weather shears'. The northern march of the Estate is even more difficult to define as Craggan is on the north side of the river Dee and one would have expected the river itself to be the natural boundary, (Fig. 1). After much litigation between Farquharson of Inverey, who now owned Corriemulzie, and the Earl of Fife, who now owned the Mackenzie of Dalmore Estate, Craggan was ceded to the Earl following an exchange of grazing rights and the river became the northern march. In 1785 the Farquharson of Inverey Estate was sold to the Earl of Fife through an intermediary by the name of Robinson and Corriemulzie became just a name on the map.

There were only around seven holdings on the estate, two of which were above the road at Braegarie and the others below the road on the flatter ground near the river Dee. The tenants had the



usual personal services to perform for the landlord. They had to attend all military musters and weapons showings and eight men with dogs had to be provided for all huntings. All growing trees, present and to come, remained in the possession of the Earl of Mar but tenants were entitled to servitude timber for their holdings as was usual on other estates. They were thirled to the mill of Dalmore. A rental of £12 : 10 shillings was payable to the Earl of Mar at Whitsunday and Martinmas at Kindrochit Castle.

A massive flood on 3/4 August 1829, known as 'the muckle spate', dramatically altered the importance of Corriemulzie. The Dee broke over the embankment at a bend of the river to the west of Old Mar Lodge. The whole valley was under five feet of water. The corner of the Lodge dining room was taken away and filled with over three feet of mud. The window of the dining room was undermined and many outbuildings swept away. The garden was completely destroyed and roads and walks ruined. The bridge over the Dee was washed away and the farmlands of Allanaquoich buried in gravel. Rather than repair the Lodge at their own expense, the Trustees leased it out with game and fishing rights to Sir Harry Goodrich for seven years from July 1830, on condition that Mar Lodge was brought into habitable use by the end of the lease. The Earl of Fife moved to Corriemulzie Cottage on the south side of the Dee, west of Corriemulzie Gorge.

The Cottage, which became known as New Mar Lodge, (Fig.2), was built about 1825 by the Earl of Fife's brother General Sir Alexander Duff. The Earl of Fife carried out continuous improvements, repairs and extensions. Running costs were high and a list of accounts paid by the Factor on behalf of the Earl for the period 12 July to 10 October 1837 totalled over £2,200. Accounts for expenditure in the years 1837 to 1849 averaged £450 a year. Window Tax on 27 August 1847 was £29:5:4 for 93 windows.

A laundry was built to the east of the lodge in 1887 and a new boiler installed in 1911. The laundry functioned until 1938 when it was decided that all linen was to be sent to "the nearest best laundry" and the building made suitable for a dwelling house for one of the employees. It was finally demolished in 1962. Repairs to the stables, straw house and sheds were carried out in 1882. In 1883 the dining

Figure 2 *New Mar Lodge before 1893. Photograph by George Washington Wilson.*

room, hall and attic rooms were rebuilt and alterations made to the kitchen. In 1886 five new bedrooms were built for servants.

The Earl of Fife married HRH Princess Louise of Wales in 1889 and was created Duke of Fife in the same year. The Duke began to feel that because he was married to a Princess he would have to extend the accommodation at New Mar lodge. Plans were drawn up and work started on a substantial extension to the Cottage. It was during these works on 14 June 1895 that fire broke out in His Grace's private room and immediately spread to other parts of the building. The fire was quickly tackled by the workmen who were on site carrying out the improvements and help from Braemar was called for. A great deal was saved from the fire including furnishings and the ballroom.

After the fire it was decided not to replace Corriemulzie Cottage (ie New Mar Lodge) on its previous site but to build a replacement New Mar Lodge on the other side of the river Dee to the west of the existing Old Mar Lodge. The foundation stone of the new lodge was laid by Queen Victoria on 15 October 1895 – four months after the Corriemulzie fire. After completion in 1898 the Corriemulzie site was completely cleared and the ballroom and furnishings rescued

from the fire were moved to the new lodge and Old Mar Lodge demolished.

Many of the buildings associated with Corriemulzie Cottage became derelict but some were later restored for use as holiday homes or permanent residences. These include the Roaring Stag, which was the hospital, Dairy Cottage which was used as a bothy for gillies in the stalking season, and the Estate Office, built in 1897, which was part used as the Factor's Office. An ice house to the rear of the Factor's Office was filled in as it became very dangerous, especially for children. The ice house was built in 1898 by a Charles McDougall who was paid 5/6d a day plus one gallon of whisky costing 18/- for the men storing the ice. There is no trace of the Eagle House where a live eagle was caged.

Around this time hydro-electric power became a possibility and the Earl was anxious to see if electricity could be provided by this means, albeit for lighting only. Various sites were investigated, including a burn at the back of Old Mar Lodge and some sources in Glen Quoich but the site chosen was on the Corriemulzie burn. There was a suitable hollow below Braegarie to act as a reservoir and from there a steep drop down to the river Dee to provide a head of water. Unfortunately the reservoir proceeded to silt up and there was generally not enough water to provide electricity. The power station was housed in a small concrete building and the water was carried to it in a pipe which still works but the machinery has been removed. The output was so poor that it had to be used to charge up batteries which were then used when lighting was required. The estate manager who lived in the Estate Office, was allowed to use the electricity but only if the Princess was not in residence. The scheme was not much of a success and it was not long before petrol generators were introduced to Mar Lodge. Eventually the hydro-electric scheme was allowed to fall into disrepair but the dam built in 1898 is still there with its pond behind it.

Access to the Corriemulzie Falls and the summer house which was at its foot, has been a continuing problem right up to the present day. In 1908 a notice was placed at its entrance 'Parties using the path do so on their own responsibility' and in 1928 the steps were in such a bad condition that they were closed to the public. They have now been repaired and it is again possible to get right down to the old

Figure 3 *Corriemulzie Falls.*

power station. There is no trace of the summer house which is shown in an etching of the Corriemulzie Falls and is named on the 1866 OS map, (Fig. 3).

Mention must be made of places in the Corriemulzie area not directly connected with New Mar Lodge. In the west we have Milldorach Cottage and its adjacent workshop which was the home

of John Lamont, a taxidermist, and locally known as 'the stuffer'. He was responsible for the presentation of many of the antler heads in the Stag Ballroom at the present day Mar Lodge

To the east, below the ruins of Arderg at the river side is Father Farquharson's Seat, a carved stone dated 1785, (Fig. 4). It relates to a Roman Catholic priest who administered to those of the old faith in the Braemar area following the 1745 uprising. A Mass was held in the ruins of Arderg Cottage in 1965 on the Feast of the Assumption to commemorate the works of Father Farquharson in preserving the Catholic Faith.

Figure 4 *Father Farquharson's seat, Arderg. Photograph by Graham Ewen.*

There were 19 households in Corriemulzie in 1696, dropping to 10 in 1785 and rising to 18 in the period 1841 to 1901. The reason for the nineteenth century increase has been explained by the Earl of Fife's move from Old Mar Lodge to New Mar Lodge around 1829. From the 1841 Census there were 3 households in Braegarie, 8 in Corriemulzie and 2 in Arderg. The 1911 Census shows 2 households in Braegarie, 7 in Corriemulzie, 1 in Alltchlair and 2 at Arderg.

Today there are few permanent households, but one of note is Inverey House built in 1986 for Captain Ramsay and Lady Saltoun, owners of the Mar Estate. Another permanent household is Bourtree in Inverey, the home of Norman and Betty Robertson. Norman became an Honorary Member of the Cairngorm Club in January 2014 to acknowledge his many years as 'man on spot' and fixer of all things that go wrong at Muir Cottage. (See page 258).

The present Braegarrie, built in 1900, was sold in a very dilapidated condition to Cairngorm Club members Richard and Gill Shirreffs in 1982. During renovation many old wooden box drains were unearthed.

This concludes Graham's series of articles about the Mar and Mar Lodge Estates. We acknowledge the assistance given by the staff of Aberdeen University Special Collections who gave access to the Duff House Papers and also wish to thank Captain Nicolson and the late Betty Lobban for permission to publish extracts from private papers held by them.

Where is this? Answer in the next Newsletter.

Cairngorm Club Newsletters

Richard Shirreffs

The October 2013 Club Newsletter posed a question "How are we doing?" and invited comment on whether the format of the Newsletter could be improved. This had me realising just how much the Club Newsletter, and more especially the means of producing and distributing it, had changed during the 25 years when I was responsible for it as Club Secretary (1972 to 1997), with this possibly scarcely known outside the Shirreffs household. So, for any historical interest that it may have, this is what I remember now.

When I took over from Eric Johnston in 1972, the Newsletter, then two issues a year, was professionally printed. The secretary had to assemble clean typed copy, take it to the printers (no disks, no e-mails, not even faxes in those days) and then await a proof for checking before the printing was done. The secretary also had to organise addressed envelopes and take them to the printers, who then added the printed material and dealt with the posting. Eric, I think, relied on handwriting the addresses on the envelopes, but I invented a primitive form of labelling based on a typed master list.

In 1972 the only way (at least for me) to assemble clean copy for the printers was to type it with a manual typewriter – and to retype it if it had to be changed. I did my own typing for quite a time, but later (perhaps when electric typewriters came on the scene) I managed to enlist help at the office. Later still, electric typewriters evolved into word processors, with which one had the luxury of savings one's work for sprucing up or adding to later, and taking a fair copy when it was all ready. This brought the added benefit that the material which recurred from year to year could be regenerated with just a little editing, no wholesale blitz of fresh typing.

Somewhere along the line, possibly in the early 1980s, I acquired a BBC B computer, with all of 32KB of memory, but this was still no help with generating Newsletter material, as my printed output was limited to a dot matrix printer. Later though, after moving on to one of the successors of the BBC B, I had a desktop publishing facility at my disposal, and an enhanced printer, and I could generate presentable printed output, with occasional boxes or even images,

that could be copied rather than printed. Before this we had in fact switched to professional photocopying, when our longstanding printers had closed down and the firm which took over did not last long.

The addressing of envelopes followed a different course of evolution. Quite early on I managed to get a mailing version of the members' list typed in a three-column format on foolscap paper. For a mailing I would take a copy of this list (with the original preserved intact), guillotine the copy sheets into three columns, and then cut these by scissors or guillotine to give "labels" which were laboriously sellotaped onto the envelopes. As members were added or deleted or changed address, the superseded entries in my master list were struck out and the new ones added at the end – until such time as the list became too unwieldy and time could be found to retype it. The advent of office word processors might have helped simplify this form of list-keeping, but in fact that was where my BBC B or its successor came into its own. Having learned how to do programming in BBC Basic I devised a program with which, even within the severe memory constraints of the machine, I could record all of my membership info (including extras such as membership type, years of admission and past or current committee service) and print (at first with the old dot matrix printer and continuous stationery and then with something better) simple lists with as much or as little information as I wanted, and, most importantly in relation to Newsletters, name and address labels. I was in fact rather proud of my little program, which underwent constant enhancement in conjunction with me generating a counterpart for domestic purposes, and in many ways went beyond anything that I can achieve now with standard packages such as Word or Excel.

During all this time, there was little if any conscious thought of reviewing the content or presentation of the Newsletter. The main thing was to produce it, covering what it had to cover, in a way that was within the resources available, and to get it out when it was needed. The resources and production methods have changed enormously since I was doing the Newsletter and I am sure that they will continue to change in years to come, but aside from that there seems to be no cause to change for change's sake.

CLUB NEWS

THE PRESIDENT

James Friend was elected President in November 2014. He has kindly provided a summary of his background and his thoughts about the Club.

I was born and brought up in Edinburgh, the youngest of three boys, and my childhood days included many family walks in the Pentlands. My first venture to the north-east was in 1947 on a family holiday at the Gordon Arms, Kincardine O'Neil. During the holiday I ascended my first Munro, Lochnagar, in a major heat wave. In my teenage years I was involved in a hill-walking club at school, with trips to bag Munros at half-term holidays in February, June and November. The winter trips were usually by bus to stay in youth hostels, and in summer to camp, and indeed one of the first summer trips involved camping at the foot of Ben Dorain, which later gave its name to the Club.

After medical training and the start of family life with Elizabeth, (also later a Cairngorm Club member), I got my hospital consultant job in Aberdeen in 1973. For some 10 years I was a member of an informal group of up to a dozen hill walkers who went out every month, but the group shrank as some people left Aberdeen, and so I joined the Cairngorm Club. Since then I have taken part in just about every sort of activity the Club has undertaken, apart from rock climbing!

Over the years Elizabeth and I attended many of the bus meets, weekend meets, dinners, and ceilidh dances, and have greatly enjoyed them all. Very sadly Elizabeth died in 2005, but her lively and caring approach to life, her humour, and her laugh, will not be forgotten.

More recently I was asked to take responsibility for Piper's Wood in Glen Ey, and for the 125th anniversary of the Club the area was doubled by the installation of further fencing, financed by generous Club members. I joined the Committee in 2012, and was very surprised and moved to find myself being elected to the Presidency.

Reading again the History of the Club, so well described by Sheila Murray in her book marking the Centenary in 1987, I am impressed by the heritage which we all share in the Club and the commitment of so many over the years to help us all benefit from the good fellowship and the joys of walking our wonderful hills. The combination of being able to experience that beauty, the physical challenge and exercise in wonderful surroundings and great company is one of the most precious benefits of living, as far as I am concerned. So as Club members we have the duty (and the pleasure) of keeping it all going for each other and those who follow. I hope that I can contribute as much as I can as your latest President, though I know that I shall struggle to match up to my illustrious predecessors.

James Friend

Honorary President: Dr Ruth Payne

At the 2014 AGM, Ruth Payne was elected to the Honorary Presidency of the Club, just in time to mark her 50 years of Club membership. Joining the Club in 1965, she served as an "ordinary" member of the Committee for no fewer than six periods (1968-71, 1975-78, 1979-81, 1986-89, 2004-07 and 2009-12), and also as Vice-President 1981-84. She also acted as custodian for the BMC Hut in Glenbrittle: not exactly convenient to Aberdeen!

Ruth has always been a doughty walker, often braving the Scottish elements in her shorts and sandals, and not averse to the occasional dip into an inviting pool! She has a particular liking for Muir, using it not only as a personal base but as a suitable point to introduce generations of international visitors (often students at Aberdeen University, where she was a lecturer in Physiology for many years) to the Scottish outdoors and in particular the Cairngorms.

In recent years, as well as attending many of the Club's regular meets, she has maintained the Club's popular "Dander and Lunch" events by which less active but highly social members can meet and eat at a suitable locale near Aberdeen. These are squeezed into her apparently frenetic programme of post-retirement international travel, which has included no fewer than 24 countries illustrated by her own slides at a recent indoor meet, for example Turkey, Peru, Patagonia, and (several times!) Mongolia.

Honorary Member: Norman Robertson

At the 2013 AGM, Honorary Membership of the Club was conferred on Norman Robertson, who joined the Club in 1978 at about the time he began to act as unofficial Muir Custodian from his home in Inverey. From there, Norman was often called upon *in extremis* by both Club and non-Club visitors to put things right, often using his professional skills as an electrician.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE CLUB

GENERAL MEETINGS

On 13 November 2013, Special and Annual General Meetings were held in succession at the Aberdeen Grammar School Former Pupils Club Centre in Aberdeen, 31 members attending. The Committee had called the SGM to consider the following additional clause to the Club's Constitution: *'The Committee shall have discretionary power to make representations or financial contributions to other bodies in pursuit of the Club's objects.*' This was agreed, only 1 vote dissenting.

At the AGM, the following were re-elected as Office-Bearers: Adrian Scott (President), Sandy McIntosh (Vice-President), Derek Pinches (Vice-President), Ken Thomson (Secretary), Derek Pinches (Treasurer), Kees Witte (Hut Custodian), Derek Beverley (Day Meets Secretary), Chris Wilson (Climbing Secretary), Marj Ewan (Weekend Meets Secretary), and Colin Brown (Communications Secretary), with no nominations for the posts of Honorary President (in view of the very recent death of Graham Ewen) or Social Activities Secretary (although Anne Pinches agreed subsequently to carry on in this role). The following were elected to "ordinary" membership of the Committee: Sue Chalmers (Ordinary), James Friend (Ordinary), Stan Urbaniak (Ordinary), Garry Wardrope (Ordinary), Donna Ryan (Ordinary), Alex Barbour (Associate), Ross Littlewood (Associate).

The Treasurer reported that Club membership stood at 414 (1 down from the previous year), and that the bank account stood at £112, 000 including the Willie Robb Bequest (see below). The main Club subscription rate was kept at £13, plus £14.25 for the MCofS.

Apart from reports of Meets etc. (see below), the main AGM item of interest was the announcement that the Club had recently been notified of the bequest of £40,336.44 from the estate of the late Willie Robb (see the Club Journal Vol. 22, No. 110, "In Memoriam" section). Over 20 options, some specific and some general, for the expenditure of this sum were discussed, and the incoming President undertook to see that the Committee would consider all these, with

more specific proposals brought forward for general Club consultation in 2014.

At the AGM held on 12 November 2014, 34 members attended, with the following elected as Office-Bearers: James Friend (President) in succession to Adrian Scott who stood down, and Jim Bryce (Weekend Meets Secretary) in succession to Marj Ewan. Garry Wardrope succeeded Derek Beverely who had served as Day Meets secretary for five years. Other Office-Bearers being re-elected. The following were elected to vacant Ordinary membership of the Committee: Sue Chalmers (Ordinary), Euan Docherty (Associate), Marj Ewan (Ord), Robert Fox (Ord), Benn Hitchen (Ord), Ruth Payne (Ord), Stan Urbaniak (Ord) and Marion White (Ord).

The Treasurer reported that Club membership stood at 406 (8 down from the previous year), and that the bank account stood at £111,266 including the Willie Robb Bequest. The main Club subscription rate was once again kept at £13, plus £14.25 for the MCofS. Most discussion revolved around the Willie Robb Bequest, for which slides were shown describing the Committee's work on this over the past year. This had included investigating and short listing 5 "main options", including a second club hut, a footbridge at Derry Lodge (an option significantly affected by the destruction of the existing footbridge during the floods of August 2014), tree planting at Altanour in Glen Ey, a bike shed at Muir, and (further) financial support for Club Meets. These options had been put to the membership for consultation in May/June 2014, and further investigations carried out since then on three (the bike shed having been erected out of general funds, and the meets support option having been discarded). However, for various reasons, namely the lack of a suitable hut site, uncertainty over the NTS position at Derry Lodge and the lack of a response from the estate at Altanour, no actual Bequest spend had yet occurred. Adrian Scott proposed an immediate decision to allocate the Bequest to a Grant Fund, whose interest would be used to support such causes as overseas expeditions. This provoked considerable discussion, which also covered the options previously explored, and the propriety of an immediate AGM decision. In the end, it was agreed that the Grant Fund idea should be considered by the Committee, while other options remained on the table.

MEETS AND EXCURSIONS

DAY MEETS

Derek Beverley was Day Meets Secretary for the period under review, and reported as follows at the 2013 and 2014 AGMs. In *2012-13*, a total of 121 participants had attended such meets, to which the Club had contributed a total of £348. In *2013-14*, 135 had participated, with a net Club contribution of £535. Travel modes had included hired coaches (at a cost approaching £500 per trip, though one shared), service buses, the Westhill Community minibus driven by a Club member, shared cars, and train (to Inverurie). He then stood down after 5 years in his post, and was heartily thanked for his work.

	2013	2014
January	Lochnagar (coach)	Lochnagar (coach)
February	Cairngorm Northern Corries (car)	Sgor Gaoith & Mullach Clach a' Bhlair (cars)
March	Ben Chonzie (minibus)	Northern Corries (minibus)
April	Cruach Ardrain Traverse (minibus)	Glen Shee (shared coach)
May	Ben Wyvis Traverse (minibus)	Mona Gowan/Morven Traverse (minibus)
June	Morvich to Glen Affric (minibus; overnighter)	Knoydart (minibus and boat; overnighter)
July	Ben Lawers (cars)	-
August	Glen Geusachan & Beinn Bhrotain (cars)	Glen Muick to Glen Clova (minibus)
September	Cairngorm Traverse (shared coach)	Cairngorm Traverse (coach)
October	Eastern Glen Cluanie (cars)	Ben Vrackie and Ben Vuirich (minibus)
November	Glen Callater (minibus)	Ladder Hills (minibus)
December	Glen Esk (minibus)	Derry Cairngorm (minibus)

WEEKEND MEETS

Over the two years under review, Marj Ewan acted as Week-end Meets Secretary until resigning in May 2013 for personal reasons, after which Jim Bryce took over. In *2012-13*, there were 11 such meets, most of which broke even. Week-end Meet charges to members had been capped at £15 pppn. In *2013-14*, with the same number of meets, there had been a considerable Club contribution, of £801, mostly due to losses at Ariundle.

	2013	2014
January	Muir Cottage (Burns Night)	Muir Cottage (Burns Night)
February	Highland Hostel, Newtonmore	Roybridge Hostel
March	Blackwater Hostel, Kinlochleven	Aviemore Bunkhouse
April	Blackrock Cottage, Glencoe	Kinlochewe Hotel Bunkhouse
May	Gairloch Carn Dearg SYH	Ariundle Bunkhouse, Strontian
June	Coruisk Memorial Hut, Skye	Sail Mhor Croft, Dundonnell
July	Cairndow Hall, Arrochar	Strawberry Cottage, Glen Affric
August	CIC Hut, Ben Nevis	Naismith Hut, Elphin
September	Newlands, Lake District	Portnalong, Skye
October	Glencoe Independent Hostel	Inverardran Cottage, Crianlarich
November	Bye the Way Hostel, Tyndrum	Raeburn Hut, Laggan

OVERSEAS MEETS

Austria: in September 2013, 9 members plus a guest spent a week based at Kaprun near Zell am See on the edge of the Hohe Tauern National Park, with splendid views of the nearby Kitzsteinhorn (3203m) and the Groszglockner (3798m) above the Kaprun Dam.

Dolomites: in July 2014, 14 members based themselves in Corvara, and explored the area's many *via ferrata*, walking paths and historic sites. The meet was splendidly organized by Adrian Scott, (see page 182).

MID-WEEK WALKS

Arthur Dickie continued to supervise these popular Thursday walks during the review period. Attendance ranged from 8 to 32, and conditions from splendid to very wet indeed (e.g. Glen Tanar!).

	2013	**2014**
January	Craibstone/Tyrebagger	Inverbervie Coastal
February	Kincorth/Tullos Hills	Strathfinella Hill
March	Fungle/Baudy Meg	Fetteresso Forest
April	Glen Dye/Clatterin' Brig	Carn na Drochaide
May	Brown Cow Hill	Glen Buchat
June	Hill of Wirren	Glen Callater/Creag nan Gabhar
July	Culardoch	Carn Ealasaid
August	Boddam/Cruden Bay	Sandy Hillock
September	Burnt Hill	Glen Girnock
October	Gannoch	Mormond Hill
November	Pannanich Hill	Glen Tanar
December	-	Bennachie

CLIMBING

Chris Wilson acted as Secretary for this aspect of the Club's activities during the period under review. Summer activities continued as before, i.e. weekly evening visits to various coastal locales, with occasional forays inland to Ballater or to the sport-climbing quarries in Angus. The summer evening meets continued to

be popular, with average numbers around 10 club members. The meets continue to attract new members who have limited climbing experience and are looking to climb with experienced local climbers. At the weekends there were trips to both local crags and some that are too far away for evening meets, e.g. Glen Clova and Logiehead. During the winters most activities switched to the indoor climbing walls at the RGU (in 2012/13) and Transition Extreme. On the regular Club weekend meets, Club climbers completed a varied collection of routes on inland crags, sea cliffs and mountains.

DANDERS

Ruth Payne once again organized these events for (mostly) less active members, with a short walk followed by a convivial lunch at a suitable nearby location. Venues included Brimmond/Kirkhill, Drum Castle/Mains, and Kinord/Dinnet.

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

These continued under the capable management of Anne Pinches, though at the 2014 AGM she announced her impending withdrawal from this role.

ANNUAL DINNERS

Two Dinners were held since the last issue of the Journal, one at the Old Mill Inn, Maryculter, on 22 November 2013, and the other (after the Old Mill was closed in advance of the Aberdeen Western Peripheral) at the Treetops Hotel, Aberdeen. They featured speakers as follows:

18 November 2013: Phil Glennie described the development and work of the Braemar Mountain Rescue Team

21 November 2014: the well-known adventure cameraman Keith Partridge - of "Touching the Void" fame - provided a gripping audio-visual presentation covering several of his trips, including scenes from an awe-inspiring cave in South America.

INDOOR MEETS

(* indicates presentations by one or more Club members)

2013
January: Members' Night*
February: Viktor Musial* – *Kilimanjaro Adventure*
March: Neil Cromar* – *Good Days in the Hills*

October: Heather Morning – *Mountain Safety*
December: Ruth Payne* – *With Passport and Pension*

2014
January: Members' Night*
February: Eric Johnston* – *Climbing and the Cairngorm Club*
March: Linda di Maio – *Portrait of Bhutan*

October: Murray Swapp – *The Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust*
December: Richard and Gill Shirreffs* – *Walking in Greece*

In addition, a barbecue was held at Templars Park, Maryculter, in June 2013, and a meal at the Old Mill Hotel in June 2014. Finally, Garry Wardrope organized a "Helpers' Evening" in March 2014 in the form of a downtown meal provided for non-Committee members who had assisted the Club over the previous couple of years.

COMMUNICATIONS

Colin Brown continued as Communications Secretary during the period under review, maintaining the Club's website www.cairngormclub.org.uk, and the Members' Forum which increased from 122 to 160 members, (involving 614 topics increasing to over 850, and from 3100 individual posts rising to 4900). He also managed The Yahoo! email system, produced three Newsletters each year, and saw to the monthly updating of Club Meets posters for display at shops, libraries, etc.

MUIR COTTAGE

Muir has continued to be very popular, with about 2000 bed-nights booked per year at charges maintained at £10 pppn (£5 for Members). It brought in revenue of £15,000 (2013) and £19,000 (2014) before routine costs, which approximate £5,000. Work Weekends timed to follow a local Mid-Week Walk in April or May have also proved successful, and, other than the usual cleaning and painting, have included drain repairs at the north-east corner, the reconstruction of part of the southern boundary dyke, and the planting (in 2014) of a few locally "acquired" tree seedlings near that dyke.

In 2013, the aging Vigilant wood-burning stove in the lounge was replaced with an efficient modern one (a Clearview Vision), and a stainless steel flue installed. This has approximately halved the consumption of firewood, whose supplier has recently switched from Invercauld to Mar Lodge. In the slated roof some deterioration was discovered in the wooden sarking, and bad sections were replaced. The plastic northern gutters proved incapable of coping with voluminous snow, and are now routinely removed for the winters.

In 2014 solar thermal panels, of 1200 KWh/yr capacity, were installed on the roof above the Members' Room, and a new hot water tank installed. Loft insulation was also laid above the common room, and LED light bulbs installed with a £300 Green Deal subsidy. All this has significantly reduced the Muir electricity bills, and in addition about £250 per year is being received under the government's Renewable Heat Incentive scheme. Also in 2014, a new shed for mountain bikes and the storage of paint and spares, was constructed to the north of the main building, leaving the old sheds fully available for firewood.

The Botany of the Piper's Wood Extension, Glen Ey, 2013

Ian Francis

Mr Ian Francis, Vice-County Recorder, South Aberdeenshire, for the Botanical Society of Britain & Ireland, was asked by the Club to undertake a baseline survey of the newly fenced-off area above Piper's Wood, which the Club established in the late 1980s. The main text of his report is reproduced below in slightly edited form. A full version of the report, which contains a number of Appendices with photographs, is available on the Club's members-only Forum, or from the Club Secretary.

Introduction

In 1989, an area of 1.7 ha (4.3 acres) was fenced off to begin a woodland regeneration project at Piper's Wood in Glen Ey, on Mar Estate near Braemar (NO098857). This marked the centenary of the Cairngorms Club. Originally this enclosed around 16 large birch trees, which were to act as seed sources. The background to the project is given by Martin (1991). Dr Heather Salzen, then Vice-County Recorder for this area, undertook a detailed botanical survey of the site in 1989 before regeneration began, and recorded 88 species of plant (Salzen, 1991). She made further surveys in 1993, 1996 and 1998, all of which were published in this *Journal*, and a further article (Salzen, 2001) summarised the first decade of change. However, no further surveys have been undertaken since then. With the Club celebrating 125 years in 2012, Mar Estate gave permission for a further enclosure adjacent to Piper's Wood. I was invited to undertake a baseline botanical survey of the new area prior to enclosure so that this can be followed up over subsequent years, (see map page 271).

In 2013 I visited the extension area three times, on 25 May, 3 August and 1 December, and surveyed the vegetation. I also visited the existing regenerating Piper's Wood and made a few notes, though the aim was not to resurvey this part. This report summarises the general baseline state of the extended woodland

area in terms of a brief description, numerous photographs and a comprehensive plant list for the newly-fenced area.

Survey results for the extension area

The extension area is largely dry tussocky grass-heath, dominated by Heather at around 60% cover, with dry and wet acid grassland covering c.35%. This is composed of *Agrostis-Festuca* communities with a high sedge component. Several runnels cover c.5% of the area – these are rocky and sedge-rich. There are scattered rocks across the area. The area is heavily grazed by deer and only c.15 very small Birch (*Betula pubescens*) seedlings were found in the extension area, near the main runnels up hill in the east. This provides a very clear baseline against which to assess future tree colonisation!

Aerial imagery of the wood, prior to fencing the extension area (imagery dates not known but possibly 2005 for one image), provides some visual background to the future changes which will occur. The plants found in the survey (see list below) total 80 species. Most notable amongst them was Field Gentian *Gentianella campestris*, which was also noted by Heather Salzen in the original Piper's Wood area. No other particularly uncommon species was found, though the flora is quite diverse, and there are a number of species present which indicate base-rich influence, especially associated with the runnels. Some of these were sedge-rich and visually attractive, especially those along the old fence line. The general sward height was low, which is not surprising given the presence of large numbers of deer for much of the year.

It is certain that, in the absence of deer grazing (now excluded), these open, flower- and sedge-rich flushes will become overgrown (as happened in the existing Piper's Wood), and in the short term the ground vegetation will become much taller and probably less diverse. As tree species colonise and woodland plants become established, the balance of the vegetation will change, with the arrival of new species, as happened in the original enclosure, and documented by Heather Salzen.

The existing Piper's Wood

I did not undertake any re-survey work in the existing woodland. However, the area was visited briefly, and three small live Scots Pines (each c.4m high) were noted in the enclosure, along with 8 large live Birch trees and several large dead birches. Originally in 1989, 16 large birch trees were present in the first exclosure, with other tree seedlings repressed; the regeneration after 25 years is clear. By 2001, 11 large birches were present, and four small Scots Pines (Salzen 2001).

Observations of fauna in 2013

On all visits, the following species were seen:

In the extension area: Meadow Pipit, Small Tortoiseshell, Toad.

Present in or over the surrounding area: Common Sandpiper, Ring Ouzel, Wheatear, Willow Warbler, Chaffinch, Snipe, Curlew, Oystercatcher, Dipper, Grey Wagtail, Raven, Kestrel, Golden Eagle.

Moles, Mountain Hare. Red Deer – 20 nearby on May visit, 70 hinds plus young present nearby on August visit, 92 seen on December visit.

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Salzen, H. 1991 Piper's Wood, Glen Ey. *Cairngorm Club Journal* Vol. 20, no. 102, pp. 9-17.

Salzen H. 1993-1998. Three further update reports published in the *Cairngorm Club Journal*.

Salzen, H. 2001. Piper's Wood, Glen Ey: the first decade. *Cairngorm Club Journal,* Vol. 21 no. 106, pp.60-62.

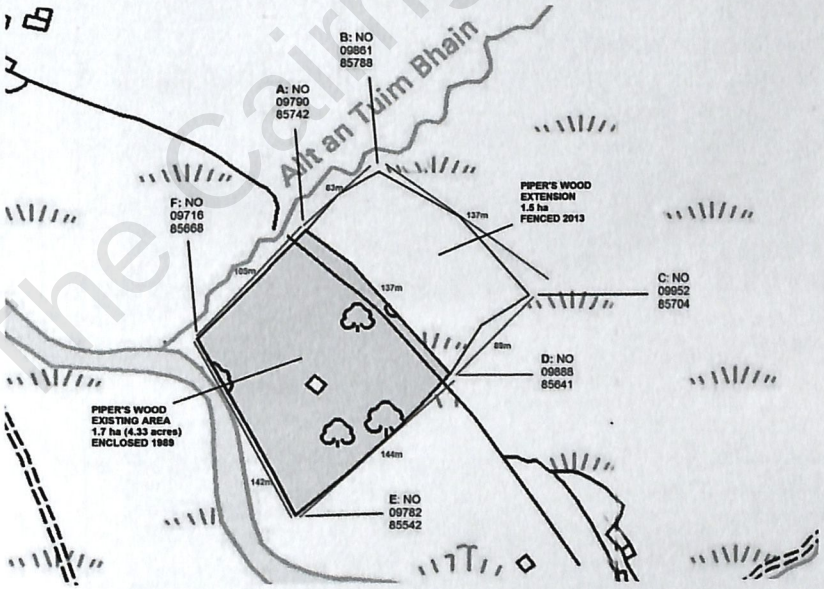
List of the 80 species recorded in the Piper's Wood extension zone before and immediately after the erection of the exclosure fence in summer 2013.

The 'DAFOR' scale is used below – a subjective assessment of the relative abundance of the different species in the area: D = Dominant; A = Abundant; F = Frequent; O = Occasional; R = Rare

Achillea millefollium	O	Achillean ptarmica	R
Agrostis canina sens. lat.	F	Agrostis capillaris	O
Anemone nemorosa	O	Antennaria dioica	R
Anthoxanthum odoratum	A	Betula pubescens	R
Briza media	F	Calluna vulgaris	D
Campanula rotundifolia	O	Cardamine flexuosa	R
Cardamine pratensis	O	Carex binervis	F
Carex demissa	R	Carex dioica	R
Carex echinata	F	Carex flacca	O
Carex hostiana	O	Carex nigra	F
Carex panacea	F	Carex pulicaris	R
Cerastium fontanum	R	Cirsium arvense	R
Cirsium heterophyllum	R	Dactylorhiza maculate	R
Dactylorhiza purpurella	R	Danthonia decumbens	R
Deschampsia flexuosa	R	Drosera rotundifolia	R
Erica cinerea	O	Erica tetralix	O
Eriophorum angustifolium	O	Euphrasia officinalis agg.	F
Festuca ovina	O	Festuca vivipara	O
Galium saxatile	F	Galium verum	O
Gentianella campestris	R	Helianthemum nummularium	O
Hypericum pulchrum	R	Juncus articulates	O
Juncus bufonius sens. lat.	R	Juncus bulbosus	O
Juncus effuses	O	Juncus squarrosus	R
Lathyrus pratensis	R	Lotus corniculatus	O
Luzula campestris	O	Luzula multiflora	O
Molinia caerulea	F	Nardus stricta	O
Narthecium ossifragum	F	Pedicularis palustris	O
Pedicularis sylvatica	O	Persicaria vivipara	O
Pilosella officinarum	O	Pinguicula vulgaris	O
Plantago lanceolata	F	Polygala serpyllifolia	O

Potentilla erecta	F	Prunella vulgaris	O
Ranunculus acris	F	Ranunculus flammula	O
Rumex acetosa	O	Salix repens	F
Saxifraga aizoides	R	Senecio jacobaea	R
Solidago virgaurea	R	Succisa pratensis	F
Taraxacum agg.	R	Thymus polytrichus	O
Trientalis europaea	R	Trifolium pratense	R
Trifolium repens	R	Triglochin palustris	R
Vaccinium myrtillus	O	Vaccinium vitis-idaea	O
Viola palustris	O	Viola riviniana	O

Map of Piper's Wood and extension. The extension area (surveyed in 2013 and reported here) is the clear area to the right of the established wood. The points labelled A to F show the 10-figure GPS references.



IN MEMORIAM

The Club notes with regret the deaths of the following members since the publication of the previous Journal (with dates of admission to the Club and of Club service and type of Club membership).

William Barlow (1973, Ordinary, Com 77-80, 89-92)

John Clegg (1980, Ordinary)

Roger Cookson (2013, Associate)

Jean Downie (1975, Ordinary Life)

Graham Ewen (1966, Honorary, Bus Sec 67-03, VP 77-80, Hon Pres 09-13)

Geoffrey Hadley (2006, Associate)

John Hargreaves (1978, Ordinary Life)

Carol Henderson (2005, Associate)

Michael Hewitt (2003, Ordinary)

Sheila Lowit (1975, Associate)

Ian Spence (1982, Ordinary, Com 72-75,76-78)

BILL BARLOW

Bill was born in 1925 on a farm near Auchterless in Aberdeenshire, the son of a farm worker and one of a family of 10. He left Auchterless school at 14, becoming an apprentice electrician. In his twenties he sustained a back injury at work which required surgery, after which he was unable to continue as an electrician.

Bill then studied successfully for 'Highers', going on to achieve a degree in chemistry at Aberdeen University. After a short spell teaching in schools he moved to Aberdeen Technical College. He was a very active member of the teachers' union and for his work as General Secretary for the north east he was made a Fellow of the Educational Institute of Scotland, an honour of which he was immensely proud.

Bill joined the Cairngorm Club in 1973 and it was during a spell on the committee that Bill, with others, was instrumental in developing the weekend meets as we know them today. Prior to this time there was only one weekend meet per year at Easter and the accommodation was always in a hotel. It was through the Club that Bill met Dot Batchelor and they became best friends completing their Munros together in 1985 with Bill, by this time, enjoying the benefit of an artificial hip. He set out to do a round on the new hip and got within 30 of the target.

On 7 July 1977 Bill, along with Murray Smith, completed the six high tops of the Cairngorms. Leaving Muir Cottage at 2 am, they spent an incredible day covering 30 miles and over 10,000 feet of ascent, starting with Cairn Toul and finishing on Ben Avon. The day was hot and sunny but interrupted in the afternoon by a fierce thunderstorm, complete with huge hailstones. They returned to Muir at around 4 pm, totally elated. Bill also walked and climbed with Ian Spence covering much of the Cuillin Ridge including a number of tops.

Bill and Dot spent several walking holidays in Europe, climbing the highest peaks in several of the European mountain ranges including Mount Olympus. On a trip to the USA they also climbed Mount Washington.

It is true to say that Bill had a bit of a competitive streak, especially when walking with Duncan Macrae-Gibson. Each

pretended that it didn't matter who got to the top first but it was amusing to watch from behind – always from behind – and see who managed to touch the cairn first!

Bill was also interested in local history and geology, interests he pursued mainly while waiting for the operation on his hip. In later years as his mobility decreased he was unable to get to his beloved hills. However he still kept active, walking every day, and was always interested in other people's exploits in the hills. Bill died in December 2013.

Anne Pinches

JEAN DOWNIE

Jean (nee Smith) was born in Buckie, on the 25th of April, 1931. From an early age she showed both musical talent and academic ability at school. She passed the Grade eight examination in piano and singing. As a teenager she played the organ at the Episcopalian Church in Buckie and, in the evenings, piano in a local dance band. However her main talent lay in singing and after winning a competition in the Aberdeen Music Festival she broadcast a song recital from the BBC Beechgrove studio, at the age of nineteen. From that Jean progressed to be the leading soprano in the St.Machar's Cathedral choir. At the same time she was heading for a science-based career. In 1951 she graduated BSc from Aberdeen University (physics, maths, geology), then qualified as a teacher and embarked on her first job at Aberdeen Girls High School in 1952. Thereafter she taught at the Middle Secondary School, Gallowgate, The Convent of the Sacred Heart Secondary School, Queen's Cross and joined Aberdeen Grammar School, then Rubislaw Academy, in 1971. Two years later Jean became Assistant Rector and retired in 1990.

In 1957 Jean married George Downie, a geologist at Aberdeen University and together they travelled extensively – to Iceland, Greenland, Arctic Norway, Antarctica, Austria, Italy and Spain. They also went to Zambia, Zimbabwe and in the USA to Montana and the Grand Canyon. Many of these trips involved high level walking, in

Zimbabwe and Sweden for example, and cross country skiing in Norway. Jean was a Life Member of the Cairngorm Club from 1975 and with George walked and skied extensively in the Cairngorms. She also shared George's enthusiasm for Scottish Country Dancing.

Throughout her teaching career Jean's singing developed, culminating in the operatic roles of Papagena in the Magic Flute, Susanna in the Marriage of Figaro, Fiordiligi in Cosi fan Tuti and the solo soprano part in the Messiah, the latter performed in the Music Hall, Aberdeen.

In retirement her interest in gardening extended to an allotment and she also took up painting. Jean died in May 2013 after a long illness. She was a remarkable Renaissance Woman whose intelligence, warmth and empathy made her an outstanding teacher and friend.

George Downie and Angus Aitken

GRAHAM EWEN

In Graham's death on 7 November 2013, at the age of 73, the Club has lost a member who followed his father (Bill Ewen) in serving the Club for several decades, as recognised first by Honorary Membership, and then the Honorary Presidency from 2009. Graham formally joined the Club in 1966, but was in fact a well-known if diminutive participant in its activities long before that, as he and his younger brother Innes accompanied his father and family on holidays and working parties at Derry Lodge, Muir and elsewhere on Deeside.

Graham was born in Torphins, grew up in Aberdeen, and attended Mile End School and then Robert Gordon's College. He took a degree in geography at Aberdeen University, and went on to become a schoolteacher in the city, actively engaged in outdoor education. His indoor interests included the Aberdeen Bridge Club (where a trophy is named after him), and genealogy via the local Family History Society.

Only a year after joining the Club, Graham became the Club's Bus Meets Secretary, a post he held for a record 36 years. He also

served as Vice-President between 1977 and 1980. His long reign as Bus Secretary not only made him a well-known figure amongst many members, but a mine of information on the road conditions and eating facilities of Deeside and elsewhere within range of Aberdeen. Always the last to leave the bus (for many years supplied by Swallow Tours of Old Aberdeen, with Mr Sandy Duguid at the wheel), he usually walked by himself, but was invariably at the vehicle early at the end of the day, even on A-to-B walks. The post involves occasional problems, such as travel uncertainties and late returners, but Graham's way of dealing with these was utterly reliable. Throughout most of his life – except, perhaps strangely, during his student years – he maintained a scrupulous set of notes on his hill walking activities: unlike his father, he was never a climber.

Many members have fond memories of Graham's long service to the Club. Here are three typical examples. "On Bus Meets Graham always occupied the same seat on the coach, a distinctive figure clad in decidedly retro hill walking clothes with rucksack to match. He quietly noted the departure and return of us all".

"One of my fond memories of Graham relates to his navigation abilities on the hills. He once confided, in typically pithy manner, how, on an overnight meet on the west coast in the '60s and at a critical summit, he had had to differ with two senior members of the Club on the route back. Graham, as he put it, got safely to the bus and his lunch, whilst the others got to Kinlochhourn and were left having to summon a taxi !"

The Editor records; when I was preparing the previous issue of the Journal, Graham was due to submit his article "The Moor of Inverey". He was ill and found it difficult to work, so as anyone would I waited and delayed publication. Then came word that the text was available so I telephoned to offer to collect it from Graham's house. Within no time at all Graham called at my house, looking very ill indeed and apologetically handed me the text and disc of his article. He died a few months later.

In his latter years, Graham spent much effort, often with Eddie Martin, researching the history of the Mar Estate from the Duff House Papers in Aberdeen University Library. The results of this work appeared in several articles in previous issues of this Journal and are listed below.

Appendix	volume (issue no)	year	pages
Inverey	19 (101)	1988	34-40
Glen Ey, a History	20 (103)	1994	86-94
Dalmore	20 (104)	1996	190-197
Allanaquoich	20 (105)	1999	324-334
Old Maps of the Cairngorms	21 (106)	2001	32-39
Inverey and the Farquharsons	21 (107)	2004	120-129
Inverey and the Duffs,	21 (108)	2007	243-251
Derry Lodge	21 (109)	2011	317-327
The Moor of Inverey	22 110)	2013	83-99
Corriemulzie (with Eddie Martin)	22 (111)	2015	246-253

The Ewen family have reprinted all these articles, with an Introduction by Graham's brother Innes, and additional photographs, in a well-produced book *Upper Deeside*, which can be obtained via the website blur.by/1s2ludx

Ken Thomson

GEOFFREY HADLEY

Geoff Hadley was born in Stoke-on-Trent in 1932. He graduated from Birmingham and Nottingham Universities and came to Aberdeen University in 1960 as Senior Lecturer in the Botany Department, where he specialised in Mycology (fungi). His caring approach to the students, and his enthusiasm, made him a greatly appreciated member of staff. He also entered local government as an Independent Councillor for Lower Deeside in 1973, going on to become Convener of Grampian Region from 1986 to 1990. Geoff became involved in many other activities as Chair of a number of Committees including the Grampian Heart Campaign, Aberdeen Civic Society, the Grampian Houston Association and many others. His personal interests included cycling, cricket, especially following the fortunes of his beloved England team, restoring old Volvo cars, and even at one time rebuilding his old house in Old Aberdeen. He edited the British Mycological Journal for some years and was

awarded MBE for his services to Mycology in 1999. For some years, before ill health limited his activities, he was an active member of the Cairngorm Club and attended many midweek walks. With his wide knowledge and warm approach to others he was always good company. He is greatly missed by his friends in this Club and, of course, by his three daughters and his widow Margaret.

James Friend.

JOHN HARGREAVES

John Hargreaves died peacefully at Glen o' Dee hospital in Banchory on the 14th February 2015. John was born in Colne in Lancashire in 1926 and met and married Sheila in 1950. After two years teaching History at Manchester University they travelled to Sierra Leone where he taught for two years at Fourah Bay College in Freetown.

The family, by then of four, travelled from West Africa to North East Scotland in 1954 where John took up a post as lecturer in History at Aberdeen University; he was later to become Professor and Dean of the Faculty of Arts.

John joined the Cairngorm Club in the mid fifties and Sheila joined him later. His love of the Scottish hills began with a trip to Poolewe when he was undergoing army training and grew throughout his life. John enjoyed many CC expeditions and weekend meets on his own, with Sheila and latterly with his daughter as well as numerous other expeditions in the hills.

John's final ascent of a Munro was in 1995 when he tackled Ben Wyvis with his daughter and three of her friends as part of the University's Quincentenary Munro Team Challenge. After this his neuropathy gradually made walking more and more difficult for him, but he valiantly continued to walk, first with sticks and then with arm crutches, before being confined to a wheelchair.

John's love of the hills is immortalised in his poetry.

Sara Hargreaves

CAROL HENDERSON

Carol Mary Henderson was born in Fonthill, Aberdeen on 26 March 1962 and she spent most of her life in the Aberdeen area. Carol trained and worked as a dental nurse, a job she loved. She was always ready to offer help to anyone in need and her cheery nature is something anyone one who knew her will always remember.

I met Carol at the Muir Family's Week in 2004 which she was attending as guest. She joined the Club the following year and was to become a regular at Burns' suppers and brought in several New Years at Muir as well as making it to quite a few of the day and weekend meets.

Carol started hill walking in her late teens, going on the Aberdeen Mountain Rescue Team sponsored walk with her mother. It was something she immediately took a liking for and soon became one of the regulars at the Braemar and Inverey youth hostels. She was also a keen cyclist, commuting between Westhill and Aberdeen, which saw her in good stead for a cycle tour of Yugoslavia at the beginning of the 90s. Latterly she took up paddling and much to her embarrassment, by virtue of being the only woman in an open canoe, managed to win the Ladies Open Boat trophy for the Dee Marathon, now known as the Carol Henderson Memorial Trophy.

After a break from hill walking to raise her son Calum, Carol's enthusiasm for the hills returned; Knoydart was probably one of her favourite places. She was less keen on exposed summits, such as those in the Cuillin of Skye, but she was nevertheless slowly ticking off the Munros, and achieved all but 19 of them. Carol died tragically in Westhill on 28th June 2013.

Garry Wardrope

MICHAEL HEWITT

Mike was born in Aldershot in May 1940. He came up to Aberdeen University in 1958 to study engineering and also joined the University's Officer Training Corps where he met his future wife Kath. On graduating in 1962 he joined the Torry Research Station in Aberdeen where he worked for a PhD. A post with Fishery Development Ltd. London, followed, but he returned to Aberdeen in 1982, joining Refrigeration Aberdeen, eventually becoming Managing Director. Freelance Consultancy followed, which, as with all his previous jobs, entailed extensive travel and projects with the World Bank.

Mike was always involved with the AUOTC and the Territorial Army, rising to the rank of Major. It was through these connections that he developed his outdoor interests of hill walking, skiing and sports shooting. Mike was also a keen golfer and an active member of Aberdeen Civic Society, acting as Chairman for a time. He was a member of a small, informal (some would say contrary) group of friends, several of whom he had met and trained through the AUOTC, which undertook many expeditions, all round Scotland and sometimes further afield. Mike was a stalwart of these meets. On one occasion, disregarding an operation on his foot, he accompanied the group up Munros with a sandal on the repaired foot, which allowed a steel pin to poke out of his big toe. He is also remembered with fondness for the way he undertook a foray up Kerloch to test his fitness after a triple heart bypass operation. Mike took all such setbacks in his stride, except one, passing the first pub unvisited after a day on the hill. Beware anyone who would suggest that!

Following the loss of some members from the group, its activity declined and some survivors joined the Cairngorm Club. Mike joined in 2003 and walked regularly on bus and weekend meets until his health failed. His last active attendance was on the Lochnagar meet in the January of 2013. He died suddenly but peacefully on December 29th 2013 at home. He is survived by his wife and three children, Kate and Deborah and Ross and four grandchildren.

Sandy McIntosh

SHEILA LOWIT

Sheila (O'Neill) was born in Edinburgh on 23rd August 1926. She met Ian at a harvest Summer camp after graduating as a Home Economics teacher and they married in 1951 at Morningside Church in Edinburgh. She was a keen Scottish country dancer and a fantastic cook. Shiela was a friend to everyone and a real home-maker for her family and any waifs and strays that she took under her wing. She joined the Cairngorm Club in 1975, two years after Ian.

She was not a dedicated hill walker and became even less enchanted after an overnighter in the pouring rain with Ian. Her interests were flora and fauna, but her passion was for cooking and catering for larger parties of people. For many years we had a family week at Muir the week before the beginning of the Autumn term. Each family cooked for one night and looked after the younger children while the parents ventured forth to the higher and distant hills. Sheila was the one who organised the menus to avoid having steak pie every night. In our younger days we had work weeks, as opposed to work weekends, to maintain and clean Muir Cottage. Again, Sheila was involved with the catering, producing tea and coffee at the appropriate times as well as working on hands and knees scrubbing the floor. Sheila valued the friendship and camaraderie that she found in the Club over the many years that she was a member. She died very suddenly on 26th April 2013 and is sadly missed by her husband Ian, children Peter, Michael and Gillian and by all those who were acquainted with her.

Eddie Martin

IAN SPENCE

Ian was born in Aberdeen in 1933. A pupil at Robert Gordon's College, he excelled in rugby and swimming, continuing these interests long after leaving school. He was a member of the Scottish swimming team which won the Bologna Trophy (1950, 1951) and of the British team in Turin at the European Championships(1954). He was also selected twice to play rugby for the Barbarians touring team in the 1963/64 season. (Founded in 1890, the Barbarians rugby team is assembled annually by invitation to play a selection of prestigious matches. The players have represented their country, but in each selection one uncapped player may be included, thus conferring a great honour on the individual).

Ian went to Jordanhill College and trained as a PE teacher, after which he signed on for 5 years in the RAF for his National Service where he learned to parachute. He was attached to the Parachute Regiment in Aldershot where he trained the soldiers, as well as managing to fit in about 100 jumps himself. After his service career Ian returned to Aberdeen in 1960 to teach PE at Aberdeen Academy and then Aberdeen Grammar School. Ian's final job was at Hazlehead Academy where his main role was Assistant Head Teacher but he still taught some PE before retiring in 1990.

As a teacher Ian touched the lives of hundreds of young people, not only in the day to day contact with them but through extra-curricular activities where he made an even bigger difference to their lives by giving them the opportunity to experience some activities that they could carry into adult life, and may also themselves have passed on to others. He introduced skiing, sailing and SCUBA diving in addition to hill walking and, most important of all, the Duke of Edinburgh Award.

Ian's involvement with hill walking goes back to when he joined the staff of Aberdeen Grammar School and got involved with the hill walking club there, which incidentally was run by a number of Cairngorm Club members – Donald Hawksworth, James Will and Ian Stephen. It was at Hazlehead Academy to which he moved in 1976 that he developed the Duke of Edinburgh Award, enriching the lives of staff and pupils. He was awarded the MBE for his services to the Award in 2001.

Ian was a member of the Cairngorm Club for many years and served on the committee twice. It was on a Club Easter Meet to Dundonnel in 1973 that Ian completed his Munros on An Teallach. Those present, including the President Sheila Murray, remember joining him on the summit and being treated to a dram and a selection of tasty snacks. Ian did some walking and climbing abroad, including the ascent of the Matterhorn, and he also completed all the 'Munros' furth of Scotland.

Many club members will remember Ian being at the end of the rope as they conquered the Inaccessible Pinnacle in the Skye Cuillin. Indeed at Ian's funeral several club members introduced themselves to his children, Lesley and Stuart, by saying 'your Dad took me up the Inn Pinn'.

After moving to Drumoak Ian started a walking club called the 'Dee-ciders' whose members enjoyed some quite challenging walks. The club is still flourishing. Ian's interests also included running and he completed several marathons. Along with his wife Norma he returned to (? took up?) golf in later life when going to the hills was unfortunately no longer an option.

Ill health took its toll over the years and Ian survived many operations and procedures. Lesser men would have succumbed to three hip replacements, a heart by-pass and bowel cancer but his strength of character shone through each time. However, it was kidney failure and the need for kidney dialysis which began in 2002 which was the final straw. Ian is survived by Norma, his wife of 53 years, son Stuart, daughter Lesley and their families. Laura, one of Ian's granddaughters was so inspired by her grandpa that she followed in his footsteps and is now a teacher of Physical Education.

Anne Pinches

DOUGLAS WILLIAMSON

Douglas Guthrie Williamson was born in 1937, in Edinburgh, and although his later childhood was spent in Paisley, he regarded himself as an Edinburgh person. He studied Chemistry at Glasgow University, gaining both BSc and PhD degrees, after which a fellowship at Cambridge followed. In 1964 he was appointed lecturer in Chemistry at Aberdeen University and three years later married Alison, in Edinburgh. Throughout his youth he climbed Munros, developed a love of the Scottish landscape and became a passionate rights of way campaigner. On occasions he was confronted by gamekeepers, some carrying broken shot guns with some menace, but he was completely fearless.

The advent of wind turbines at first dismayed him but he came to the view that the generation of renewable electricity was valuable, if done imaginatively. He had a passionate interest in the Railway system and became vice-chairman of the Scottish Rail Passenger Committee. He travelled extensively by rail throughout the UK and continental Europe. He was also vice-chairman of the Scottish Consumer Council, a member of the Scottish Transport Users Committee and a lay member of the Law Society of Scotland Complaints Committee. It was for all this work that he was awarded an MBE in 2000.

Douglas was a marvellous raconteur (see his article in the Club Journal, Vol 21, p108, 2007), and had strong interests in music and literature. His death in 2012 was recorded in the 2013 issue of the Journal but unfortunately an obituary was not included. He is greatly missed.

Les Batt

Anne Pinches, right, on the occasion of the 2014 Club Dinner, the eighth she has organized. She is talking with Sheila Murray, (President 1970-73) who has lost count of the Club Dinners she has attended. The question is, what, or who, are they talking about? Photograph by Sandy McIntosh.