

The Cairngorm Club Journal

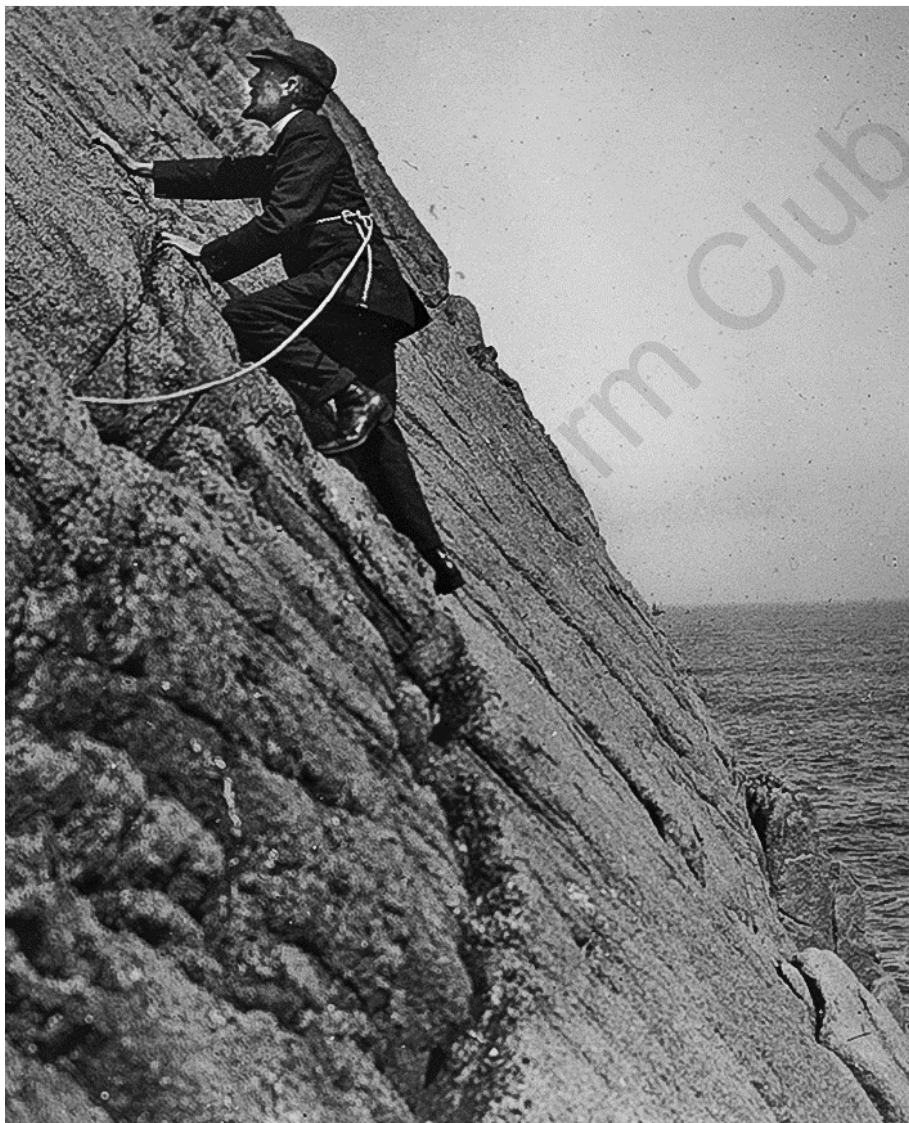


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The Cairngorm Club

THE CAIRNGORM CLUB JOURNAL

Edited by Jean G. Robinson

Volume 22 Number 112 2018

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The Cairngorm Club

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EDITORIAL

This 112th issue of the Cairngorm Club Journal coincides with the 100th anniversary of the end of the First World War in which the Club, from its then membership of 140, lost nine men. It is therefore appropriate that both the First and Second World Wars feature in several of the articles.

February 2018 also marks the 100th anniversary of the Representation of the People Act which allowed, for the first time, some women over the age of 30 to vote in the December 1918 UK general election. It is a good time therefore to recall as later described by Robert Lippe, one of the Club's Founder Members, that from the outset of the Club in 1887 it was open to "*men and women of heroic spirit*". It is pleasing to have several female contributors to this issue as well of course as welcoming another woman, the 7th of a total of 44, to the role and leadership of Presidency.

A new development for the Journal - a 16-page colour section has been used to highlight some of the Club's and members' achievements and photographic skills in the last 3 years, whilst acknowledging that this is only a tiny representation of all that has been accomplished.

The internet hyperlinks used in several of the articles and marked in the printed version by underlined text, reflect the Journal's forthcoming and new dual format: first and foremost, as a much-valued hard-copy of Club activities and from 2018 as an online and searchable archive. For those readers without a tablet or smart mobile-phone, there will in due course be a link from the Club's website to the online Journal archive. Further details will be provided in the *Club Newsletter*.

The task of Editorship is at times daunting and I am grateful for the help given by Hazel Witte, Ken Thomson, Donald Thomas and Sandy McIntosh and the outstanding examples of fortitude, sense of duty, good humour and resourcefulness exemplified in the pages of writing which follow.

INTO THE BLUE MOUNTAINS

JOHN FLEMING, February 1942

For six months the noise of industrial Lanarkshire had been in my ears. The soot, grime and dust had filled my nostrils and eyes. I had spent the best of the time in the heat and sweat of the melting shop in a steel-work. This was a sudden change for one who had lived his life by the sea and wandered afar in the mountains and glens of Argyll. With ever-increasing intensity, the call of the hills pulled me irresistibly into the open. The roar of furnaces melting, the crash of scrap falling from the magnet cranes, the beat of the pneumatic hammer dinned into my brain, emphasising the command of industrialism and war; but behind it all were the weekends. In them was, and still is, the escape to peace and quiet. An all-engulfing tranquillity, which can only for me, be found in the heights and valleys, flowed over me in these all too short excursions and carried me on to the next escape. I have come to bless the far-seeing persons who organised and started the Scottish Youth Hostel Association, which makes it possible for one such as me to betake myself into the most beautiful, and often loneliest, reaches of this Scotland, unsurpassable for beauty and grandeur. Add to this the meeting and companionship of, kindred searchers and you have an organisation which can justifiably claim to be doing its part to uphold the national morale.

It was with this background that I began to plan for my holidays. The Cairngorms had been in my mind's eye for some time, and had been put off last year, as I had been giving service at a school camp; but was it now feasible? I had ten days at my disposal, but was it possible to find a companion or must I risk it alone? At last my plans were made, but it had to be a lone journey, unless I met in with someone en-route. Reading the S.M.C. guide made it clear to me that I could not see everything in ten short days, but I decided that with Aviemore Hostel as my headquarters, I would do as much as physically possible in my stay, and to save time I would hasten north by train.

John Fleming Brewing Up



John Fleming

Thursday (July 17th) found me, complete in kilt with rucksack on my back, in Buchanan Street Station, Glasgow, and by dint of being early, settled down on a comfortable seat in a Pullman coach. At last the guard's whistle, and at precisely 10 a.m., we steamed out into the morning sunshine. The journey could not be fast enough for me, Stirling, then Perth were left behind without regrets. Next Dunkeld and Pitlochry, and my interest quickened as the country was not quite so familiar. Through the Pass of Killiecrankie to Blair Atholl, reminding me of the story told by H.V. Morton of the origin of Atholl Brose, and of how it was responsible for the choice of the coat-of-arms used by the Duke of Atholl, and the motto "*Furth Fortune and Fill the Fetters*". From this point the railway begins to climb in earnest, and the two engines panted like an athlete straining for that wonderful solace called his "second wind", which enables him to go on for miles just when he thought he was finished. The country becomes progressively barer and barer, and I moved along to the dining car for lunch as we slowly made our way up into Drumochter Pass and the river Garry below. A shower of rain reminded me that just a year before I had cycled up through this pass in rain and had found that more to my liking than the effortless journey by train. The summit (1,504 ft.) reached, the tempo of the wheels on the rails quickened, and, as I glimpsed Loch Ericht sunk in the hills of Badenoch, my pulse quickened too, as they seemed to beat out Cairngorms, Cairngorms, Cairngorms. At 2.20 p.m. we sped into Aviemore, under the shade of Craigellachie, with the immense range of the Grampians to the southeast, rising behind the expanse of Rothiemurchus Forest.

Aviemore is a straggling little hamlet for such a big station, which seems to extend the full length of the village, giving it an air of bustle. The casual observer may be deluded but it is a restful and almost sleepy clachan, where one can browse and ruminate in peace among its forests and by the shores of its several lochs. The hostel sits on the main road at the Kingussie end of the string of houses and hotels which make up Aviemore. On arrival I found the hostel rather quiet and the warden having an afternoon rest, so I left him undisturbed. By 5

o'clock things brightened up, and having signed in, the inner man called for attention and was not denied.

The light was good, and the cumulus cloud over the mountains demanded a photograph, so I set out with my camera for what I hoped was going to be, for it, a busy week. Up the face of Craigellachie, and soon Speyside and Rothiemurchus lay below, but overshadowed by the greatest mountain range in Britain, and an ideal subject for a panorama. It took me seven exposures, but I returned to the hostel satisfied that it was worth it.

The common-room was seething with new arrivals, cooking, or talking, but all happy and tired after a day in the open. Where can there be better camaraderie than between open-air wanderers, sitting back after an evening meal, at the end of a day's exertion? Everyone was happy and brotherly, whether it was in sharing tea from the pot or giving advice as to routes for the morrow. It was now I met Jim J., a cyclist from Edinburgh. He wanted to know if he could go to the top of the Lairig Ghru and back in one day. We got talking and it came out that he too was a keen photographer, and so we started comparing his Rolleiflex with my Super Ikonta. Nothing was more natural than we should join forces for the next day, the plans were made, and routes worked out and then to bed.

At 6 a.m., the morning did not seem too promising, but enthusiasm is difficult to damp, and we jumped out of our sleeping bags, lit the stove, breakfasted and made up our pack meals. Soon after seven we quietly stole out and down over the Spey, and away through the tree-lined avenue to Coylum Bridge. Rothiemurchus Forest is a labyrinth of passes and tracks, and we lost our way twice before reaching the Cairngorm Club Bridge. From there, the way into the Lairig was clear and we hit a steady pace through the wonderfully wooded paradise. Quiet it was as we strode on amid the Scots pines and the ground community of blaeberry and heather. It seemed an enchanted land as the morning brightened, and it did not take much imagination to think of the innumerable anthills of pine needles as the dwellings of the "Little Folk", so dear to the heart of the Gael.

At long last we climbed above the trees to look back over the forest to Speyside and Aviemore, with jets of steam rising from the station. Looking back may be pleasant, but to look ahead is thrilling and uncertain. There was the Lairig Ghru at last, deep set in the hills which rose steeply on either side and were lost in the mist. Down below, the Allt Druidh tumbled its way through its narrow-cleft gully, sending up sweet music to our ears. But that is only conical Carn Eilrig on the right, and rounded Castle Hill to the left, and we must push on before starting the real ascent. The path is well defined and makes good walking, though the peat is soft in places. The weather is a problem, and it is uncertain whether the mist will rise or fall, but no matter we shall take the chance.

We cross a little burn and through the mists ahead, we see very steep slopes, which must be Creag an Leth-choin, the Lurcher's Crag, so it is time for us to leave the path and strike up the shoulder. Before long we are enveloped in mist and experience the wonderful and ever-changing fantasies conjured up by the swirling. Soon the going changes from heather and crowberry moorland to boulder-fields with occasional clumps of blaeberry in sheltered nooks and crannies. In this mist, the slope seems never ending, but our judgement was good and the first cairn (3,365 ft.) loomed ahead. This is the lower of the two peaks of the Lurcher's Crag, and so, taking a compass bearing from the map we made for the second peak, which is nearly half a mile away. It seemed easy, for soon we saw it straight ahead, and we rested on the edge of the steep cliffs.

Our next objective was to reach Cairn Lochan on the way to Cairngorm, but the rain started, and visibility was restricted to a few yards. Here the canny Scot temperament came to the fore, helped by the fact that so far, our direction finding had been good. To travel by map and compass would mean getting the map wet, so we decided we would trust to our sense of direction. Walking at an angle of 45° to the cliffs would take us to our objective, so with light hearts we set out. On, on, and never the semblance of a doubt came to us, but Cairn Lochan just refused to emerge from the sea of mist that circled about

us. Up slopes and down into gullies we went, mile after mile, till at last we stopped to wonder. Is it possible we had gone wrong? Let us try again and hope the mist will rise for a fleeting moment to get a sight of something. More miles, and nothing to show for it but capes glistening with rain, and then our hopes were fulfilled. Up went the mist, and down below us we spotted a gully strangely familiar, but unbelievable. Surely that is not the Lairig? But the truth will out, and we had to admit to ourselves, that for the last four hours we had been going around in circles. Disappointed but wiser men, we descended and made our way back to Aviemore without so much as one camera shot. The Cairngorms had taught us our first lesson, and we decided to try again the next day, but to take no chances in the mist, and use a compass when we could not see our next objective.

To know mountains only in fine weather is to have a very incomplete knowledge and a poor appreciation of them, and so it was not with rancour, but with expectation that we rose the next morning earlier than ever, eager to be off. At five of the clock, we silently sneaked from the dormitory hoping, but little knowing the glories the day held for us. By 6 a.m., we had breakfasted and made up our day's rations and were away on the same programme as yesterday. We tested the direction of the wind, looked at the sky, and kept on. As is usual, the mountains rose into the morning clouds, and as we left Rothiemurchus behind, these same clouds came down to envelop us and then rise again. Once more leaving the Lairig we trudged steadily up the Lurcher's Crag and were rewarded by a glimpse of Loch Morlich surrounded by its glory of pine trees. Only a glimpse and nothing more, for the mist encircled us and we held our compass course to the second summit cairn. Here we rested for a few minutes and were granted a brightening of the weather, sufficient to let us take some camera shots, and to give us a sight of Cairn Lochan a mile or more over the plateau.

Eastward from the cliffs over which a lurcher is supposed to have fallen when chasing a stag, there is, over huge boulders, a drop down into a grassy col, Miadan or meadow of Creagan Leth-choin, and so, by

a gentle rise to the western end of Coire an Lochain, where vegetation becomes much sparser as the last rise to Cairn Lochan is tackled. Here we found little cushions of the moss campion still in flower, but little else. At this point, the mist came down again, and as we reached the summit plateau, the visibility was reduced to a few yards, and a strong wind was blowing, causing the mist to swirl more than ever.

It is indeed an awesome feeling to be walking through mist when every small stone or cushion of moss, seen vaguely at a few yards, seems to be the sought for cairn seen at a distance. Hurrying forward, one or two steps brings you up against the object, and you feel very foolish for letting your imagination run away. Is it any wonder that living in such close harmony with and reach of such experiences, Highland folk are superstitious and imaginative?

Ultimately, we did find the cairn of Cairn Lochan (3,983 ft.), perched on the edge of the corrie of the same name. Here long tongues of snow lay several feet deep in the gullies of the corrie, and our luck once more changed. We were rewarded with a clear view of everything but the summits of Ben Macdhui and Cairngorm. We wandered round the edge of the three great corries of Cairngorm, with their snow wreaths which are visible from Speyside, and on the edge of Coire an t-Sneachda sat down out of the wind to eat some of our rations. Away before us stretched the undulating plateau for miles, until it rose into the clouds to the summit of Ben Macdhui on the right, and over the valley of Loch Avon straight ahead rose Ben Mheadhoin. To the left, again in the clouds, the last cone of Cairngorm was lost. Turning around, we looked down into the corrie with the weathered rocks, as if they had been put down by some giant bricklayer who had forgotten to finish his task. Further below, the pines of Rothiemurchus began, and in them, Loch Morlich, nestling like a silver ornamental pond and across the valley the forest bounded by the serpentine course of the Spey.

Though we knew there was little chance of seeing anything from the summit of Cairngorm, we ascended into the clouds, and made our salutations to the cairn (4,084ft.). Without wasting any time, apart from

regaining our breath, we came down out of this region of wildness and spectral shapes into bright sunshine and headed southeast towards Loch Avon. On the way, I was surprised to see a solitary rabbit bouncing slowly over the rocks nearly 4,000 ft. above the sea. Also, on this barren expanse we found thrift, which until now I had associated almost exclusively with seashore vegetation.

Shall I ever forget my first view of Loch Avon? It did not come into sight until we came on to Stac an Fharaidh, and there it lay almost a thousand feet below, a mile and a half in length, with the river Avon flowing out of its eastern end. From this height, the shallows of the loch could be noted by their lighter colour, but the most impressive aspect of the scene was its absolute loneliness. Except for the valley out through which the river flows, the loch is enclosed by high cliffs, cut by deep corries and gullies, down which cataracts foam, all of which led Queen Victoria to exclaim "*nothing could be grander and wilder*".

Down one of the gullies we scrambled, often using the course of the cataract as our stepping stones, and finding in this sheltered spot, heath dog violets and globe flowers. Down, down, until almost at the margin of the loch, and then along by its side, clinging at times by hand to steep slopes which rose out of the very lochside. In about a mile, we reached the little stretch of golden sand at the western end of the loch, and fording the Garbh Uisge, scrambled to the Shelter Stone. There has never been a built habitation by Loch Avon, or a boat on the loch, but this huge stone weighing some 1,400 tons, and lying on top of smaller boulders furnishes a welcome resting place and refuge in this remote glen. Except for a narrow entrance, the stone has been packed round by boulders and sods to make it windproof, and inside there is enough room for about ten persons to sleep. At the back, the height is about five feet eight inches, though at other parts one must stoop. The floor is spread with heather, and in a tin box on a ledge just inside the door, there is a visitor's book now in its sixth volume, having been started in 1925. The present volume makes interesting reading, as it contains comments written on the eve of war by a party who slept under the

stone, not knowing that war had been declared. There is also an entry by a lone voyager, who brought in the New Year in snow and solitude. Could warmongers like Hitler but be persuaded to take such lone trips to realise man's insignificance in the scheme of grand nature, surely, they would be weaned from their purpose, and realise that all beauty whether moral, spiritual or physical depends on harmony.

Sitting by the entrance to the Shelter Stone, eating a sandwich, we watched an eagle, monarch of the skies, sail lazily overhead and come to rest on one of the high crags clustered around the top end of the loch. Behind us, dominating the scene, is the Shelter Stone Crag and Carn Etchachan, and to the west of these the Garbh Uisge, rough water, leaps and bounds its way down a thousand feet to the loch below. Our route lay up the side of this cataract, and as we climbed using hands and feet, rain started to fall. Luckily, we reached the top, and had time to photograph the loch below, before it was shut out by mist (see photograph below).

Loch Avon



John Fleming

It must have been a scene such as this that inspired Byron to write his poem “Loch-na-gar”. For here indeed was the complete antithesis of beauty “*tame and domestic*”. On the plateau we found a magnificent snow-bridge twenty or thirty yards long under which the Garbh Uisge chattered and murmured. The rain became heavier and following the river we travelled south towards Ben Macdhui, heading into a wind of 50 or 60 miles per hour. Down lashed the rain, and visibility was zero, but this was comparatively pleasant compared with a sudden change to driving hail which stung and hurt, besides numbing us as we pushed on with heads down across this bare flat plateau.

Two hours saw us on Ben Macdhui (4,296 ft.), with no improvement of the weather, so without halting we headed north to find the March Burn. Here was the burn, and so down we went out of the clouds into the Lairig Ghru. But the March Burn drops down to the summit of the Lairig, and we were coming into the mouth of the great Garbh Choire well on the South side of the Lairig summit, so this burn was the Allt a'Choire Mhor, which left us with an extra two miles to cover before Aviemore was reached. Nothing daunted, and eating the last of our sandwiches, we set out with a swing up this famous Mounth Pass with its boulder-strewn floor, and on to the Pools of Dee. These pools are not the source of the River Dee but give birth to a feeder of this river. At the pools, the river is subterranean, and not visible until they are left behind on their southern end. Once past the pools, the summit (2,733 ft.) of the pass was soon reached and the boulder-fields, alive with ptarmigan, left behind.

We made short work of the descent to Rothiemurchus, and on this part of the route met two men, the first humans we had seen since 6 a.m. Through the forest to Coylum Bridge and so to the hostel just as the clock showed 10.30 p.m. Though it was late, the warden let us cook our meal and eat as everyone went off to bed, and we relaxed delightfully tired after a long day full of beauty and inspiration, of rain and shine, filled with the wonders of this land, this Scotland.

Let me here pay tribute to Jim J., that though he had never done any hill walking before, and though he wore only cycling shoes, he kept up

with me and never once complained. Indeed, he finished the day convinced that cyclists miss the best of the country.

Having unexpectedly spent two days at Aviemore, Jim had no time to cycle back to Edinburgh, so he decided to take the train. We rose late, had breakfast and sauntered out to spend the forenoon visiting Loch an Eilein. These small lochs, cradled in the forest, bring the necessary sylvan contrast to the rugged and barren mountains, and throw these features into greater relief. Loch an Eilein is beautifully wooded, but the centre of interest, as the name suggests, is the island.

On this island which was a stronghold of Alexander Comyn, Wolf of Badenoch, there is a priory which was restored by the Grants in the 16th century but is again in ruins. In its precincts, the osprey nested as late as 1900, but the ravages of ruthless collectors caused it to desert and since then it has been seen no more in the district.

The fertile Strathspey has not been immune from marauders, and clan fights. The land of Rothiemurchus was taken from Comyn, a Norman family, by a Shaw, but now belongs to the Clan Grant. Many have been the skirmishes round the lochs and among the trees.

Returning to Aviemore we lunched at the "Pot o' Luck" tea-room, as we were too lazy to cook for ourselves, and shortly afterwards I said farewell to Jim as his train drew out carrying him back to more mundane matters.

The next day turned out very wet, and so I did not venture far from the hostel until the evening when the weather faired. Then I strolled east from Coylum Bridge and chanced upon little Loch Pityoulish and was entranced. Despite all that has been said and written about Loch an Eilein, this loch is the gem of Rothiemurchus with its reeds and lilies, its pines and its birches. Here it was that a Captain Shaw wrested Rothiemurchus from the Lords of Badenoch in the 14th century.

Two quiet days on the low ground rested me sufficiently to be restless for the hills again, and it was with eager heart that I rose next morning at 5 a.m. and set out an hour later to explore the mountains to the west of the Lairig. Setting a stiff pace, I soon walked myself fully awake over ground that was fast becoming familiar, and before the

morning was far advanced, I stood in mist at the summit of the "gloomy" pass. Slowly the morning mists rose, and as I came abreast of the Garbh Choire most of the steep slopes of Ben Macdhui on the left had emerged. Then conical and precipitous Cairn Toul was displayed in full sunshine, with shadows in its hanging corrie and "Soldier's" corrie. I stopped by the Tailor's Stone, where the three hapless tailors lay down to die one Winter's night so long ago and looking back watched the mist rolling and swirling off in Choire Bhrochain of Braeriach, realising why it was named the "porridge pot".

The River Dee was murmuring its way down the glen, and I must follow it as far as Corrou Bothy, in the shade of the very prominent Devil's Point and facing the Ben Macdhui-Carn a'Mhaim ridge. Once here, I took off my boots and forded the ice-cold river and visited a few lads who were making a stay at the bothy. The bothy is an old disused stalkers' bothy, which is left on the latch for any wanderer to use. It is very small, but it is amazing how many people can bed down, each trying to avoid the many leaks in the roof (see photograph below).

Corrou Bothy



John Fleming

Having eaten a couple of sandwiches, I set out up Coire Odhar to the summit peak of Devil's Point, turning ever and again to view the Lairig as it gradually fell away below me. Then the summit (3,0303 ft.) and a wonderful panorama to the south; the River Dee winding away down Glen Dee to turn east towards Braemar, and deeply cleft in the hills to the west, Glen Geusachan deep in shade, despite the sun, so deep are its sides, and dividing Devil's Point from Beinn Bhrotain.

The air up on top was keen and invigorating, so off I went, north across the boulders, round Coire Odhar then Soldier's Corrie, and on to the last jumbled mass of slope leading to Cairn Toul. The sun shone down, but at the peak cairn (4,241 ft.), it was cold when I stopped. Away to the east lay Derry Cairngorm, and further still Lochnagar, but turning to the west the great mass of Ben Nevis stood out fifty miles away, and further south, at some twenty miles, Ben Cruachan by Loch Awe. Nearer and easily recognised, the twin cones of Ben More and Stobinian at Crianlarich, and many more tops I have known at closer quarters.

So much for the distant view, but much of interest lay at my feet. Moving over to the edge of the ridge, I looked down on little Lochan Uaine nestling so beautifully between Cairn Toul and Angel's Peak (Sgor an Lochain Uaine) and emptying its overflow into the Garbh Choire to join the infant Dee several hundred feet below. At the back of the great corrie, falling some thousand feet, was the cataract that becomes the Dee. Rising on the plateau of Braeriach at the Wells of Dee, the river takes this great drop in the first two hundred yards of its existence and drops out of the very snows themselves which then in July had not melted.

From Cairn Toul to Braeriach, there is a glorious ridge walk of three and a half miles round the corries and all of it above 4,000 ft. Nowhere else in Britain is there such a long stretch at this altitude, and every yard of it on such a day as I had, defies my attempts to describe it. Round to Angel's Peak where, the snow wreath of the Garbh Choire Mhor can be best viewed. This is the only snow in this country which has never disappeared in living memory and may easily be the last

remnant of one of the glaciers which flowed out of these corries. Then round on to the flat top of Braeriach, so expansive and still carrying snow. Braeriach has two summits, one the Einich Cairn at 4,061 ft., and the other above Choire Bhrochain at 4,248 ft. Midway between these, and in a little hollow, lie the Wells of Dee, consisting of several small springs in the soft shingle of the plateau. Before leaving Braeriach, I was impressed by the cliffs of Choire Bhrochain, perpendicular and high, and away below some two thousand feet, the Dee lay like a linen thread in the bottom of Glen Dee.

Evening was drawing on, so I hastened north from the last peak along the descending ridge to Sron na Lairig (3,860 ft.), and from there down on to the summit of the Lairig, where again, the ptarmigan were numerous and not in the least shy. Keeping up my steady pace, I managed back into Aviemore by nine o'clock, ready for a meal which I cooked at full speed. Except for the few greetings made at Corrou Bothy, I had not spoken with anyone since early morning, but at no point had I felt lonely. There is companionship in the hills, and inspiration and peace for those who go out to seek it.

My days were now few, so I decided to leave Aviemore and head towards Ballater. The trek through the Lairig to Braemar is twenty-nine miles long, and no easy one with a heavy pack. It is especially trying tramping over the great boulder-field on top of the Lairig, as the pack is inclined to swing. However, I set off early as usual, and was again lucky with the weather. Traversing once more the familiar paths, I pushed on steadily, making my first halt well over the summit. Down past Devil's Point, then turned east round Carn a'Mhaim into Glen Luibeg, and so with a last glance at Ben Macdhui and Derry Cairngorm, I entered Mar Forest at Derry Lodge. Crossing the Lui Water at the bridge, I increased my pace on the road to reach the famous Linn of Dee, in its deep cleft course, and with its tremendous flow of water.

After the hills, hard roads bring aches to the limbs and fire to the feet, but the wonderful forest lands by Inverey and Mar Lodge did much to take my attention from these discomforts. At last I hirpled into

Braemar just five minutes too late for the last bus to Ballater. However, finding a comfortable house in the square, I had tea and then a perfect luxury, a hot bath. With two hard days behind me, I turned in early and heard nothing of an air-raid alert until mentioned at breakfast next morning.

I spent the morning wandering in Braemar, through a light rain and glorying in the beauties of the forests of Deeside. These forests are grander than those of Speyside, and do not show the ravages of cutting so markedly, but Ballater was my destination, and as I did not relish sixteen miles of road walking, I boarded the bus.

This journey is one of arboreal beauty unexcelled, with great castles and mansions flashing into view, Braemar Castle, Invercauld House, and most impressive of all, Balmoral Castle, and so to Ballater. Here I found, a delightful hostel for my last night, so I dumped my pack and went out to view Ballater. A small town, clean and orderly, made to look impressive with the royal arms above the smallest of shops. I was particularly pleased with the bakers' shops and did full justice to their wares. The evening was passed pleasantly by song and story in the common-room, and since I was going for the early Aberdeen train, I bedded down on a couch there so that I would not disturb the rather full dormitory at that time in the morning.

The journey home came as an anti-climax to a perfect week, and as the train hurried me south and home, I lay back travelling again over the high tops, (see photograph on the opposite page), feeling in the memory the mist, rain and sunshine, but above all a deep sorrow in my heart that my stay had been so short.

Cairn Toul



John Fleming

Editor's Note: John Fleming, father of Club member, Joan Fleming, died in 1948 at 36 years. This article was found amongst his personal documents along with boxes of his black and white negatives.

THE NORTH EAST MOUNTAIN TRUST

The Cairngorm Club has been a member of the North East Mountain Trust, (NEMT), since its inception in 1980. The following question and answer article presents an overview of the Trust by its current Chair, Dave Windle and highlights some of the threats posed, particularly in the northeast of Scotland, to areas of landscape.

Q1 From where does your interest and concern about the Scottish Highlands and environmental issues stem?

I fell in love with the Highlands 50 years ago, when out on school camping trips. We went to places such as Torridon, Sutherland and Fisherfield. We had an early attempt on the Old Man of Stoe, shortly after Patey's first ascent. Like many of his routes, we experienced a severely under-graded climb and retired defeated! We were more successful on the Ben, completing some epic climbs, and making for memorable days. I left to go to university, and then worked abroad and in London.

When I got back to Aberdeen, after working away, I quickly reconnected with the hills. The Scottish Highlands is a very special place, and, when one is out in the open, gives a sense of perspective on the human ego. But, if you look at the scale of the changes that have taken place in the last 50 years, it is in urgent need of better protection.

I think that it is important to be out there in all weathers, doing some of a variety of things; camping, bothying, walking, climbing (see photograph opposite) and paddling. Being in the landscape gives you energy and motivation to campaign for protection when you get back.

Q2 What blogs or websites do you use to keep informed about relevant environmental issues?

I find Parkswatch, very useful to keep in touch with what's happening in our local Cairngorms National Park. The John Muir Trust, is very

helpful. If you're prepared to be depressed, visit, the [Raptor Persecution Scotland](#) site, to see the scale of the illegal killing by our "stewards of the countryside". [George Monbiot's blog](#), is a very useful if sometimes extreme view of reality, but it's well written and is a good introduction to the underlying issues.

Dave Windle



Mike Lates

Q3 Which is your favourite walk and why?

I have many favourite walks. I think that the islands are very special. The conjunction of sea and hills with relatively few people, together with a very good chance of seeing some special wildlife such as otters or eagles, makes them a “must-visit place” for me. I fear that this is now changing very quickly; we have all heard of the problems on Skye this summer, and even more remote islands such as Harris are becoming popular. It’s good for local businesses but less good for getting away from our crowded cities. However, islands like Mingulay and Pabbay are easy to get to and not crowded! Scarp has an abandoned village, is even easier to get to, and is fine for camping.

A remote walk involving one or two nights in a bothy is often good fun. Most of the time you get to meet interesting people and to enjoy a dram and some memorable craic.

Closer to home, walking in the Cairngorms evokes a sense of familiarity. The landscape is dramatic but, because you recognise the features, somehow comforting. Navigation becomes less of an issue, and you gain more time to look around and appreciate the detail. Walking along the plateau between Sgorr Gaoith and Mullach Clach a’ Bhlair, with views across to the cliffs along Loch Einich and then over to Cairn Toul, cannot fail to inspire you and, if in low cloud, test your navigation skills! If you want to get off the beaten track, then visit Glen Geusachan.

Q4 How is NEMT constituted?

NEMT, is an umbrella group, representing mostly hillwalkers and climbers but also others who enjoy getting outdoors and care about the mountain environment. There are two principal categories of membership: those who are members via a member club such as the Cairngorm Club, and individual members. Overall, it represents about 1,000 hillwalkers and climbers. It is a registered charity and is governed by a Board of Trustees, all of whom are voluntary. Member clubs are encouraged to nominate a trustee, and we try to get out to

visit clubs once a year to check that we are working on the issues that members care about. In the past, we have surveyed members and now hold members' evenings on a regular basis. By and large, we all seem to agree on the key issues that NEMT should be campaigning on.

Q5 With which other organisations does NEMT work?

NEMT is affiliated with a range of organisations such as Ramblers Scotland, the Bailies of Bennachie, Save Bennachie Alliance, Save Clachnaben, the Mountain Bothies Association and the local mountain rescue teams. We work closely with groups such as the Badenoch and Strathspey Conservation group and the Cairngorms Campaign on issues to do with the National Park. Recently, these have included commenting on the new Partnership Plan, campaigning against the proposed An Camas Mor new town across the river from Aviemore, and trying to get Natural Retreats, the ski operator at Cairngorm, to work to better standards.

An important grouping is via Scottish Environment LINK, which currently represents 37 of Scotland's environmental charities, as varied as for example the Bat Conservation Trust, Butterfly Conservation Scotland, Friends of the Earth Scotland, Planning Democracy and Ramblers Scotland. Through LINK we seek to influence Government policy on issues that concern us. Our on-going work on hill tracks and on the management of driven grouse moors benefits from speaking with a single voice across the whole of Scotland.

Q6 How have the aims of NEMT changed over the years?

In many ways, the aims of NEMT have stayed the same over the years since it was inaugurated in 1980. We started by campaigning against inappropriate developments in the mountains and along our coastline. The nature of the developments has changed; skiing developments are less popular but the proliferation of hill tracks for both hydro schemes and shooting access are just as damaging. Instead of one or two massive developments, we now have multiple smaller developments.

We began by focussing on the northeast, particularly the Cairngorms, and still have our prime interest there. However, we do try to influence particularly bad developments elsewhere in Scotland.

What has changed is the need to work with others. Today, victories are won by working with other organisations. The role of NEMT is more important than ever. Individual clubs have a smaller voice than a wide range of NGOs speaking in unison. This can be seen in our dealings with the Cairngorms National Park Authority, where we meet with the CEO and his directors as part of Scottish Environment LINK. Similarly, we provide a conduit for projects such as “The Mountains & The People” to reach our members and clubs. The Mountains & The People is a partnership project which aims to conserve the upland landscape heritage of Scotland's two National Parks, led by the Outdoor Access Trust for Scotland.

This campaigning work needs to be supported by communicating with our clubs and members. We do this via our Winter Lecture series and our bi-annual newsletter, *Mountain Views*.

Q7 What do you consider to be the top threats to the uplands of the Northeast of Scotland?

I think that the excessive number of wind farm developments in some of our finest and wildest landscapes, increasingly intensive management of grouse moors, and the seeming inability of the government to force estates to properly manage their deer numbers are the biggest problems. Not far behind come issues such as our National Parks, which in Scotland are often seen as enablers for development rather than conservation, and lack local resources to enforce planning conditions.

In 2014, Scottish National Heritage, (SNH), published a map of the country showing 42 distinct areas of wild land, places that you could visit and see minimal signs of human interference (see photograph opposite).

Cairngorm Wild Land Area No. 15, SNH



Sandy McIntosh

The government talked of “*improved protection without the need for statutory intervention*”. Since then, we have seen these vital areas eroded and chipped away. The map is becoming worthless. In

conjunction with other NGOs and via LINK, we plan to support the campaign by John Muir Trust to “Keep it Wild”. This is a good example of an issue that requires a single well-coordinated voice. Please support us in this.

Land reform is a political issue at the present, with many people concerned about foreign ownership. In my view, this is a red herring. Compare what Sigrid Rausing and Anders Holch Povlsen have done for their estates with the locally owned Invercauld and Dinnet estates. What matters is the way the estate is run rather than who owns it. I’m in favour of greater local ownership but it’s not a panacea.

Q8 What are NEMT’s current priorities?

Not surprisingly, our priority list reflects the above threats. Our top priorities are as follows.

Inappropriate wind farm developments, a good example being the proposed Glen Dye wind farm, which will destroy views of and from Clachnaben. On a similar theme but smaller in scale, we have objected to several proposals for inappropriately sited mobile-phone masts in areas with great landscape significance.

Abuses in modern driven grouse moor management, with many local examples such as Invercauld and many of the estates in the Angus Glens. Threats arising from this include raptor poisoning, illegal hill track construction, muirburn and mountain hare persecution.

Working with other groups to influence the Cairngorms National Park Authority to stop chasing economic development at any cost and to take better care of this priceless asset (although it does seem that they do a better job than their colleagues in the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs Park).

Working as part of the LINK Hill Tracks Group monitoring the recent change in the legal arrangements for applications to planning authorities for new tracks. The LINK Group will produce a report on its findings in 2018. This is likely to lead to a campaign to further tighten controls regarding where tracks can be built, for what purposes and to improve construction methods on the ground.

Working with others via LINK to support the campaign for better protection of our remaining fragments of wild land.

On an ongoing basis, we respond to Government consultations on these topics and related areas, such as proposed changes to the planning laws, affecting the general mountain environment.

In the future, as the topic rises on the political agenda and our MSPs realise that something more needs to be done, we expect to do more work on the correct management of deer numbers. The devastation caused by excessive deer numbers is there for us all to see.

Q9 What is the most significant success to date achieved for the landscape by NEMT?

Undoubtedly, our biggest success to date was in getting the proposed skiing development in Lurcher's Gully stopped in 1981, closely followed by stopping the proposed super-quarry at the Longhaven cliffs in 1980.

Success nowadays comes in smaller parcels. Some years ago, we appeared at two separate planning inquiries to get the Invercauld Estate to carry out mitigating works after very poor standards of track construction. Undoubtedly, this will have made them think twice about future track works. Together with other NGOs, we have managed to get the planning controls on new hill tracks tightened and are starting to get the Government to tame some of the absurdities of modern grouse moor management.

In many ways, our work to give better protection to mountain hares exemplifies modern campaigning. We started because of rumours that their numbers were dropping dramatically, typically because modern grouse moor management involves eradicating hares as they carry ticks, which, in turn carry the "louping ill" virus which can kill grouse chicks. Work has involved collecting evidence that indeed their numbers are falling, complaining to the European Commission (very effective because it rouses our own slumbering officials), and working with other NGOs with allied objectives (in this case, people concerned

with raptor persecution) to bring pressure to bear on the Government to do something about the abuses that go on in the name of grouse management. There are highs and lows, of course: writing to MSPs only to get standardised, anodyne responses can be soul-destroying, but the successes do compensate.

Q10 Which are the most significant pieces of legislation or guidance about the environment of which hillwalkers and climbers should be aware?

Most of the relevant environmental legislation is led by the Scottish Parliament's Committee for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform, which also includes Flood Protection and Wildlife Crime. MSPs from across Scotland serve on this Committee, and currently Roseanna Cunningham is the Scottish Government's Cabinet Secretary for these areas.

A most useful piece of legislation from our point of view is the European Habitats Directive. This "*ensures the conservation of a wide range of rare, threatened or endemic animal and plant species. Some 200 rare and characteristic habitat types are also targeted for conservation.*" It is a good example of a piece of European law making us do what we should have been doing in any case. I think of it as analogous to the bathing water quality directive which made the Government stop encouraging us to swim in our own sewage! It was adopted into UK law, and provides a framework for the protection of many rare and endangered species, requiring the government to ensure that specific species are maintained in "favourable condition". There is obviously a lot of interpretation involved, e.g. what constitutes "favourable condition" and how is this determined? However, it is a very useful piece of legislation. As noted above, threats of going to the EU tend to get a response from even the busiest civil servant.

Biodiversity is primarily protected via the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, p. 3148. However, at a working level, it is often more effective to complain via the Habitats Directive quoted above. In some

cases, if the site is protected, e.g. Natura 2000 or Site of Special Scientific Interest, then that legislation can provide an approach. Although, as Donald Trump demonstrated at Menie, it is comparatively easy to force a gold-plated limousine through these designations if you have the politicians in your hand.

The principal piece of wild life crime legislation is the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) . This is used to deter bat, badger, hare and raptor persecution amongst other priorities. Following concern about its effectiveness, it was reviewed in 2015 and a report produced. It is currently on the political agenda once again, following the publication of a report on disappearing golden eagles, clearly linking the problem to intensive grouse moor management, see the Guardian, 11 August 2016 and the Scottish Government Newsroom for Ministerial reaction. The problem is that most of these crimes are committed out in the open moorland out of sight of the public and proving an individual guilty is very difficult. One possible solution might be to introduce some specific form of vicarious liability, to encourage the owners to stop turning a blind eye to their gamekeepers' illegal practices. This requires a lower burden of proof than the criminal prosecution of a wayward gamekeeper and was successfully used in the case of disruption of a golden eagle's nest in Glendye.

Land reform in Scotland has been on the political agenda for a couple of decades now but has not yet delivered much in the northeast other than the very important right of responsible access, and some core paths. The pattern of land ownership on Deeside and Speyside has certainly not changed, except for Mar Lodge and Glenfeshie estates now managed by more enlightened purchasers. Even so, NEMT must keep a vigilant eye on what goes on even there: a carelessly operated bulldozer can cause a lot of semi-permanent damage in a day or two.

Similarly, legislation and regulation on deer management seem to change at only a snail's pace. In the Cairngorms, Glenfeshie is an outstanding success (deer numbers down by 90%, with lots of new trees), and Mar Lodge a partial one, though at the cost of a fence to divide the "full control" zone around the Lui Beg from the "moorland"

zone to the west. Elsewhere, browsing prevents regeneration except where prevented by – very expensive! – fencing. Very recently, SNH has been given new powers to take a stronger line with recalcitrant estates; once again, NEMT will now adopt a “wait and see” position.

Scottish Natural Heritage, working with the Scottish Government and a range of stakeholders has published a National Peatland Plan, to highlight the importance of Scotland's peatlands. It draws attention to the poor state of large areas of peat and proposes building on existing initiatives to secure their sustainable use, management and restoration.

The Plan also sets out some proposals for research and awareness-raising. To achieve these objectives, a National Peatland Group which is being chaired by Scottish Natural Heritage, has been established to promote the Plan and to support its implementation. The Group is being supported by a Research and Monitoring Group to ensure a sound scientific basis for the management and restoration activities proposed, and to inform future work.

Q11 What can Cairngorm Club members do to contribute to the work of NEMT?

The first thing to do is to get out into the hills and enjoy them. You get back energised and ready to do things to help in their conservation. We need more volunteers to help with campaigning. MSPs are busy but will respond to persistent constituent pressure. Many constituents are more difficult to ignore than a single constituent. If enough of us write to and visit our MSPs about an issue, they take notice. MSPs are an important group as they can activate tardy civil servants in both local and national departments. Taking photographs and recording changes can provide evidence (see photograph opposite), which is important in getting organisations such as SNH to act. Producing detailed evidence on the decline of mountain hares certainly helped in this respect.

Example of Bad Tracks



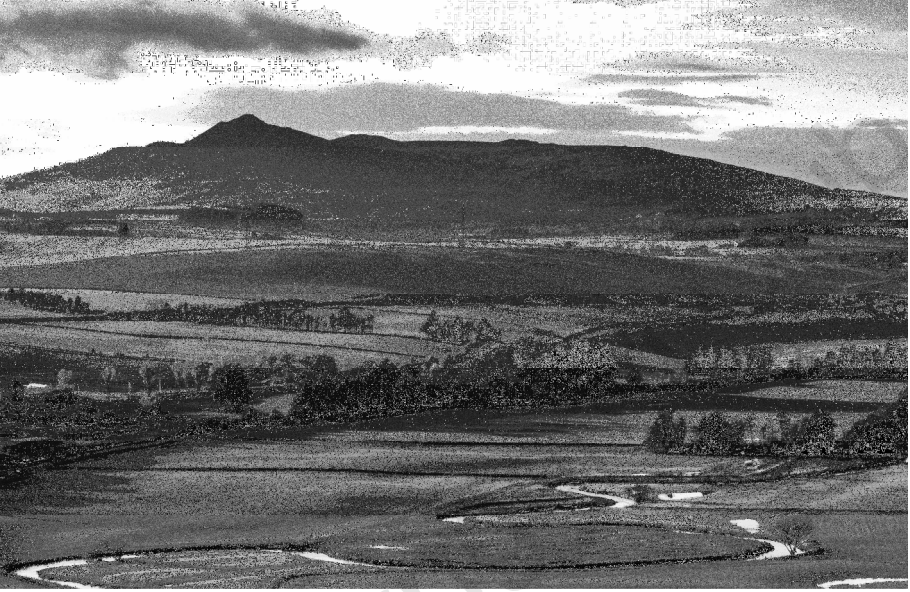
Adam Watson

However, a good beginning is to take more interest in these matters and to get better informed. Attending some of our NEMT lectures, helps us attract better speakers and reading *Mountain Views*, (a good signpost for live issues) and published in Spring and Autumn will keep you informed. Signing online petitions can help, as shown by the mountain hare campaign run by the Scottish charity, OneKind.

The hills and wild places are our sanctuary and are more than ever needed in this fractured world. In the words of John Muir: *“Thousands of tired, nerve-shaken, over-civilized people are beginning to find out that going to the mountains is going home; that wildness is a necessity; and that mountain parks and reservations are useful not only as fountains of timber and irrigating rivers, but as fountains of life.”*

If you enjoy the hills, fight for them.

Save Bennachie



Fennel Media

The Cairn

PIPER'S WOOD EXTENSION - A 2017 Update

LYDIA THOMSON and HAZEL A. WITTE

In 1989, the Club marked its centenary by financing the enclosure of Piper's Wood, a 1.7-hectare (4.3 acre) site in Glen Ey (NO 098 857), courtesy of Mar Estate. Plant distribution at the time was noted by Heather Salzen, then vice-county recorder of the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland (BSBI), (see *Cairngorm Club Journal*, 101, 1992, pp. 9-17). She followed this up by subsequent recordings as published in this Journal until 2001. Piper's Wood has now re-established itself by regeneration as a predominantly birch woodland, with consequent changes in associated flora. Early regeneration was in fact so apparent, due to the inhibition of deer grazing, that it stimulated the Mar Estate to enclose a larger area of the glen opposite Piper's Wood, and this is developing well.

In 2013, the Club funded a further enclosure in Glen Ey (see colour photograph No1) of around 1.5 hectares uphill from Piper's Wood. In 2013, Ian Francis, the Botanical Society's South Aberdeenshire vice-county recorder, undertook a baseline survey of its vegetation which was published in the *Cairngorm Club Journal*, (111, 2015, pp. 267-271), and Club members carried out a further survey in 2015.

In 2017, the initial impression was of a marked difference in the height of vegetation within the enclosure. The many grasses and sedges had reached their full potential whilst taller plants including goldenrod and knapweed protruded above them. The most remarkable increase was in the number of downy birch seedlings pushing through the heather, particularly on the lower slope, with over 80 recorded which compares with an initial count of only 15 four years ago. This is heartening, since, when the original Piper's Wood was first surveyed by Heather in 1989 she reckoned that the few remaining elderly birches had almost reached the end of their ability to produce seed. Seven small rowans were also seen in the extension in 2013, (one around a metre in height) and an increase in creeping willow and so there is a fast-developing woodland on this previously deer-grazed site.

Plant species identified *since* 2013 are:

<i>Alchemilla alpina</i>	alpine lady's mantle
<i>Alchemilla glabra</i>	hairless lady's mantle
<i>Centaurea nigra</i>	common knapweed
<i>Equisetum arvense</i>	field horsetail
<i>Galium palustre</i>	marsh bedstraw
<i>Genista anglica</i>	petty whin
<i>Lathyrus linifolius</i>	bitter vetchling
<i>Linum catharticum</i>	fairy flax
<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>	rowan
<i>Veronica chamaedrys</i>	germander speedwell
<i>Veronica officinalis</i>	heath speedwell

Access to this extension can only be made through the original Piper's Wood, which means forcing a route through well grown birch trees with entwining branches. Has the time come for the Club to consider whether there is a continuing need to exclude deer from this area?

THE ALTANOUR ENCLOSURES - First Botanical Survey

HAZEL A. WITTE

Willie Robb's bequest to the Club in 2012 stimulated discussion on the most appropriate use of these funds in his memory, and one suggestion was the creation of a further enclosure, some 4 km further up Glen Ey from Piper's Wood. Altanour Lodge, (NO 082 824), was built in 1838 for the Earl of Fife, with a plantation of pine trees around it to provide shelter. Graham Ewen's history of Glen Ey (*Cairngorm Club Journal*, 103,1994, pp. 86-94) indicates that this building was listed as uninhabited in every census between 1841 and 1891, so it was probably only used during the shooting season. The roof was removed around 1960, and little now remains to shelter passing walkers. Most of the original trees surrounding the Lodge have been felled by gales and left to rot.

To preserve and regenerate trees at Altanour, the Club erected 950m of 2m-high deer (but not rabbit) fencing in September 2015 on either side of the land rover track at the Lodge, at a cost of around £11,000 again with permission from Mar Estate. There is an access stile for each enclosure (see colour photograph No 2). The enclosed areas include mature larch trees, particularly in the lower southeast section, and some marshy ground between raised, turfed hillocks. The upper northwest section includes the ruined building, a grassy slope, a small marsh and several rotting tree trunks. Each includes a little burn and old dykes which harbour well-established plants.

During the weekend of 23 - 25 July 2016, Eric Jensen, Lydia Thomson and Hazel Witte carried out a baseline botanical survey of the two Altanour enclosures, so that the results can be used to assess future changes. In the above variety of habitats, the following plants were identified:

List of the species recorded in the Altanour Enclosure after the erection of the fences, 25 July 2016. The 'DAFOR' scale is used below (not for grasses, sedges and rushes) – a subjective assessment of the relative abundance of the different species in the area:

D = Dominant; A = Abundant; F = Frequent; O = Occasional; R = Rare

<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	Millfoil / Yarrow	F
<i>Agrostis canina sens. lat.</i>	Velvet bent grass	
<i>Agrostis capillaris</i>	Common bent grass	
<i>Agrostis vinealis</i>	Brown bent grass	
<i>Alchemilla alpina</i>	Alpine lady's mantle	D
<i>Anemone nemorosa</i>	Wood anemone	F
<i>Antennaria dioica</i>	Mountain everlasting	R
<i>Anthoxanthum odoratum</i>	Sweet vernal grass	
<i>Bellis perennis</i>	Daisy	O
<i>Briza media</i>	Quaking grass	O
<i>Calluna vulgaris</i>	Heather	F
<i>Caltha palustris</i>	Marsh marigold	R
<i>Campanula rotundifolia</i>	Harebell	O
<i>Cardamine pratensis</i>	Cuckoo flower	O
<i>Carex binervis</i>	Green ribbed sedge	
<i>Carex capillaris</i>	Hair sedge	
<i>Carex caryophyllea</i>	Spring sedge	
<i>Carex dioica</i>	Dioecious sedge	
<i>Carex echinata</i>	Star sedge	
<i>Carex flacca</i>	Glaucous sedge	
<i>Carex hostiana</i>	Tawny sedge	
<i>Carex leporina</i>	Oval sedge	
<i>Carex nigra</i>	Common sedge	
<i>Carex panicea</i>	Carnation sedge	
<i>Carex pilulifera</i>	Pill sedge	
<i>Carex pulicaris</i>	Flea sedge	
<i>Carex viridula sp. oedocarpa</i>	Common yellow sedge	
<i>Cerastium fontanum</i>	Common mouse-ear	R
<i>Cirsium palustre</i>	Marsh thistle	F
<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>	Spear thistle	
<i>Conopodium majus</i>	Pignut	O

<i>Cynosurus cristatus</i>	Crested dog's tail	
<i>Dactylorhiza maculata</i>	Heath spotted orchid	R
<i>Danthonia decumbens</i>	Heath grass	
<i>Deschampsia cespitosa</i>	Tufted hair grass	
<i>Deschampsia flexuosa</i>	Wavy hair grass	
<i>Digitalis purpurea</i>	Foxglove	F
<i>Drosera rotundifolia</i>	Round leaved sundew	O
<i>Epilobium palustre</i>	Marsh willowherb	O
<i>Erica cinerea</i>	Bell heather	F
<i>Erica tetralix</i>	Cross leaved heath	O
<i>Eriophorum angustifolium</i>	Common cotton grass	O
<i>Eriophorum vaginatum</i>	Hare's tail cotton grass	
<i>Euphrasia officinalis</i> agg.	Eyebright	F
<i>Equisetum arvense</i>	Field Horsetail	O
<i>Equisetum sylvaticum</i>	Wood horsetail	O
<i>Festuca ovina</i>	Sheep's fescue grass	
<i>Festuca rubra</i>	Red fescue grass	
<i>Festuca vivipara</i>	Viviparous fescue grass	
<i>Fragaria vesca</i>	Wild strawberry	
<i>Galium boreale</i>	Northern bedstraw	
<i>Galium saxatile</i>	Heath bedstraw	A
<i>Galium verum</i>	Lady's bedstraw	O
<i>Gentianella campestris</i>	Field gentian	R
<i>Geum rivale</i>	Water avens	O
<i>Glyceria fluitans</i>	Floating sweet grass	
<i>Gnaphalium sylvaticum</i>	Heath cudweed	R
<i>Hieracium anglicum</i>	Hawkweed	O
<i>Holcus lanatus</i>	Yorkshire fog	
<i>Holcus mollis</i>	Creeping soft grass	
<i>Hypericum pulchrum</i>	Beautiful St John's wort	O
<i>Hypochaeris radicata</i>	Cat's ear	O
<i>Juncus acutiflorus</i>	Sharp-flowered rush	
<i>Juncus articulatus</i>	Jointed rush	
<i>Juncus bufonius</i> sens. lat.	Toad rush	
<i>Juncus conglomeratus</i>	Compact rush	
<i>Juncus effusus</i>	Soft rush	
<i>Juncus squarrosus</i>	Heath rush	

<i>Larix europea</i>	European larch	F
<i>Lathyrus linifolius</i>	Bitter vetch	R
<i>Linum catharticum</i>	Purging (fairy) flax	O
<i>Lotus corniculatus</i>	Bird's-foot trefoil	R
<i>Luzula multiflora</i>	Heath wood-rush	
<i>Molinia caerulea</i>	Purple moor-grass	
<i>Nardus stricta</i>	Mat grass	
<i>Narthecium ossifragum</i>	Bog asphodel	F
<i>Oxalis acetosella</i>	Wood sorrel	O
<i>Pedicularis sylvatica</i>	Lousewort	R
<i>Persicaria vivipara</i>	Alpine bistort	R
<i>Pilosella officinarum</i>	Mouse-eared hawkweed	R
<i>Pinguicula vulgaris</i>	Common butterwort	O
<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>	Ribwort plantain	O
<i>Poa pratensis</i>	Smooth meadow grass	
<i>Poa trivialis</i>	Rough meadow grass	
<i>Polygala serpyllifolia</i>	Heath milkwort	O
<i>Potentilla erecta</i>	Tormentil	A
<i>Prunella vulgaris</i>	Self-heal	F
<i>Ranunculus acris</i>	Meadow buttercup	F
<i>Ranunculus flammula</i>	Lesser spearwort	F
<i>Rubus idaeus</i>	Raspberry	O
<i>Rumex acetosa</i>	Common sorrel	O
<i>Rumex acetosella</i>	Sheep's sorrel	O
<i>Rumex longifolius</i>	Northern dock	O
<i>Salix repens</i>	Creeping willow	R
<i>Saxifraga azoides</i>	Yellow mountain saxifrage	R
<i>Scorzoneroïdes autumnalis</i>	Autumn hawkbit	
<i>Selaginella selaginoides</i>	Lesser clubmoss	O
<i>Solidago virgaurea</i>	Goldenrod	O
<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>	Rowan	R
<i>Stellaria graminea</i>	Lesser stitchwort	R
<i>Succisa pratensis</i>	Devils-bit scabious	O
<i>Taraxacum officinale</i>	Dandelion	O
<i>Thymus polytrichus</i>	Wild thyme	F
<i>Trichophorum cespitosum</i>	Deer sedge	
<i>Trientalis europaea</i>	Chickweed wintergreen	O

<i>Trifolium pratense</i>	Red clover	O
<i>Trifolium repens</i>	White clover	F
<i>Triglochin palustris</i>	Marsh arrow grass	R
<i>Urtica dioica</i>	Stinging nettle	O
<i>Vaccinium myrtillus</i>	Blaeberry / bilberry	A
<i>Veronica officinalis</i>	Heath speedwell	A
<i>Veronica chamaedris</i>	Germander speedwell	O
<i>Vaccinium vitis-idaea</i>	Cowberry	F
<i>Viola palustris</i>	Marsh violet	F
<i>Viola riviniana</i>	Dog violet	F

Author's Note: Club members are encouraged to photograph any plants they are unable to identify at Altanour, particularly if not on this preliminary list. Repeat surveys will be done in future – you are welcome join us.

FROM THE SOURCE OF THE DEE TO THE SEA – My Duke of Edinburgh Challenge

JUDY M. MIDDLETON

“Please would you supervise a Silver Duke of Edinburgh (DofE) group for us?” That was my introduction to the joys of the DofE way back in 1996. I’ve been involved ever since. DofE is a National Youth Charity operating in the UK and internationally. So, when for the 60th anniversary year, they set a Diamond Challenge to raise funds to enable DofE to be delivered to an even wider variety of young people, especially in disadvantaged London and inner-City areas, I along with fellow DofE Club stalwarts Anne Pinches and Benn Hitchen began to toss around ideas for our own individual adventures.

DofE became a way of life for me when for many years, I ran the Award at Mearns Academy. I saw young people grow up through their Awards from Bronze to Gold, becoming confident, capable young adults with the ability to rise to life’s challenges.

I became a DofE Assessor some years ago, thinking ahead to when I no longer wanted to carry a heavy pack for four days supervising Gold Expeditions. I now assess Expeditions for Aberdeenshire, Girl Guiding Scotland and the Grampian and Cairngorm Network.

When many people think of DofE, the Expedition is all that comes to mind, not realising the very wide remit of the Award. In fact, there are another three sections which allow students to develop or improve on a New Skill, Physical Activity and Volunteer in their Community, and at Gold additionally complete a Residential Placement with other young people. All sections expand their horizons and help grow great young adults. At each level, Bronze, Silver and Gold, they spend increasingly more time to achieve their Awards.

Many readers will have met groups of young people in the hills carrying heavy rucksacks, with map cases hung about them; they are always easy to spot. The DofE Expedition section aims to inspire young people to develop initiative and a spirit of adventure. This gives them the opportunity to work in a team, learn to navigate, cook outdoors, practise camp craft and most importantly learn to be self-sufficient on a

journey as part of a team. They journey for two (Bronze), three (Silver) or four (Gold) days in the outdoor environment.

DofE is open to all young people aged 14 to 25 years. Many undertake DofE through schools or uniformed organisations, but it is also delivered by companies to their apprentices and in Young Offender institutions. It is open to all abilities, with the context varying depending on physical capability and those with learning difficulties.

DofE has taken me to amazing places both in the Cairngorms and further afield to Skye and the West Coast, and to places I probably wouldn't have ventured into otherwise, as although a few teams choose to climb hills, most journey through valleys and over passes. I have met many fantastic young people over the years, from privileged school groups to inner London Community Groups.

Trying to think of a suitable Diamond Challenge for myself wasn't easy. I had been challenged many times when working as an Outdoor Tutor! As I am not a natural "water person", I had, nonetheless, undergone training in white-water rafting, coasteering and high ropes. I eventually decided on journeying from "The Source of the River Dee to the Sea" as that would be a significant physical challenge for me.

I planned my Challenge to begin at the Wells of Dee. So, the route began with a cycle in to White Bridge, a walk in to the Garbh Coire Shelter, (leaving my overnight pack) and then a climb up the steep slopes of the Coire onto Braeriach and the Wells of Dee. I asked Ken Thomson for the best route to take, typically he underplayed it and said, "it's a bit steep in places"! From the Wells, I planned to bivi at the Shelter and walk and cycle out to the Linn of Dee. From there, I would cycle by various routes to Aberdeen and the mouth of the River Dee, following the river where I could. Back-up was to be provided by husband Robbie and my family.

August 21st, 2017 was a glorious day and accompanied by friend Kerstin Kramer we cycled in to White Bridge and wandered up towards the Lairig Ghru, turning off into the Garbh Coire and the shelter (see photograph on following page). Leaving our heavy items there, we commenced the long pull up onto the plateau. It got steeper, so our pace

slowed. The midges were out in their millions, but midge nets were not an option; as it became steeper, we needed to see where we were going! Arriving at the plateau, a light breeze kept the midges at bay and we were able to wander across the plateau and explore the area at leisure.

Garbh Coire Shelter



Kerstin Kramer

The Wells of Dee (see photograph opposite) are amazing, with so many springs bubbling up, producing small trickles and gradually all coming together to form the infant River Dee. We watched the river falling over the edge of the Coire and could see it way below us wending its way to the sea. It was a glorious day and the views were spectacular over to mighty Ben Macdhui, Cairn Toul and Angel's Peak.

Wells of Dee



Judy Middleton

Clambering down the Coire sides, I thought about Ken's comments! Once back at the shelter, we decided to cook our tea there despite the midges. The Garbh Coire Shelter did not look inviting as the door was hanging off and sadly the small building needs lots of work to make it watertight again. Two guys then appeared who planned to stay overnight. They magnanimously said we could have the bothy and they would bivi as there is only space for two. This made our minds up: we'd walk to Corrour Bothy.

The walk to Corrour was better than expected and joy of joys we had the Bothy to ourselves. It is quite luxurious now compared with the olden days as it is wood-lined with a porch and a toilet. An amazing man from the Mountain Bothies Association (MBA), Neil Reid, walks into the Bothy monthly to change the toilet bags: what a star he is.

Next day we headed back to White Bridge and our bikes and were soon at Linn of Dee where Robbie took our heavy packs from us. A short cycle to Braemar (see photograph on following page) for lunch (and shower!) and off to the Old Brig of Dee.

Upper Deeside



Robbie Middleton

Cycling through Ballochbuie Forest on Balmoral Estate is beautiful and eventually we came to the locked gates into the curtilage of the Castle. Slowly the gates opened, and Prince Edward drove through and waved to us. The policeman on the gate couldn't be persuaded to let us through to cycle the easy way: "*too much paperwork*"! So, it was uphill and round with a good run down to Easter Balmoral. The South Deeside Road took us past the flood-damaged base of Abergeldie Castle and to Ballater where we picked up the old railway line, now the Deeside Way. The old station was all boarded up after the fire, awaiting rebuilding.

Cycling on to Dinnet, past the damaged White Bridge at Cambus o'May, Kerstin left me there and I stayed overnight with a friend. Next day I rejoined the Deeside Way at Dinnet Station and had an easy cycle as far as Aboyne where the final section of the Way awaits completion. Picking up the Way later from Kincardine o'Neil to Potarch and a welcome coffee, it was uphill towards Shooting Greens, but I cut

through and down to the River again where I had to push my bike, as much of the track had sadly been washed out by the December 2016 floods. I rejoined the old railway line at Banchory and onwards passing the thriving Crathes Station and its trains. Further east I passed old stations and platforms with bits of road at Drumoak and Culter (with Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route disruption) and eventually arrived at the end of the Deeside Way at Duthie Park. Then I was amongst heavy traffic all the way through Aberdeen and the harbour, where the family met me, at the end of what had been for me a fascinating and challenging journey.

The experience of travelling the course of the Dee from bubbling springs, to frothing maturity and finally meandering sedateness was memorable, and recalled all the children and young people I have observed mature from chaotic exuberance to organised and competent hillwalkers.

All in all, a great experience and with lots of support from friends and family raising about £1,000 for DofE.

Garbh Coire



Sandy McIntosh

SCHOOL VISITS: “The Evidence”

ANNE PINCHES

Some time ago, the then President Adrian Scott and I were invited to speak to a Primary 4 Class at Newburgh Mathers School. The children had been doing a project on the Antarctic, and their teacher thought that to hear from people who walked and climbed in the snowy hills in Scotland would allow the children to relate more closely to their project.

Adrian and I went to the school dressed in our winter gear with rucksacks packed for a Winter day. We both showed the children how we would use the equipment we had taken with us and talked about the clothing. The children were fascinated and paid close attention, especially when Adrian belayed himself to the radiator! They asked lots of questions and added their own comments!

It was heartening to learn later that because of our visit one boy got his parents to take him up Bennachie and another two children had started indoor climbing.

The opportunity arose again to speak with a group of children and I was very happy to be involved; the Head Teacher of Kincardine o’Neil School, Frances Ridley, is a Cairngorm Club member. She had noticed from her *Club Newsletter* that the February 2017 Mid-Week Walk was planned to start and finish in Kincardine o’Neil and she invited the group of walkers to come to the school after the walk for refreshments.

It was a snowy day and we were glad to get wet boots off and into the warmth of the school hall. Apart from some children who were snowbound at home the whole school was present! We were firstly entertained by the children who sang several songs accompanied by Frances on the piano. This was followed by the children serving us tea and a selection of their home baking – most welcome.

Once the children were settled again I described what I was wearing and carrying with me for a big day in the hills in Winter. I first spoke about what was in my pockets, the first essential item being a ‘real’ hanky as I said tissues were of no use for me as I needed to blow my

nose quite a lot. When I brought out tissues from another pocket they knew why I needed those! I talked about the need to “go” when out and about, and they got over any possible awkwardness, so when I produced a little trowel they smiled. I asked what they thought I would bury with the trowel and one little boy’s hand shot up and he said, “*The Evidence!*” Another boy suggested that I would need hand sanitiser, and that too I was able to produce.

We were all impressed by the children’s attention span as I worked through the contents of my rucksack and they were happy to ask more questions. I also asked if anyone knew what to do if they found a sheep on its back. One boy replied that you should leave it, which is true for most situations in nature. I explained that the weight of the fleece would prevent it getting up and it would die, so you would need to help it up by approaching it from behind, grabbing its fleece and pulling it up onto its feet. After I had finished, one lad, who had obviously been thinking about what I had said, came up to me and asked what I would do if the sheep had been shorn and had no fleece to grab hold of! I was able to explain that the situation would probably not arise, but you may have to put your arms round its tummy to help it up.

When I had finished we moved through to a classroom, and Ken Thomson showed the children slides of some mountain views and told them a bit about the Club. Again, the children paid attention and asked some thoughtful questions.

It was a lovely day and all of us enjoyed the walk, the refreshments and the company of the children and their interest in our hobby. Writing this reminds me of some other things I have heard about children in relation to the Club’s Muir Cottage.

One member was in the habit of booking Muir for herself, her daughter and two grandchildren. When one of the grandchildren, aged 9, realised that the reason they could go to Muir was because grandma booked it she was rather concerned. She asked mum “What happens when grandma dies, will we still be able to go to Muir?”. Her mum then joined the Club and has booked Muir many times since, though

happily grandma is still very much alive. The young lady in question is now old enough to join the Cairngorm Club herself.

Other grandparents were looking after 3 grandchildren and were thinking of taking them to Muir for the first time. They mentioned this to the children's mother. She apologised for the children not being "outdoorsy", thinking the children would not enjoy being at Muir and thus make life difficult for their grandparents. There was no need to be concerned - combine running water, stones and children with the optional extra of sunshine and you have the recipe for a good time. Add in toasting marshmallows, barbecue and a treasure hunt, and fun will be guaranteed.

CLIMBING CORBETTS

BRIAN DAVEY

Corbetts are that set of Scottish mountains with heights between 2,500 feet (762 m) and 3,000 feet (914.4 m) above sea level with a drop of at least 500 feet (152.4 m) between each mountain and any adjacent higher one. With this criterion, unlike Munros (mountains above 3,000 feet or 914.4m in height), the large height drop between Corbetts guarantees that they are quite distinct mountains. As such they often present many excellent, demanding climbs of great character and interest; height alone should not be anybody's basis for judgement of the nature or beauty of a hill.

The list number of the Corbetts stands at 222 in September 2016 but has been known to change over the years, like the Munro list numbers (presently standing at 282 after the revision in 2012). This follows changes in hill and bealach (col) heights as measured by the Ordnance Survey. On one mountain range where the drop between peaks is less than 500 feet, nobody was quite certain which summit could claim the title of Corbett because the Ordnance Survey had measured both hills, Sgurr a' Bhac Chaolais (The Peak of the Hollow in the Narrows) and Bhuidhe Bheinn (The Yellow Hill, pronunciation Boo-ie-Ben, in south Glen Shiel) at 885 m! However, a re-survey in September 2012 measured Buidhe Bheinn at 885.5 m which was 0.29 m higher than its rival for Corbett status. This distance separation of the Corbetts resulting from the 500 feet drop criterion has led to the fact that there are few places in Scotland where more than 2 or 3 Corbetts can be climbed in a single day's traverse.

By September 2016 over 6000 names had appeared on the Scottish Mountaineering Club's Munro Compleatist List, with the number of compleatists having almost doubled in the last 10 years. Corbett Compleatists are much rarer making Corbett bagging a minority sport. This has distinct advantages for the Corbett climber who likes to enjoy the mountains in peace and virtual solitude, unlike the crowded noisy bustle of Union Street in Aberdeen on a Saturday afternoon that one is

likely to encounter nowadays on the summit of many Munros. Make a silent prayer that the Corbetts will never become like Scafell Pike, England's highest mountain, where one memorable afternoon in September 2006 on a Cairngorm Club Weekend Meet, I encountered a multitude of several hundred walkers, all converging on the summit cairn around the same time. Another advantage in climbing Corbetts is their height criteria which means that their tops are often cloud-free, affording magnificent views of the surrounding countryside when at the same time the Munro peaks can be shrouded in thick pea-soup hill fog with visibility often down to less than 50 m.

Lapse rate is the rate at which air temperature decreases with height. In the troposphere or lower atmosphere, air temperature at our latitude usually decreases with elevation from sea level up to a height of about 10 km (6 statute miles) since solar radiation or direct sunlight warms the earth's surface and the surface in turn warms the air from below. The average drop in air temperature is about 6.5 degrees Celsius per 1000 metres or about 1 degree Celsius per 500 feet of ascent. This may seem insignificant but along with increased wind speed with height due to the friction effect of an air mass moving over a land surface and the resulting increased wind-chill factor, this presents another reason why climbing Corbetts has many advantages over climbing Munros. Of course, there are some disadvantages also such as the absence of a well-worn path to follow but given the eyesore of path erosion caused by too many boots on Munros such as Schiehallion, this absence of a path may be a blessing in disguise. It is certainly a great bonus for visual and environmental reasons.

When the challenge of climbing all the Munros has been conquered, the logical next challenge in Scotland for a mountaineer must be the climbing of all the Corbetts. The advantage of having reached retirement age is meeting this challenge in a more leisurely way by selecting favourable weather windows and not becoming addicted to list-ticking as is often the case with Munro baggers.

The Corbett Nobody Wanted to Climb

On a recent walking weekend with so many Munros and interesting Corbetts to climb within relatively easy reach of the excellent bunkhouse of Slochd Mhor Lodge, Carrbridge, not to mention numerous other attractive low-level walks within our stunning Cairngorms National Park, it was not surprising that nobody wanted to tackle the rather common-named Corbett Geal Charn. I say common-named because there are four Munros and two Corbetts with the same name as well as another Corbett called Geal Charn Mor. This may seem a little odd, but the translation from Gaelic means White Cairn and with that meaning, given the climate of Scotland in early Spring, Autumn and Winter it's a wonder that there are not more Geal Charns in the country. However, I was soon to discover that the name bestowed by the ancient Celts may have been derived from the extensive ground cover of white lichen which I found to be growing profusely near the summit, or even more likely than the snow cover theory, from the large white quartz cairn (see photographs on opposite page).

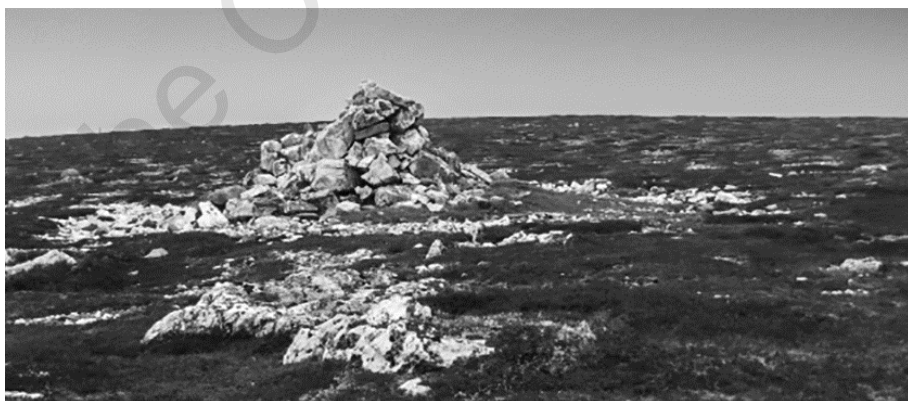
So, setting off alone to conquer my final Cairngorm Corbett I was confronted with the rather unwelcome roadside sign of "NO PARKING, TURNING PLACE", at the end of the minor public road to Dorback Lodge. The suggested parking place from the Scottish Mountaineering Club Hillwalkers Guide, of a nearby quarry, is no longer available since the quarry is now the site of a large store or industrial building for road construction or perhaps for snow clearing vehicles. With no other option, given the Dorback Estate sign of "NO UNAUTHORISED VEHICLES BEYOND THIS POINT", this despite another notice from the Dorback Estate which welcomes responsible access, I was obliged to park my car at the edge of the large turning circle with the hope that it would still be there undamaged on my return.

White Lichen-Cladonia sp.



Brian Davey

Quartz Cairn



Brian Davey

My walk-in to this rather unremarkable though quite beautiful hill was not the most direct as suggested by the Scottish Mountaineering Club (SMC) guide which includes at the start of the day, the possibility of a paddle when fording the Dorback Burn. I opted for a slightly longer route up a good land rover track which runs southeastwards parallel to the Allt Mor for about four and a half km until the watershed is reached. At this point, a steep southwest heather bashing ascent took me to the more gently sloping southeast ridge of Geal Charn. Alone with my thoughts of the recent Referendum result and the words of Wordsworth's most famous work, "*I wandered lonely as a cloud that floats on high o'er vales and hills, when all at once I saw a crowd, a host of golden*"... red deer taking off at great speed over the hilly horizon. It was at this point that I discovered a wooden marker post, the top of which looked strikingly like a deer's face, probably shaped by red deer in back-scratching, tick-removing exercise (see photograph on opposite page).

Lunch at the white quartz summit cairn was a relaxing rest, contemplating the rather hazy views of the other Cairngorm hills whilst deciding the best route back towards Dorback Lodge. The temperature at the summit was a cool 8 Celsius but I soon warmed up on my chosen return route which was down the gentle sloping northwest-to-north ridge, then after a steep heathery descent, picking up a good land rover track with a stalker's shelter near the ford on the Allt na h-Eirghe, I continued past a few small fluvioglacial kettle lochs, then past the lonely ruins of Upper Dell farm house.

Given the recent relatively dry weather, the crossing of the Dorback Burn presented no problems. After a wet spell however, fording this might prove difficult. Bright evening sunshine along the burn soon had me back to an undamaged car and the quiet satisfaction of a solitary five-hour sortie in hills where the only living creatures encountered were red deer, a mountain hare, a solitary pheasant, and numerous grouse.

What a great day, followed by a night back at the Carrbridge bunkhouse celebrating with fellow mountaineers and a dram, the smug self-satisfaction of another splendid Corbett climbed.

Marker Post



Brian Davey

THE MCDONALDS OF BRAEMAR

ALISTER G. MACDONALD

The question of how and when folk bearing Highland clan names came to Deeside is intriguing. In the absence of evidence of mass immigration, I have suggested that the answer to the question can be found in a multiplicity of family histories; which you might think is no answer at all. In previous articles (Macdonald, February and March 2015), I described the histories of two John McDonalds each of whom moved to Deeside in Victorian times, joining the Royal Household at Balmoral. Here I am concerned with the McDonalds of Braemar, the most highland part of Deeside, but nevertheless a long way from their ancestral lands.

Braemar began as a Pictish community. In medieval times, as Kindrochit, it was situated on the banks of the Waters of Clunie some way above the confluence with the Dee. The village which grew on the west of the Clunie was Auchendryne and on the east, there was Castleton. An altitude of 300 m, a tendency for floods, and soils largely derived from glacial boulder clay created a valley floor of modest fertility. Most of the land was covered by the Caledonian pine forest. The region was the Earldom of Mar, favoured as a royal hunting forest, and in the 11th century King Malcolm III used Kindrochit Castle as a base. Its recently restored ruins can be seen today opposite the main public carpark in Braemar. Also, in medieval times despite the poor conditions in Glen Lui for example, numerous shielings and townships were established to the west of Braemar. Present-day walkers, with sights set on the distant high-tops, may be unaware of them. In the 18th and early 19th century some sheep farming was developed but in Victorian times the region reverted to hunting, on the Mar estate now by shooting. Benefitting from that fashion Auchendryne and Castleton, now Braemar, grew from a meagre village to a grander place, able to service its hinterland, the transport routes and its visitors. Here Braemar is used as in the Braes of Mar, the village and its surroundings.

The Mar Lodge estate, in the ownership of the National Trust for Scotland since 1995, derived from a small part of the Earldom of Mar. A principal player in its history was William Duff, an ambitious businessman. When the Earl of Mar forfeited his estate as punishment for initiating the 1715 Jacobite uprising in Braemar, Duff was able to acquire it from intermediary owners. The main acquisition was the big house of Dalmore, which was ruined in the Muckle Spate of 1829. Agricultural improvements and serious land management ensued. Duff purchased Irish titles, becoming the Earl of Fife in 1759. Subsequent descendants also prospered, and in 1889 the 6th Earl married Princess Louise, the daughter of the future King Edward VII and became the Duke of Fife. The long-established Farquharson family were the other main land-owners in the region and remain so today. Auchendryne, with the Duke of Fife Hotel, and Castleton, with its Invercauld Arms Hotel, reflect this history.

In 1755 the population of the parish of Braemar was 1,227 - mostly Gaelic speaking, according to the Statistical Account of Scotland, Volume XIV. The idea that Braemar was well populated by McDonalds is borne out by a stroll through the kirkyard of St. Andrew's and more quantitatively by the 1851 census records. They show the population was, in round figures, 1,750 of whom 80 were named McDonald. The 1851 census was the first to record the place of birth, and so we know that 17 of the 80 were born outwith the parish. These data also demonstrate that the majority of Braemar McDonalds were well established in mid-Victorian times.

In Glengairn, about 20 miles east of Braemar, there existed a McDonald lairdship at Rineaten. There was a mansion house, but the only remaining building is a strange burial ground, the "Aisle", a walled enclosure, hidden among trees on the slopes of Cnoc Chalmac. The tomb-stones are inscribed and date from the 18th century. The relationship between the mysterious Rineaten McDonalds and those of Braemar is unknown.

Returning to Braemar in 1851, of the 17 McDonald incomers some were temporary visitors. For example, a retired tailor Malcolm

McGregor ran a boarding house at 18 Auchendryne. Living with him were his wife and two grown-up children and seven lodgers. Three of these were masons from Kirkmichael, Banffshire, doubtless working in the area, and one of the three was a Robert McDonald. Similarly, Donald Dingwall the miller at Inverey also took in lodgers. Three were described as travelling paupers. One was Jean White (56) born in Fife and the other two were children, William McDonald (5) born in Inverness and Charlotte McDonald (2) born in Perth. These intriguing examples reveal something of the mobility of people at the time but not the movement of highland clan folk from the west.

The incomer who attracted my interest most in the 1851 census returns was Alexander McDonald, a gamekeeper living with his wife and children at the Bridge of Lui. The census records that he was born in Inverness-shire, but the 1861 and 1871 censuses cite "Glencoe, Argyleshire" (sic). It is probable that his baptism was recorded at Kilmallie on the 7th of August 1814 and that his father was Donald and his mother Catherine Kennedy. Alexander moved to the Braemar area before 1842, as that year, while living at Mar Lodge, he married Janet Watson from Rothiemurchus. They raised eight children, including two sets of twins. In 1861 seven children were at home; Charlotte (17), Ronald (15), Mary (11), Ewen (8), Ann (5), Jane and Jessie, 2-month-old twins. Mary's twin brother William, listed in the previous census, was not recorded. Alexander died in 1877 at the age of 63 and is buried in St. Andrew's Kirkyard where his gravestone is inscribed "Alester McDonald". (For those interested in variations encountered from translating Gaelic names into English he is also recorded as Alister in his death certificate and the 1871 census and as Alexander in other records). His wife Janet, who died in 1897 at Claybokie Lodge, is also buried there. Their twin daughters Jane and Jessie are also commemorated. Both died young, Jane at the age of 29, in London, and Jessie at the age of 31. Their eldest daughter, Charlotte, is also mentioned.

Ann, and her sister Jessie, were servants at the Fife Arms Hotel in Auchendryne in 1881. I have been unable to find more about Ann, Jane

or the twins Mary and William, but Jessie's life is well documented. In 1891 she married William Forbes, a mason from Glenmuick and within eighteen months she died of septicaemia.

Ewen became a gamekeeper and, remarkably, married Ellen Fletcher from Hackney, London. I wish I knew the story behind this event, but the official record is that the ceremony took place on 23 December 1875 at St. John's, Hoxton, Hackney. Ewen was described as a gamekeeper from Invercauld and Ellen as a spinster. In 1881 they were living at Inverey with two children, Ellen (3) and Edith (1), although earlier, in 1879, they had lost a baby girl, Jessie Ann. Two sons were born, William in 1883 and Ewen in 1884. In 1901 Ewen, the father, was still a gamekeeper at Inverey, living with his wife, daughter Edith and two sons. Daughter Ellen had left home. The 1911 census records that the elder Ewen, now 58, a Gaelic speaker and gamekeeper, was still at Inverey with Ellen. Their granddaughter Francis Edith McHardy (4) was living with them. She was the daughter of Edith who married Donald McHardy in 1906. Also, by 1911 Ewen (the younger) had moved south and was a chauffeur to the Delderfield family of Little Bush Farm, Kingsbury, Hendon (London). A gravestone in St. Andrew's Kirkyard records the death of the elder Ewen in 1912, at Inverey Cottage, and that of his wife Ellen at Cults in 1943, in her 93rd year. It also records that their son William "gave his life for his country in France in 1916" (see photograph on following page).

Ronald, also a gamekeeper, married Mary Thomson from the Post Office at Crathie, in 1873. He was 28 and she was 42. He had previously lived with his unmarried sister Charlotte at Lui Beg Cottage. The 1881 census records Ronald, now 35, living at Claybokie with Maggie Smith (18), a servant, whilst his wife Mary (49) is recorded at the Post Office, Crathie, still living with her mother and father. She was still at the Post Office in 1891, married, and a housekeeper living with her brother, who was now the postmaster, and her widowed mother. The same census shows that Ronald was at Claybokie, a head gamekeeper living with his widowed mother and his sister Jessie (who married later that year) and two servants.

The gravestones of three gamekeepers in St. Andrew's Kirkyard, Braemar, commemorating, from left to right, Alexander McDonald and his family, his younger son Ewen and his family, and his elder son Ronald.



Alister Macdonald

Ronald continued to live at Claybokie. His mother died in 1897 and the 1901 census shows that his elder sister Charlotte had rejoined him, and additionally in the household there was a niece, Jane McDonald (10), born in England in 1890. Also, in 1901, the census shows that Ronald's wife Mary was still living at the Crathie Post Office with her brother Albert, now head of the household. She died on October 1st, at the age of 70. In 1911 Ronald (65), Charlotte (67) and niece Jane (20) were living at Mar Lodge. Ronald and his sister were recorded as speaking both Gaelic and English whereas for Jane there was no entry. This is curious for reasons which will become apparent.

Jane was born in England in the same year as Jean Bain, (née McDonald), also born in England, who became a well-known personality in Deeside history. In those days the names Jean and Jane were interchangeable and as they were both the niece of Ronald McDonald (the exact family connection being obscure) I think there is no doubt that they are the same person. I have discussed this with Ian Murray whose book (Murray, 1999) describes aspects of Jean's life. Watson and Allan's excellent account (Watson and Allan, 1986) also includes important information about her. She was born in London (not just England) in 1890, and her mother (also Jean) died in childbirth. She was cared for by relatives and then moved to Inverey, to the care of an uncle and an English aunt, who must be, Ewen and Ellen McDonald. At the age of eight she went to live with her other uncle, Ronald, and was presumably mostly in the care of his sister Charlotte. Murray's book contains photographs of Ronald and one "with his wife Charlotte", presumably his sister. After the death of Ronald and Charlotte (in 1921 and 1924 respectively) Jean became a relief school teacher and in 1928 she married William Bain in Braemar. They farmed in Glen Gairn and then at Ardoch above Crathie and raised two sons. Jean died in Aboyne hospital in 1984.

According to Watson and Allan, Jean (McDonald) Bain had the distinction of being the last natural Gaelic speaker in Deeside, having learned the language as a child, although born in England. She learned the language largely at home where Ronald and Charlotte only spoke Gaelic and acquired the Deeside dialect. This came to the attention of Watson and Allan who recorded their interviews with Jean in the 1970s. Their article discusses linguistic points of interest.

What are we to make of Alexander McDonald's move to Deeside? It was a success. He established himself and his family in a service economy familiar to us today. Two sons, Ewen and Ronald, became notable head gamekeepers, and their gravestones, along with that of their father, stand together in the St. Andrew's Kirkyard. The extended family experienced both orderly progress and the sort of problems which beset many families, but, as ever, the dry records are limited. We

must imagine how the individuals felt and coped, unless we are lucky enough to come across some of their descendants, in which case we might learn more.

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Author’s Note: This article was first published in the *Leopard Magazine* in 2016 and is reproduced here with permission given by Mr. Keith McIntyre.

No 1. Piper's Wood, showing new fenced-off section, 2013



Sandy McIntosh

No 2. Altanour Enclosure, fenced off in 2015



Sandy McIntosh

No 3. Mating Adders – Piper’s Wood, April 2014



Sandy McIntosh

No 4. New President, Marjorie Ewan, seen here on Dubh Ridge, Skye



Chris Wilson

No 5. Day Meet, Carn na Drochaide, November 2016



Mike Duguid

No 6. Day Meet, Lochnagar, January 2018



Mike Duguid

No 7. Day Meet, Stuchd an Lochain, Garry Wardrope's Final Munro, August 2017



Jean Robinson

No 8. Snow-holing Overnighter, Stob Coire Etchachan, 2017



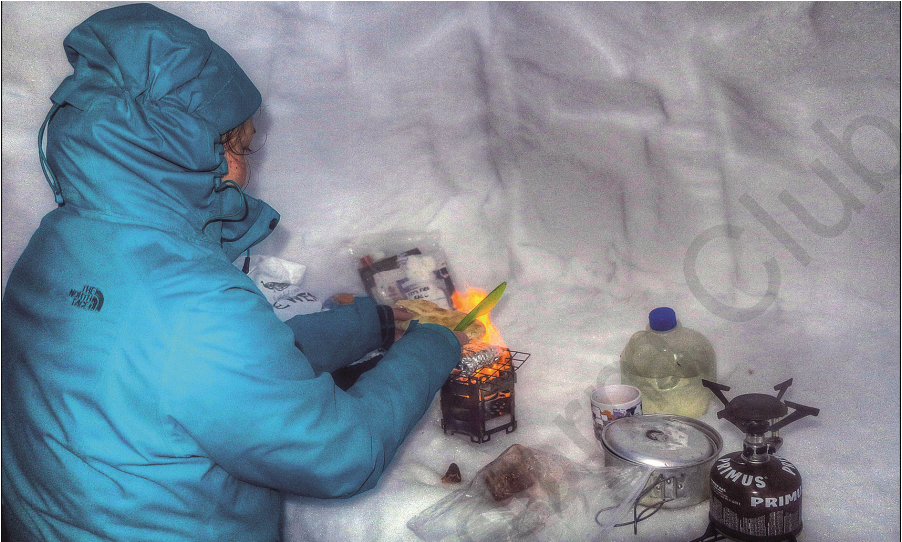
Mike Duguid

No 9. Snow-holing, Hutchison's Memorial Hut, 2017



Mike Duguid

No 10. Snow-holing, Cordon Bleu, 2016



Carlos Oldani

No 11. The Great Outdoor Challenge, Mallaig to Newburgh, Izy Kirkaldy, Half Way There, May 2017



Izy Kirkaldy

No 12. Weekend Meet, Australia Quarry, Llanberis, July 2017



Chris Smith

No 13. Weekend Meet, Inbhirfhaolain Bothy, Glen Etive, November 2015



Neil Chalmers

No 14. Muir Work Weekend, Path Edging, 2017



Ken Thomson

No 15. Muir Work Weekend, Gutter Clearing, 2017



Ken Thomson

No 16. New Quoich Bridge, Willie Robb Bequest, January 2017



Richard Shirreffs

No 17. Fog Bow and Glory, DofE Diamond Challenge, August 2017



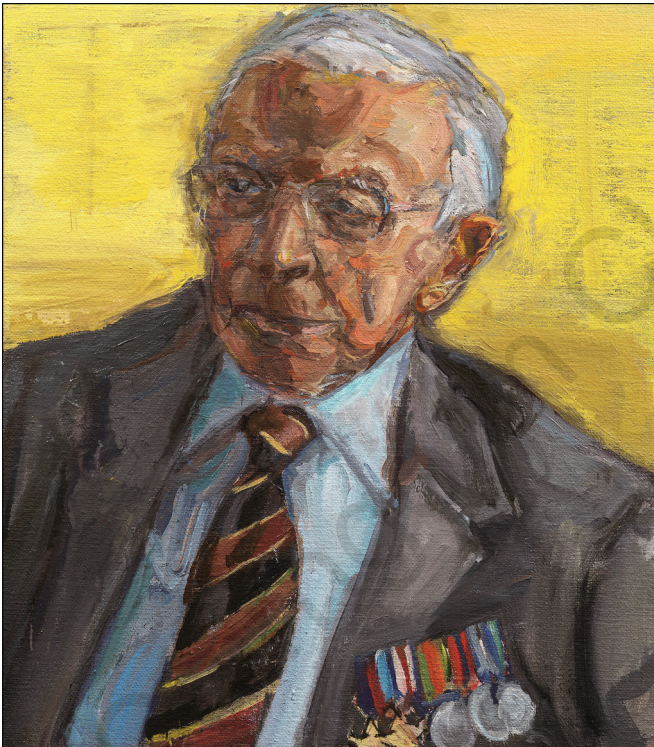
Ben Hitchen

No 18. Descending Beinn a' Bhuid, August 2017



Benn Hitchen

No 19. Portrait of Eric Johnston, 2015



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Portrait of a Mountaineer

Many readers will know long-standing Club Member, Eric F. Johnston. Eric joined the Club in 1954, served as Membership Secretary 1956-67, Secretary 1967-72, Vice-President 1966-67 and 1976-77, Auditor 1978-82, President 1982-85, Honorary President 1994-2003 and elected Honorary Club Member in 1997. However, fewer readers will know of Eric's wartime service and recent celebrity fame, very briefly summarised here.

During World War Two, at 18, Eric volunteered for the Royal Armoured Corps and, after training, joined the 4/7 Royal Dragoon Guards. After landing on Gold Beach on D-Day, Bremerhaven was reached 11 months later: Victory in Europe Day (VE).

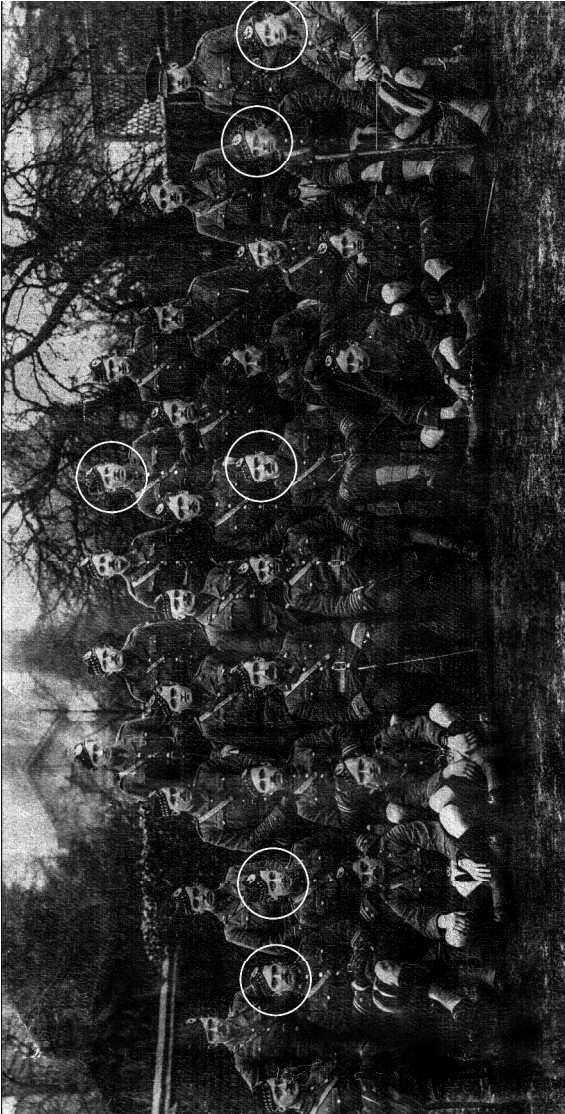
Back in civilian life, the war was seldom mentioned except perhaps with old comrades. In 2005, when in his eighties, Eric and his wife Joan were invited to a reception in London for veterans hosted by the Prince of Wales and Duchess of Cornwall. Later Eric was asked to take part in an oral recording of war experiences. This is now held in his regimental museum. There then followed a request to write up the liberation of a French town: Eric was in the lead tank in this offensive and the story was published in the French national press. Eric's memoirs were subsequently published in 2014 in book form, entitled "Reflections of a Tank Trooper (Retd)".

Later in 2015, Eric received a letter, telling him that he had been selected as the subject for one of 12 portraits commissioned by the Prince of Wales. Shortly afterwards, the artist Catherine Goodman, a former winner of the BP Portrait award and National Portrait Gallery exhibitor, contacted him to say that whilst staying at Birkhall, she would travel in daily to paint Eric in his home. Eric recalls "*I found Catherine to be very good company as we chatted during the long hours of sitting. She is very familiar with the Cairngorms, enjoying landscape painting when she is a guest at Birkhall in the Summer*".

On 6th June 2015, on the 71st anniversary of the Allied invasion of Normandy (the largest amphibious operation in history), an exhibition entitled "The Last of the Tide" of 12 D Day veterans' portraits opened at the Queen's Gallery, Buckingham Palace. The exhibition title derives from General Eisenhower's message to troops in which he declared, "*The tide has turned*". In 2017, Eric was made a Chevalier, the Légion d'honneur.

Describing the article each artist wrote about their partnered veteran, Eric recalls that in his piece he was described as a "*man of the mountains*" – and as is revealed here, much, much more!

No 20. 4th Battalion Gordon Highlanders, 1915, Bedford Barracks



E W H Brander

Charles Reid

W L Cook

G A Smith

J B Gillies

A M Wilson

No 21. The Buzancy Pillar



“ICI FLEURIRA TOUJOURS LE GLORIEUX CHARDON D'ECOSSE
PARMIS LES ROSES DE FRANCE.”
(Buzancy, 28th July, 1918.)

THE CAIRNGORM CLUB AND THE FIRST WORLD WAR

MARK PEEL

After the battle of Buzancy in May 1918, a French General, impressed by the performance and sacrifice of the Gordon Highlanders (GH), had a stone memorial erected (see colour photograph No 21), and inscribed with the words:

“Ici fleurira toujours le glorieux Chardon d’Ecosse parmi les Roses de France.”

“Here will flourish forever the glorious thistle of Scotland amongst the roses of France.”

This article is a contribution to the Club’s commemoration of its members’ service in the First World War. The Club published an account of this war service in 1919, (*Cairngorm Club Journal*, 49, 1919, pp. 244-254). I have sought to add to this material through research at the Gordon Highlanders Museum, reading Club Minutes held in the University of Aberdeen Special Collection and scouring other Journal and In Memoriam articles elsewhere. My reading has been further supplemented by the books “The History of the Gordon Highlanders in the First World War” and “The Grammar at War 1914-1918”, by Richard Lewis Campbell Dargie, 2014. In addition, my search has taken me to the war memorial of King’s College Chapel.

Haldane’s reforms of 1907 led in 1908 to the old Volunteer Regiments being replaced by the Territorial Force (TF). At the outbreak of the war this entire force was asked to volunteer for overseas service, which they did. Many Cairngorm Club members served in the Gordon Highlanders Territorial Force. Some were soon mobilised and spent some months training in Bedford (see colour photograph No 20). The emphasis in training was on physical fitness rather than the use of machine guns.

In 1914 the Club had a membership of 140, and 41 members ultimately served in the war, a proud record for the Club. Nine members were to lose their lives, and in this account, I have kept their deaths in chronological order, followed by those who survived active

service in alphabetical order. The information on some men is of necessity scant and for others more detailed. The number of words devoted to each man should not of course be taken as a measure of their war effort.

Club Minutes note that the Club donated three guineas to a dressing depot where women volunteered to make up bandages. Lady Aberdeen was President of the Red Cross at the time and toured the country to help set up these depots. It is estimated that during the war the Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC) used 108 million bandages.

As graduates of Aberdeen University, George Buchanan Smith, George Alexander Smith, Robert Lyon and James Brown Gillies are commemorated in the Kings College Chapel, Book of Remembrance. All Club members are mentioned on the Edinburgh Castle War Memorial and variously on local memorials throughout Aberdeen city and shire.

Coile – Mhrochan

*At dusk I flung my knapsack on the heath,
I made my bracken bed, I supped, and soon
As daylight faded from the glen beneath,
Cool winds among the firs were rising fast,
Stirring the sleeping branches till they cast
Black limbs athwart the silver moon.*

This is the first verse of a poem written by **George Buchanan Smith**, the Club's first fatality and printed in the *Cairngorm Club Journal*, (49, 1917, p. 35). He was the brother of Janet Adam Smith, a distinguished author and mountaineer (see Book Review section). It was only after his death that his family became aware that he had been writing poetry about his 'tramps' through Scotland. He was an ardent mountaineer and in his short life had done many long and hard walks over the greater part of Scotland. An account of his seven days walk from Glasgow to Braemar was printed in the *Cairngorm Club Journal*, (49, pp. 20-26). For part of this trip he was accompanied by old

Glasgow Academy schoolmate, James Wordie, who would later accompany Shackleton to Antarctica as a geologist. George had also visited the English Lake District and the Pyrenees.

Whilst studying for the Scottish Bar he was gazetted a Second Lieutenant in August 1914 and was in Flanders by December. On the 14th, while leading his platoon in a charge on the German trenches he was severely wounded. George however was back in France by August 1915 and was killed in action in September while leading his platoon of the 12th Battalion of the Gordons in the first charge of the advance on Loos, a coal-mining area, and a far cry from his beloved Cairngorms. A battalion from every Scottish regiment fought in this battle. Virtually all communities in Scotland were affected by the high level of casualties.

Robert Lyon, like George Buchanan Smith, was studying for the Scottish Bar and was 24 years when he died. He had been a Club member since 1907, full of enthusiasm for mountaineering. As his climbing experiences extended, he developed a deep passion for the hills. Robert had been a sergeant in the University Company of the Territorial Force (TF), and speedily received a commission on the outbreak of war, eventually achieving the rank of Captain. Though wounded whilst advancing with his company of 4th Gordon Highlanders, in the face of withering fire, during one of the battles of the Somme, he continued to lead his men on, but was killed in front of the German wire entanglements on 30 July 1916.

Ian McLaren's association with the Club began in 1906. He was a keen naturalist and led many excursions to the hills around Aberdeen before leaving for California in 1911. He is remembered by the Club for climbing the six Cairngorms in one day in June 1908. Ian had also climbed in Zermatt and skied in the Bernese Oberland. His friend recalled a weekend in Ballater when they drove up Glen Muick, strapped on their skis at Alltnaguibhsach and ascended Lochnagar in glorious Winter sunshine. On returning to Britain in 1915 he joined the London Scottish as a Private. He died on 7 October 1916 while

charging with his regiment on the Somme. He is remembered, with Robert Lyon, on the Thiepval Memorial.

James B. Gillies was Secretary and Treasurer of the Club from 1912 to 1916 and was also for a while Editor of the Journal. He took part in many of the Club's activities including the building of the Bennie Bridge, and would often ride out to Inverey on his motorbike. A former pupil of Aberdeen Grammar School, he was a founder member of the Former Pupil's Motorcycle Club. He was re-commissioned in 1914 and went with the 4th GH to France in March 1916. James was heavily involved on the Somme battlefield, and the advance on Beaumont Hamel. He was killed in action on 13 November, while clearing a German trench, shortly before its capture. James wrote an article for the *Cairngorm Club Journal*, (47, 1916, pp. 181-184), in which he describes travelling back up to the Front through the communication trenches. He bemoans the lack of features because of shelling. He does, however, allow himself to dream of a week at Maggie Gruer's, with an increased appreciation of the hills. "*However, a day will come when one will return to the hills and return with an increased appreciation of their splendour and of one's luck in getting to them.*" Sadly, this was not to be.

William Meff was the fourth member of the Club to die in 1916, and the second to die following the battle for Beaumont Hamel. He was one of the 'Ultramontane' members of the Club, being exceptionally keen on snow climbing. It is recorded that he had cut snow and ice steps up most of the corries and gullies of the Cairngorms. He was commissioned in February 1915 and went to France three months later. William acted for some months as Brigade Bombing Officer which involved the use of hand and rifle grenades. He was there at all the major engagements of the Somme Offensive. He died on the 14th November, of shrapnel wounds received the day before, in the Battle of Beaumont Hamel. The GH probably never fought in less favourable conditions.

Robert Dunn became a member of the Club in 1911 and was one of the group who frequently made weekend motorcycle runs to Inverey

and from there explored the hills. He had climbed on Lochnagar, and had completed a long walk in Ross-shire before joining up. As a former Territorial, he was commissioned and was sent out to France in Autumn 1915. He saw much heavy fighting with his unit of the GH and was fortunate to emerge from the attack on Beaumont Hamel unscathed. On 23 April 1917 he was wounded almost immediately he got over the parapet. Stopping only to have his wound bound, he went on with his men and was killed by a machine gun bullet in front of the German wire. He was one of the few Club members to leave a widow and child.

James Ellis was 20 years old when he joined the Club in 1912 and was a keen mountaineer. Rowing was another of his interests and for some years he was in the Aberdeen Boat Club's championship crew. Like James Gillies and Robert Dunn, he was an enthusiastic motorcyclist. He joined the GH in September 1914 and went to France in April 1915. By June he was back in England suffering from trench fever. Up to a third of the British soldiers examined by a doctor suffered from this disease. It was only after the war that the cause was discovered to be a bacterium carried by body lice. The kilt worn by many Scottish soldiers had severe disadvantages in the conditions met in the trenches of the Western Front, with lice harbouring in the folds. James rejoined his battalion in March 1917 and was wounded on 22 April while fighting on the Scarpe. He died two days later in a casualty clearing station.

Austin J. C. Fyfe was 39 years old and the last of three members to die in 1917. He became a member of the Club in 1911 and was both an enthusiastic mountaineer and skier. Many of his friends remembered his musical ability; for several years he acted as music critic for the Aberdeen Daily Journal. He worked as an actuary for Northern Assurance and had written a notable paper on insurance statistics affecting women. He volunteered in 1915 and received a commission in the Aberdeen Territorial Artillery. He went out to France in 1916 and was detailed for trench mortar work. Austin was killed in action on 23 November 1917. The trench mortar was a new development for the

First World War and it was only in 1915 that a successful design became available. By 1916 there were highly organised units within each brigade. The 3-inch Stokes mortar could fire up to nine rounds a minute and be used to suppress an enemy machine gun post or a sniper position.

George Alexander Smith was the last of Club members to die, in July 1918. He joined the Club in 1911 and regularly attended the outings. George had been an enthusiastic member of both the Volunteer Force and the TF, and when war broke out held the rank of major in the 4th Battalion of the GH. George was with his battalion in France from February to December 1915 and took part in many engagements. He was wounded, and the pocket book that stopped a penetrating shrapnel bullet is in the Gordon Highlanders Museum. He was in command of the 8th King's Own Regiment before spending a year at General Headquarters. Though more than once offered a staff appointment, he preferred to serve as an active combatant. From October 1917 he was either second in command or in command of a battalion of the GH. During the war he was wounded twice, was awarded the Distinguished Service Order, and was twice mentioned in dispatches. At the battle for Buzancy he was Officer Commanding the 5th Battalion. He took up an exceedingly exposed position on top of a hill to observe the progress of his men and was killed by a shell splinter on 28 July 1918.

In addition to the deaths of the 9 members described thus far, the Club had another 32 who variously served through the theatre of war.

William Barclay joined up in November 1916, serving as a gunner, following his return from South Africa. He was a qualified dentist and the army was short of these skills. Yet it was another 6 months before the army posted him to Oswestry in charge of the garrison's dental centre.

Eric Brander was mobilised with the 4th Battalion GH in August 1914. He went out to France in February 1915 and served with the 51st Highland Division. In May 1916 he was put in charge of the Infantry Training School at Calais, and after a year was transferred to

Headquarters staff. In 1921 he was awarded the Chevalier Order de Leopold (Belgium).

Henry Butchart served throughout the war and travelled further afield than many of our members. He was mobilised in August 1914 and was officer commanding the depot of the Scottish Horse until 1915. He accompanied his regiment to Egypt in May 1916 and held a series of administrative roles. He was present at most of the critical battles against the Turkish forces, including the taking of Jerusalem. Henry was later transferred to France with 4th GH and was part of the advance that broke through the Hindenburg Line. He received the Distinguished Service Order (DSO) and the Star of Roumania.

In later life, he was a founder member of the *Scottish Ski Club* and became President in 1950. There is a Butchart Corrie on Glas Maol named after him. Butchart also played a major role in planning and developing the University of Aberdeen's sports facilities and the physical activity centre, which bears his name. He received an OBE in 1951. In 1970 he was made an Honorary Member for services to the Club but sadly died soon afterwards.

William Cook joined the 4th Battalion GH in September 1914 and was wounded near Ypres in June 1915. In November of that year, he was attached to the Admiralty Transport Department and by May 1916 he was working for the Principal Naval Officer based in Archangel. His father was a ship owner, and this new role probably more accurately matched his previous experiences. He had to facilitate the supply of large quantities of Russian timber for the armies in France. He was decorated with the Order of St. Anne by the Tsar. After the revolution, unable to return to Archangel, William was based in Bergen. Here he was engaged in running convoys between the Scandinavian countries and the Allies.

Eldred Corner was mobilised in August 1914 and served as an Officer in the Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC). He worked at the London General Hospital, the King George Hospital and Queen Mary's Auxiliary Hospital for the limbless at Roehampton.

William Croll was mobilised as a member of the RAMC Home Hospital Reserve to serve at Aberdeen Military Hospital with the rank of Captain. He was appointed officer in charge of the hospital early in 1915 and continued in that post until demobilised in January 1919. Five military hospitals were established in Aberdeen by the end of the war.

James Crombie was a Captain in the RAMC (TF) and attached to the 1st Scottish General Hospital, Aberdeen. He served here throughout the war, becoming the officer in command of the centre for the treatment of jaw injuries and the Aberdeen Military Dental Centre.

John Dickson was in France in May 1915 with the 6th GH and was wounded in June, being invalided home. Once he had recovered from his wounds he was promoted Major and involved in the command of training units in Britain

James Duffus also saw action at Beaumont Hamel. He served with the 51st Highland Division in the Royal Field Artillery, going out to France in May 1915. James took part in all his brigade's engagements. During the war he was awarded the Military Cross and Croix de Guerre.

James Edwards practised law in Aberdeen. A member of the TF, he was mobilised in August 1914. Proceeding to France in May 1915, he was in the Royal Field Artillery which formed part of the 1st Highland Brigade. James served throughout the war and was present in all his unit's engagements.

Alexander Galloway was a major in the RAMC (TF) and was attached to the 1st Scottish General Hospital. Alexander acted as an ophthalmic specialist to the Medical Recruiting Board and Ministry of Pensions in Aberdeen.

Alexander M. Johnston was mobilised in July 1914. He had already overseen the Signal Section of the 4th GH. He went to France in May 1915 and was wounded on 3rd June. Sent back to England, he did not return until November 1916. He was responsible for the lines of communication behind the fighting and served in this capacity until the

end of the war, and was present in all the engagements in which his unit took part.

David Levack, the youngest member to volunteer, joined the Wireless Division of the Signals aged 17 in February 1917. He finished the war as a Sergeant Instructor at Haynes Park. After the war he trained as a doctor and maintained his membership of the Club, being President 1935 to 1937. David was mobilised at the outbreak of World War Two and was captured at St. Valery, spending four years as a prisoner of war. Now a colonel, he was awarded a CBE by King George VI for gallant and distinguished service in the field.

John Levack was also a member of the RAMC (TF). He was mobilised on war being declared and was attached to the 1st Scottish as Medical Officer in charge of the x-ray and electrical departments. Promoted Major in 1915, he held these posts until November 1919. He was President of the Club from 1919 to 1924 and was still serving on the committee in 1931.

James Lorimer saw his first action in May 1915 and then served on the Western Front in the Army Service Corps for the duration of the war. He was wounded at Ypres in 1916 and later awarded the OBE (Military).

James C. D. Mackie saw four years of active service on the Western Front. He was promoted Captain in June 1916 and wounded in March 1918. He was gassed in the war and died of pneumonia in 1919.

James B. Miller was in the Royal Engineers (TF) and took his company to France in April 1915, remaining in command of it throughout the war. He was involved in building defensive positions and sites required by artillery units. During the progress of the war James had to both demolish bridges and finally build ones that could take heavy transport. For these achievements, often under fire, he was awarded the Military Cross.

Arthur Milne retired from the Volunteer Force in 1900 but rejoined in August 1915. He was then involved in the construction of a School of Aerial Gunnery at Loch Doon, Ayrshire, and subsequently acted as Camp Commandant.

John Murray was employed on coastal defence for three years before joining a Siege Battery of the Royal Garrison Artillery. He was on the Ypres Salient until the Armistice.

Alexander McConnochie served in the Army Service Corps in Glasgow until 1918. What is little mentioned is that he was a qualified accountant aged 68 years when the war ended. Alexander was a founder member of the Club, the first Club Secretary, the first Meets Secretary and the first Editor of the Journal. It has been said that in the years after the Club was founded there was no more ardent hill walker. He was one of the first people to climb the higher hills in winter. Alexander was also the author of several guide books and articles for the Journal.

James McCoss joined the North Scottish Royal Garrison Artillery in June 1916, going to France in March 1917. James was in the Battle of Messines in June 1917, which is remembered for the detonation of 19 mines beneath the German front lines. This took the Germans by surprise and the allies were able to capitalise on it. The explosion was heard in Downing Street. He served with the artillery for the rest of the war and was at many notable battles including the crossing of the St. Quentin Canal. By the end of the war he had been promoted to sergeant. James wrote several articles for the Journal after the war, including one on the Matterhorn.

John MacDiarmid like Henry Butchart also served in Egypt. John rejoined as a Captain in the Royal Army Service Corps serving in Perthshire and Norfolk on transport work. He went to Salonika in January 1917, but plans changed, and all available personnel were sent to Palestine. He continued in his transport role and after the defeat of the Turkish army returned to Alexandria to work as Senior Supply Officer.

D. Ronald MacDonald joined as a despatch rider in June 1915 and took part in all the major engagements attached to the 4th Signal Company until the Armistice.

John McGregor had the shortest war service of any Club member. A major in the 6th Battalion Gordon Highlanders (TF) prior to the war,

he was mobilised in August 1914 but placed on the reserve list in November 1914 being deemed too old for active service.

John Nicol enlisted as a private in the Scots Guard in November 1915. He was involved in heavy fighting until the Armistice. John was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal and in his own words was “*wounded (slightly) twice and gassed once*”. In 1931 he was both Secretary and Treasurer of the Club.

Duncan Pirie's father lived in France and his mother was French. This background along with his public-school education, left him with a knowledge of French and Greek, useful in his future postings. He joined the army in 1887, serving in Egypt and Ceylon. In 1894 he married a daughter of Lord Semphill of Craigievar Castle. He became MP for North Aberdeen in 1896 and held the seat until 1918. Duncan served in the Boer War of 1889 to 1900. Service in the First World War led to promotion and the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. In 1916 he served in Macedonia and then became Commander of the British Garrison in Corfu. Duncan was made OBE (Military), awarded the Greek Order of the Redeemer and the Serbian Decoration of the White Eagle, unique honours for a Cairngorm Club member.

Charles Reid's war began earlier than most. A week before war was declared he was sent to the Torry Battery, Aberdeen. His job was to supervise, in feverish haste, the erection of wire entanglements and dig trenches. Charles left for France in February 1915 and was at Ypres when he fell, seriously wounded. His batman defied enemy fire and carried him to safety, receiving a Military Medal for his actions. Charles never forgot Duncan McLean, visiting twice yearly from London and remembering him in his will. Colonel Reid rejoined the battalion the following March but was wounded in the Somme offensive. He is recorded as remaining in command of his battalion throughout a heavy bombardment of gas shells despite being affected himself. Charles took over the command of a battalion of the GH for the Passchendaele offensive in July 1917. He was wounded for the third time, taking a machine-gun bullet through the jaw in April 1918 and was awarded the DSO.

Alexander Smith was another member keen to participate in the war effort but not eligible for active service. He was a lieutenant in the TF and became a Recruiting Officer in Aberdeen. Alexander served in that capacity from February 1916 until recruitment was taken over by the Ministry of National Service in 1918. This change in management reflects the changing role of conscription.

Arthur Landsborough Thomson served in France with the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders and then in the Headquarters of the 9th Division where in 1918 he was responsible for salvage, such as the recycling of shell cases. Arthur finished the war as Assistant Quartermaster General at General Headquarters with the rank of lieutenant colonel. He went on to be the Administrator of the Medical Research Council for 40 years and to gain a knighthood. He was a leading ornithologist, was president of the British Ornithologists' Union from 1948 to 1955 and an international expert in bird-ringing and migration.

Edward Watt was mobilised in August 1914, but it was August 1918 before he joined a Battalion of the GH in France. He had previously been part of the command of various reserve units of his regiment.

William Welsh, schoolmaster, was determined to enlist. He had been a sergeant in the TF and at the outbreak of war offered his services but was twice rejected by the Medical Board. He was eventually in charge of a platoon from the 1st Banffshire Volunteer Regiment.

Alexander M. Wilson was the only member of the Cairngorm Club to join the Royal Flying Corps (RFC). He was mobilised at the outbreak of the war and served with the 4th Battalion GH in France and Belgium. Wounded in Spring of 1915, he was fit to join the RFC in August. He flew a Maurice Farman biplane during training in Montrose. Alexander served for about a year as a flight commander and then moved into the technical work of aerodrome construction. He was to become Officer Commanding RAF Paris and was awarded the OBE (Military).

In this overview of the service and lives given by Club members in the First World War, the vigour and vitality of these men, in the mountains and at the commencement of war, both in mind and in body shines through. *Glorious Thistles* of Scotland indeed.

Author's Note: The author welcomes corrections or additions to the material in this article and should like to thank the Editor for her encouragement, the Committee for their support, and the Gordon Highlanders Museum for their enthusiasm.

CROSSINGS IN THE CAIRNGORMS

KEN J. THOMSON

Crossing water has always held a special meaning – think of the Red Sea, the Rubicon, or the Rhine. For mountaineers, such a crossing is usually a notable point in an expedition, even if it is the low point of a trip aimed at the summits above. The Cairngorm Mountains are the source of many rivers and burns, all of which can present walkers with problems from time to time and have done since time immemorial. Their waters may flow deep and wide even in normal conditions. Crossing these obstacles has normally been achieved by bridges or fords (or ferries, lower down the main rivers), although tunnels and stilts (MacCannell, 2011) have been suggested, and in winter ice-crossings have occasionally been attempted.

This article, even though it is mostly restricted to crossings upstream of Braemar, Blair Atholl, Feshiebridge, Coylumbridge and Tomintoul, cannot possibly cover all the bridges and fords that have been used over the centuries. Indeed, to focus on only one river, “*The number of bridges that the Dee has swept away, whether of wood, stone or iron, would make a small book in itself*” (MacCannell, 2011). In the nineteenth century, estates erected many bridges, usually of wood, to serve deer stalking (the original inhabitants, and their cattle and sheep, being left to their own devices), but subsequently several metal and wooden bridges have been erected or funded by others, including the Club, as related below.

Apart from the normal watercourse features of width and depth, spates and floods have been notable historical events affecting bridges and, though less obviously, fords. The best-known spates occurred in 1769, August 1829 (the “Muckle Spate”), 1920, 1929, 1937 and August 1956 (the “Cairngorm Flood”, with another spate a fortnight earlier), but many other similar if smaller events have been recorded: 19 between 1768 and 1946 (SEPA, 2015). A Club writer (Perkins, 1957) carefully compared the 1829 and 1956 events in their effects on

the stones and trees of the Luibeg and concluded that *“It is more probable than not ... that the 1829 spate was greater than the 1956 one”*. The most recent spates (at time of writing!) have been in August 2014 (Hurricane Bertha) and late December 2015 (Storm Frank): contemporary photographs and videos are available on the [Cairngorm Wanderer blogsite](#) .

A survey of the records in Britain since 1750 (Macdonald and Sangster, 2017) finds major floods to be negatively correlated with the Winter North Atlantic Oscillation Index (NAOI) of relative air pressure between Iceland and Iberia. Unfortunately, that survey does not include the main rivers of the Cairngorms themselves, but only the Findhorn, which flows down from the Monadhliaths, and the Tay, into which the Tilt and Bruar flow, via the Garry. However, it concludes that the current (post-2000) “flood-rich” period is not unprecedented, though more evident in northern regions of Britain than southern ones. The period 1970–2000 is considered “flood-poor”, which may partly explain why recent floods are often perceived as extreme events. However, the Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA, 2015) has reported data from measuring stations on the Spey and Dee which *“show a general trend for higher annual maximums over the time they were monitored”* (1951/52 and 1972/73 to 2005/06 respectively), although from uncertain causes.

There seems no simple way to order the many crossing points along several rivers and their tributaries distributed around a mountain massif. The organisation of the crossings in this article is as follows:

North and East of the main Cairngorms, in Rothiemurchus, Glen Avon, etc.

The Upper Dee and its Northern Tributaries, working anticlockwise from the Quoich, the Derry and the Lui

The Ey, the Dee from the Linn upstream, including the Geldie

Ballater, Braemar and “round about”, i.e. the Muick, the Girnock, the Gelder and the Clunie

The South and West of the main Cairngorms, i.e. the Feshie, the Tilt and the Shee

References to “the 1866 map” or similar are to the Ordnance Survey (OS) six-inch (about 1:10000) maps surveyed in or around that year. These and many other maps are available online and can be examined in minute detail at the [National Library of Scotland website](#). However, pre-OS estate maps for the Cairngorms have not yet been digitised, the OS six-inch series around 1900 omit several areas in the region, and the one-inch maps of that era are less detailed than the six-inch versions.

The North and East

On the northern approach to the Lairig Ghru, the famous “Cairngorm Club Footbridge” crosses the Allt na-Béinne Moire coming down from Braeriach and the western slopes of Cairngorm. This had a succession of wooden bridges in the nineteenth century until the steel one was erected by the Cairngorm Club in 1912 under the supervision of the indefatigable engineer and Club member James A. Parker (see photographs on opposite page)). The total cost was £94. 4s 6d, less than the £100 estimate. On its centenary, in 2012, the entire bridge was repainted by the Club, and its stylish plaques refurbished. Much further upstream, according to Scroggie (1989, p. 40), “an old plank” spanned the Allt Druie near the site of the now demolished Sinclair Hut (1957-91), probably in the 1960s.

East of Glenmore, at the Bynack Stable, according to the [Adopt a Path website](#) “*a smart wooden bridge over the youthful, bubbling River Nethy*” eases access to the Lairig an Laoigh.

Allt na Beinne Bridge



Peter Mackay, Scotways

Cairngorm Bridge



Cairngorm Club Photo-Archive

The “Fords of Avon” is the major water crossing of the Lairig an Laoigh and possesses a set of rocks and natural stepping stones which ease passage in all but very abnormal conditions. Around 1970, a refuge was built on the northern bank for the convenience of stranded walkers, and this was rebuilt (and much improved) in 2011. Further downstream, there was in the 1920s “*sometimes a bridge over the Avon at Coire nan Clach below Beinn a’Charorruinn*” [sic], but nowadays only estate bridges cross the river; a mile or so downstream from Faindouran Lodge; below the Slochd Mor of Beinn a’Bhuird and Ben Avon, and below Big Garvoun a couple of miles above Inchroy.

Several vehicular estate bridges cross the River Gairn west of the public road at Gairnshiel and have done so for more than a century (the iron one was built to take the Deeside railway over the Gairn at Ballater) (A., 1919), and there are two footbridges beyond the Loch Builg junction. The highest of these footbridges – a broad wooden platform – enables access between Ben Avon and Invercauld over the Bealach Dearg.

The Upper Dee and Its Northern Tributaries

The New Year floods of 2015/16 affected most of the crossings on the lower part of the Quoich, i.e. the vehicular bridge over to Allanaquoich, the footbridge over the Linn just downstream from the Punchbowl, and the small footbridge a mile or so upstream. The first of these bridges is currently “stranded” across dry land as the river has moved eastwards, and a replacement is still under discussion. The Punchbowl footbridge, though high above the usual water level, was moved a few inches (presumably by a tree being swept downstream), and on inspection was found to be suffering from rot in the handrails. A replacement was funded by a £25,000 donation from the Club and erected in December 2016; a plaque commemorating Club member Willie Robb, whose bequest made the donation possible, was affixed in March 2017 (see colour photograph No 16).

The 1866 map shows a footbridge (and a ford) over to Allanaquoich, and a footbridge over the Linn, with a sawmill between

the two, but no “tea-house” cottage. There was also a footbridge further upstream, at the site mentioned above, where the main glen track then ended, although no path or track is shown on the other (north) side.

Higher up the Quoich, there are at present no more bridges. The tributary Allt Dubh Gleann (near the site of a wooden bothy, long since vanished) bars access to Beinn a’Bhuird, although fording here is usually not a great problem. Further up the Quoich, the 1866 map shows a footbridge just upstream from the right-angled turn where the path over from Glen Slugain descends to the Quoich, but that is long gone. For those aiming at Beinn a’Bhuird this way, the fording of the Quoich can be a problem, with a risk of being cut off, on the return. A few years ago, a wire cage of boulders in the middle of the water at the usual fording point was of some assistance, but this has now disappeared.

Access from Braemar and Derry Lodge to the Lairig Ghru requires the crossing of the Lui Beg outflow from Ben Macdhui. Again, a wooden footbridge had “always” been there (e.g. Copland, 1901), but in 1948, Dr George Taylor, a Club member and an engineering lecturer at Aberdeen University, designed and supervised the erection of a new bridge made of aluminium alloy – probably the first in Britain (Taylor, 1948-49). Aluminium was preferred because steel might have been unobtainable at a time of rationing; it also corrodes more slowly (“*and more pleasantly*”) than steel, does not require painting, and is of course much lighter – an important consideration when a “cartie” was to be used (as well as human backs) before helicopters became available. This bridge lasted until the flood of mid-August 1956, when the abutments were undermined, and the whole superstructure carried downstream about 100 yards, amidst a scene “*fantastically unfamiliar*” (Taylor, 1957). A year later, the bridge being bent but still useable, it was re-erected across a rocky gorge about 200 yards upstream from the original site (Taylor, 1961). The 1866 map shows a footbridge at the mouth of this gorge, and a ford on the more direct route, which is still commonly used to avoid the detour to the metal bridge. The footpaths on both sides of the bridge and ford were improved in the early 2000s.

Halfway up Glen Derry, above Derry Lodge, a moraine lies athwart the glen, leaving the Derry Burn to exit, via a narrow gap on the eastern side, from an extensive stretch of flat land upstream. In the early nineteenth century, the Scots pines on the flats were felled by a well-known Deeside character, Alexander Davidson or “Rough Sanie” (1792-1843) and floated downstream with the assistance of water flowing from above an earth dam constructed to fill this gap. According to McConnochie (1900), the dam was swept away in the 1829 flood, and Davidson lost his investment (from smuggling) in timber speculation. A footbridge at the same point is shown on the 1866 and 1921-22 maps, but was occasionally swept away (e.g. McLaren, 1907). In 1937, “*the remains of the bridge over the Derry Burn, about three-quarters of a mile from the Lodge*” were recorded as part of the 50-year celebrations of the founding of the Club (*Cairngorm Club Journal*, July 1938, p. 296); this is probably the same place although the actual distance is about twice as much. In 1959, the then wooden bridge was replaced by a steel one erected by Nature Conservancy student volunteers, with advice, as at Corroul, from the Cairngorm Club’s Dr Taylor, and with the then novel use of a helicopter (Taylor, 1961). The floods of 2015 apparently left this bridge unaffected, but in 2017 the east abutment was found to be in a doubtful state, and a ‘closure’ notice was posted although generally ignored.

Further up Glen Derry, the Glas Allt Mor comes down from the Moine Bhealaich to the east. A bridge here was provided at the same time as at the Derry Dam (see below), but it was washed away in 1970, and has never been replaced. The crossing can normally be made across boulders without too much trouble but can be impossible during spate – even when the Fords of Avon are feasible. A little upstream from the Glas Allt, a small wooden footbridge over the Coire Etchachan burn was erected by Braemar locals in about 1980 and eases the route to the Hutchison Memorial Hut.

Where the Derry Burn flows into the Lui Beg burn, the Lodge lies on the east side of the confluence, and the keeper’s (“Bob Scott’s”)

cottage on the west side. In the nineteenth century, mutual access was obviously essential, and the 1866 map shows two pairs of footbridge and ford across both water courses despite their considerable width. In the 1950s, a vehicular bridge was built over the Lui Water just downstream from the confluence, and possibly also across the Derry. During the 1956 spate, *“the previously damaged access bridge to Luibeg Cottage [was] swept about a mile downstream”* (Taylor, 1957). Scroggie (1989, p. 45) records how in 1958 – after passing Queen Elizabeth’s convoy of cars coming down from the Lodge – he *“clumped over two broad wooden bridges, one across the Derry, and one across the Lui”*, to get to Bob Scott’s cottage and bothy (see photograph below).

Luibeg Bridge to Bob Scott’s



Cairngorm Club Photo-Archive

Dorward records: *“I remember sometime in the late 1970s a unit of Royal Engineers (Territorials I think) lived in the lodge for the few weeks it took them to build a bridge across the Laoigh near the*

downstream edge of the plantation.” The Lui bridge was again damaged in the 1970s and has not been replaced, making it difficult to cross the river to the cottage and onto Sgor Dubh: there is no easy ford.

Access from Derry Lodge to the Lairig Ghru and up the west side of the Derry Burn is now by a footbridge just beyond the Mountain Rescue post at Derry Lodge, a little upstream from the earlier bridge(s). This footbridge was washed away (probably by a tree coming downstream) in August 2014 but was swiftly replaced by one supplied by the Scottish Rights of Way Society (or ScotWays). Although “temporary”, this bridge survived the Storm Frank floods, and it seems destined to stay although its abutments may require strengthening (see photograph below).

Derry Bridge



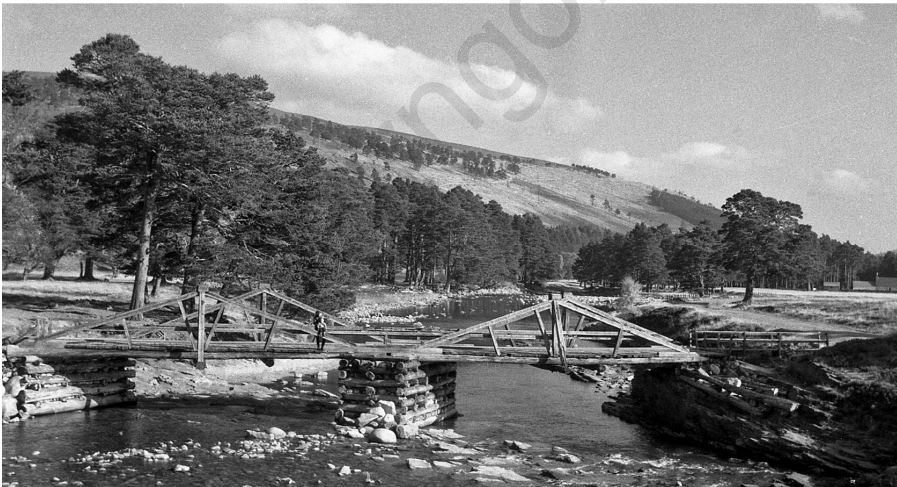
Cairngorm Club Photo-Archive

A footbridge at the present Black Bridge site appears to have been built in the early 1860s (it is marked on the 1866 map). Before (and probably after) that, the main route used by carriages and others would

have been the track over the shoulder of the hill from Mar Lodge. The vehicular bridge in place by 1947 (and perhaps long before) sustained “*rather extensive damage*” in the 1956 spate, and the Club, which at that time was leasing Derry Lodge, contributed fifty guineas to its repair.

Below the road bridge over the Lui, and the Lui-Dee confluence, Company 25, 2nd Forestry District, of the Canadian Forestry Corps built a sawmill during the Second World War on the north bank of the Dee upstream from Muir Cottage. A small railway from the mill over a substantial wooden bridge facilitated transport of cut boards onto the public road without having to negotiate the road bridges over the Lui and the Linn of Dee (see photograph below).

Canadian Bridge



Cairngorm Club Photo-Archive

The bridge remained crossable (although its approaches were damaged, and it was closed to traffic in 1956) until the 1960s, when it was demolished. Even after the New Year 2015/16 floods, the last remnants of the bridge (an eroded spiked log on either side of the river)

remained visible, but lack of conservation (or even interest, apparently; see criticism by Club member Peter Aikman on the Club Forum) by the current landowner, the National Trust for Scotland, means that these are unlikely to last for long.

The Ey, the Linn of Dee and Upstream

On the Ey, Ricardo's Bridge crossed the river just below the confluence with the Allt Cristie. According to Dorward, it was probably named after John Lewis Ricardo who in 1841 married Catherine Duff, the niece of James, 4th Earl of Fife (owner of the extensive Mar estate) and was almost certainly the shooting tenant of the area in 1842. Until the 1930s, this was a footbridge, but it was converted – probably during the Second World War by the Canadian Forestry Corps who were active in the area (see Canadian Bridge) – into a vehicular bridge, which remained crossable, with care, until the 1960s. The abutments are still obvious. The 1866 map also marks a bridge – apparently vehicular, since it is not marked “Footbridge” – over the Ey at the present track site.

Further upstream, at Auchelie, the 1866 map (at “Aucherie”) shows a footbridge over the Ey – this lasted, at least in the form of a fallen tree trunk, until the early 1990s – and another where the present track bridges the Allt an t-Sionnaich tributary just upriver. However, in 1897, *“For seven miles or so there is more or less of a road [up Glen Ey], although it cannot be said that much trouble has been taken as regards bridges. Two considerable streams have to be forded.”* (Anonymous, 1897). About halfway up Glen Ey, the “Double Fords Brig” (see [Alec Finlay blog](#)) takes the track from the west to the east side of the river, before entering the flats (which sometimes flood completely) up towards Altanour.

The 1866 map shows a footbridge across the Ey gorge near “Alltanodhar Shieling”, at the same site as presently used and another a little upstream, across that Allt. However, no bridge is shown downstream, where the main track to Altanour now crosses the Ey for

the final time on a wooden estate bridge; presumably it was simply forded.

At the Linn of Dee, “*a plank did duty*” at the beginning of the nineteenth century (McConnochie (1900)) and was replaced by “*an alpine wooden bridge*” about 1830. According to Dorward: “*The first bridge, built in the teens or twenties of the 19th century, was destroyed by the Muckle Spate of 1829. The second bridge replaced the first and was itself replaced by the third and current bridge in 1857*”. This bridge was opened by Queen Victoria, who wrote: “*we started in “Highland state” – Albert in a royal Stuart plaid, and I and the girls in skirts of the same, – with the ladies (who had only returned at five in the morning from the ball at Mar Lodge) and gentlemen, for the Linn of Dee, to open the new bridge there. On the bridge Lady Fife received us, and we drank in whisky “prosperity to the bridge”*”.

Further up the Dee, beyond a few estate bridges over side-streams, the White Bridge (on the 1866 map) was probably wide enough to take carriages up to Geldie and Bynack Lodges and was at some point (perhaps from its erection, and repeatedly) painted white, although that fades over time. According to McConnochie (1898, pp.13-14), it succeeded “*a footbridge with a ford a little lower down*”. However, there may be some confusion here with an old footbridge just below the Chest of Dee rapids before the White Bridge was erected (McConnochie, 1900, p. 225), and a ford was still visible nearer the junction with the Geldie.

High up the Dee itself, early visitors had to ford the Dee as best they could from the Lairig path near the entrance to Glen Geusachan (this can sometimes be done dryshod in summer, but fording becomes dangerous or impossible at other times; e.g. M’Connochie, 1896; Kyd, 1906b) to the watcher’s cottage (a bothy for over a century, though no bridge or cottage is shown on the 1866 or 1922 maps) under the Devil’s Point. A “plank and stilts” at Corroure are mentioned by McConnochie in 1898. In July 1951, as the result of a drowning the previous year (after Corroure had just been reconstructed by the Cairngorm Club), a cable crossing (see photograph on the following page), was erected by

Mr Jack Milne, a retired Aberdeen postal worker: Syd Scroggie used it during his first blind (and one-legged) trip into the Cairngorms in 1955 (Scroggie, 1989, p. 23). It “*provided a dry crossing, somewhat perilous for the aged and nervous but highly stimulating for the acrobatic*” (Taylor, 1961), but had collapsed by 1958. In 1959, the Nature Conservancy, which then managed the land, replaced it, with advice from Dr Taylor, by a metal bridge, with materials brought in by helicopter, and power-drilling of the rock for the foundations. Access from the Lairig path became extremely boggy over the years but was greatly improved in the early 2000s by path work by the new owner, the National Trust for Scotland

Pam Howgate on the Cable Bridge at Corrour



Peter Howgate

A mile or so south of White Bridge, the Geldie turns west near the Ruighe Ealasaid (Elisabeth’s Shiel) – long empty, but due to be refurbished as a bothy in 2018. The 1866 map shows only a ford, but later a footbridge existed, at least intermittently (1922 map; *Cairngorm*

Club Journal, 1939, p. 70). In the late 1960s, there was “a long and tottering footbridge which spans the river in two strides, using a shingly island in the middle for this purpose” (Scroggie, p. 60). Currently, only six concrete pillars – one overturned in midstream – are to be seen, with the most northerly one inscribed thus:

*Bob Scott
Gordon Fraser
Robbie Mitchell
John Konig
1968: Oor Brig*

There is occasional pressure to re-erect a bridge here (it is on a long-distance right of way and core path), but it lies on a broad and bouldery flood plain, and, apart from other considerations (see below), the risk of losing a support is plain.

Further up the Geldie, at least one old bridge site is plainly visible – at the Allt Dhaidh Beag, where a small footbridge has been installed relatively recently (see photograph below) and possibly a similar one existed further west at Allt Dhaidh Mor, which is now a boulder ford.

Allt Dhaidh Beag Bridge



No bridge site over to the Geldie Lodge is obvious, but one was apparently here in the 1930s (*Cairngorm Club Journal*, 80, p. 68). However, the river is easily fordable here in normal conditions.

Despite the apparent lack of a bridge over the Geldie at that time, the 1866 map shows a “Foot Bridge” over the Bynack Burn near the “Bynack Shieling” (or Lodge, now ruined), and as late as June 1961 a “*footbridge ... sagged over the burn*” (Scroggie, p. 97).

Ballater, Braemar and Roond About

In Glen Muick, the bridge between the Spittal and Allt-na-Giubhsaich was renewed in the 1960s, when the track thereabouts was reinforced with military-style metal track for vehicles. The 1900 map records only a footbridge here. Similarly, the rather ugly concrete affair now across the Black Burn about halfway along the southern shore of Loch Muick probably replaced an earlier footbridge (e.g. on the 1900 map), when the army was brought in to establish the zigzag track up onto Sandy Hillock above the loch. The two small footbridges at the head of Loch Muick were swept away in the New Year 2015/16 floods but were quickly re-installed. Above the Glas Allt Falls, a relatively modern bridge replaces an earlier (e.g. 1900 map) footbridge.

In Glen Girnock, the next glen to the west, a giant weaver named Muckle Fleeman is supposed to have placed in the late sixteenth century an enormous flat stone across the Girnock river, near the now-vanished village of Greystone, where it served for two hundred years (MacCannell, 2011). Another source Deeside Tales has this event as the climax of a long-forgotten feud between the Gordons of Knock and Forbes of Strathgirnoc. Further upstream, and from the same source, “*The approach to Linqoch [also now vanished] is lovely, meandering as it does through the airy and scented Birk Wuid of Lynvaig, before coming to a halt at an old wooden bridge over the Girnock burn*”.

In the next glen, west again, no bridge is shown on the 1866 map at “Glengelder Lodge” (now Gelder Shiel, with its newly palatial bothy), but a crude vehicular bridge now goes over the watercourse just upstream from the buildings. Both approaches to this bridge were

damaged by the Storm Frank spate (as were many of the riparian mini-plantations just established in this and other Deeside glens) but were swiftly repaired. The 2001 1:25000 (but not the 1:50000) map marks a footbridge about 500m further upstream from the Lodge.

The stone road-bridges between and around Ballater and Braemar are too well known to need description here; instead, only the various smaller bridges in the area are mentioned. The suspension footbridge at Polhollick above Ballater – built by James Abernethy & Co. in 1892 – was rendered useless by the 2015/16 floods and awaits the repair of its piers. At Abergeldie Castle (which once lay to the north of the River Dee, so that the 2015/16 floods were perhaps merely trying to restore this course!), a rope-held wooden cradle or box once crossed the river but became disused after a tragedy in 1823. In 1885, the contraption was replaced by “*a handsome suspension bridge ... erected by the Queen*”, but this in turn became ruined, and was destroyed in the 2015/16 floods. Further upriver, there is another suspension footbridge at Easter Balmoral a short way below the road bridge built by Prince Albert to facilitate the stopping-up of the South Deeside route between Balmoral and Invercauld. Finally, a mile short of Invercauld is the Danzig suspension bridge (long blocked to casual visitors – though not to persistent mountaineers!), which leads to the Danzig (now Allt Garbh) Shiel built by Queen Victoria and visited by the poet-queen of Roumania, Carmen Sylva, who “*was overpowered by the weird and solemn grandeur of the forest, and [whose] imaginative nature revelled in the picturesque scene when a Highland torchlight dance celebrated the return of the Royal sportsmen with the deer*”, (Anonymous, 1910-12); it is now available for weekly rental. This bridge was also built by James Abernethy & Co. in 1924, like the Cambus o' May bridge (1905, reconstructed in 1988, and damaged in the 2015/16 flood). Further up the Allt Garbh, a humpbacked cast-iron bridge spans the fine falls of that burn on the track up through the Ballochbuie Forest and the Feindallacher Burn – the route that Victorians often took from Braemar up to Lochnagar. Higher up the

Burn, at the stables, a small planked bridge existed at least in 2009 but the burn can be easily leaped elsewhere.

At Braemar itself, there has been a public road bridge for many years over the Clunie between Castleton on the east and Auchindryne on the west, but a bridge over the Dee at Braemar itself is currently lacking, although the name Carn na Drochaide (“hill of the bridge”) to the north is suggestive. *“From time immemorial there [was] a ferry boat for the convenience of persons wishing to cross the river from Castleton of Braemar to that part of the road lying opposite this much-frequented village”* (at Inverchandlick), but this was removed shortly before 1852 when Mr James Farquharson closed the road between Invercauld Bridge and Allanaquoich to public use (“Scotus”, quoted in *Cairngorm Club Journal*, 1911). However, a private ferry still existed there, or perhaps opposite Invercauld House, in 1912 (Anonymous, 1912, p. 182). There appears to have been a footbridge at Braemar Castle in the 1930s (*Cairngorm Club Journal*, 80, p. 68) though it is not marked on the 1866 or 1894 maps. And so many generations, including climbers from the Fife Arms bar intent on Glen Slugain and beyond, have relied on fords, dependent on current and recent water levels, or have had to go around by Invercauld or Mar Lodge, creeping past the “big hoose” at least until recently. Plans, and even a design (see [The Happy Pontist blog](#)) costed at some £1 million, for a new foot and cycle bridge at Braemar were floated a few years ago, but there have been no recent signs of progress with this.

Going south, Fraser’s Bridge is the 18th century vehicle bridge over Clunie Water about 3 miles south of Braemar. It was built in 1749, or soon after, as part of the ‘New Military Road’ system set up after the Jacobite rising of 1745. It is shown on General Roy’s map circa 1755 and is still in public use. On the 1866 map, footbridges over the Clunie are shown at their present sites, i.e. between Newbigging and Coireyaltie, and between Alltamhait and Coirenalarig (where there is presently a rough vehicular bridge). Another footbridge, still present, is shown over the Baddoch Burn, but no more (or even a path) further up that tributary. Further up the Clunie, there was another footbridge over

the Allt a'Garbh Choire, onto the path up below Sron na Gaoithe; the main road seems to have had proper bridges (like Fraser's Bridge), e.g. the Sean Spittal Bridge over the Clunie a little downstream of that Allt.

At the foot of Glen Callater, the 1866 map marks a footbridge over Clunie Water at Auchallater: one is still there. On the same map, a footbridge (and ford) is marked where the track to the Lodge crosses the river halfway up. McConnochie (1900) has a "*wooden bridge*" here, with the road hereabouts being repaired by "*the hirers in Braemar, who are not unnaturally interested in preventing it from getting utterly impassable for vehicles*". Nowadays, there is a wooden vehicular bridge here, and at the Lodge itself. Above the loch, there is no bridge across the main watercourse, the Allt an Loch; walkers are advised to use the ford (also used by vehicles) a good deal further up the Jock's Road path, which also has a couple of excellent stepping stones over side-streams.

Going west of Braemar, a footbridge lies just below the Corriemulzie gorge, and a little way above the new hydroelectric turbine building. This bridge is marked on the 1866 map, but by the mid-20th century had become "*extremely rotten, moss-covered tree-trunks*" (Tewnion, 1946-47). Above the road bridge, a new vehicular bridge has been installed at the water intake. Then, further west still, the Victoria Bridge over to Mar Lodge is marked on the 1866 map as "*wooden*", presumably the one erected in Victoria's time (1848, according to one of the two inscriptions). The current metal version was erected (for King Edward VII) in 1905 but is in poor condition: see [YouTube](#). Upstream again, and until at least 1972, a white suspension bridge over the Dee could be crossed north of the houses of Inverey; this may have been constructed to serve a golf course on the intervening flats. Currently, only the tall metal uprights on both sides remain.

The South and West

In the North Esk area, apart from several vehicular estate bridges, a footbridge crosses the burn beneath the Shank of Inchgrundle, another goes over the Water of Lee to ease access to the Falls of Unich, and a steel beam crosses the same Water below Hunt Hill. Mapped footbridges over the river lower down, near Tarfside, cannot all be relied upon.

In the upper South Esk glen, beyond the road-end car park, a footbridge crosses the river (or Burn of Gowal), beyond Moulzie Farm (as one did below the farm around 1900); (Anonymous, 1912, p. 174), as it has done since the 1860s. Just above Bachnagairn, the river is nowadays crossed by the Roy Tait Memorial Bridge, built in 1984 to commemorate a *Grampian Club* Member who died three years earlier on Lochnagar, and funded via the first Dundee Mountain Festival in 1983. Being on the Balmoral estate, this needed royal approval, which was given on condition that the width should not allow land-rover type vehicles. It was repaired in 2016 with EU outdoor access funds.

In upper Glen Shee, only a “*couple of planks ... from the old bridge*” over the Allt a’Ghlinne Bhig below the Devil’s Elbow were said to exist in 2009; a footbridge is marked on the 1866 map.

Above Blair Atholl, the Tilt and its tributaries carry several estate bridges, but the highest in the glen lies in the narrow gap below the Falls of Tarf. Replacing earlier bridges here (though at least one was removed in the mid-nineteenth century to obstruct a right of way), (Anonymous, 1911); the fine suspension-type Bedford Memorial Bridge was erected in 1886 by the family and friends of a young English visitor drowned in the pool below the falls. They were financially assisted by the Scottish Rights of Way Society, that organisation’s first venture into bridge-building. The bridge already needed repair in 1905 (Kyd, 1906a), and was last refurbished by the Society in 2000. According to Scroggie (1989, p.72), the sixteen-year-old Jamie Scroggie spent the night in his sleeping bag on this bridge, to avoid the “*spookiness*” of Lower Geldie Lodge. Up the Tarf, there was

once a bridge beside the lodge (now the “Tarf Hotel”) (Barclay, 1903), but nothing of this now remains.

On the Eidart, a major tributary of the Feshie and a major obstacle after rain or a thaw, a footbridge was erected before 1914 about 100 yards above the junction: “*it consists of two pairs of light trees laid end to end and spliced in the centre, where they are supported by similar but stronger pairs, which act as a pier and are secured by a considerable pile of stones. The footway has battens at intervals and a strong wire on the upper side to serve as a parapet. The bridge will be of immense service to mountaineers and tourists, and it is to be hoped that it will stand the stress of the winter floods*” (Anonymous, 1914). Presumably that hope was dashed! – certainly the wire, and probably the bridge, seems to have come and gone over the decades (e.g. Anderson, 1896; Anderson, 1902; Baker, 1902; Robertson, 1903; “Lady Pedestrian”, 1918).

Between the Wars, many, including the Club (e.g. Anonymous, 1919), supported a road between the Linn of Dee and the Feshie; that would have solved the crossing problem for walkers, but the proposal came to nothing.

The current Eidart bridge (see photograph on next page), is a narrow metal one, erected in July 1957 by 152 (H) Infantry Workshops (Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers), (T.A.) for the Scottish Rights of Way Society, as described by *WalkScotland*, “*in response to potential loss of life*” on an ancient right of way in a remote location downstream of a huge catchment area. Installed in an impressive situation just above a fine waterfall, it looks somewhat flimsy but appears to be in as good a state as it was when erected. Further down the Feshie, the Allt Coire Bhlairst has to be forded (which might be problematic in spate), before a land rover track nowadays goes down the eastern bank of the river.

The trestle bridge across the Feshie at Carnachuinn was washed away in 2009 (a bridge has been here since at least 1870), and its replacement has been held back by planning problems. Still further down the river, path work at the Allts Garbhloch and Fhearnagan was

also washed away in early 2016, as was at least one of the bridges over the Allts Chromhraig and na Caoleig on the right of way west to Drumguish, (Heritage Paths). Around here, bridges over the main river seem to have come and gone over the decades since at least the nineteenth century (e.g. Anonymous, 1900).

Eidart Bridge



Ken Thomson

Final Thoughts

As the paragraphs above suggest, crossing the watercourses of the Cairngorms is an integral part of most long-distance travel in these parts, and many of the bridges described have been regarded as essential, as evidenced by the frequent re-building of those washed away by floods and spates. “*Access to the mountains*” has been a goal ever since the Club’s first President, James Bryce MP, introduced a Parliamentary Bill with that title in 1884. There has been progress since, notably in the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 with its Access

Code, and the work of organisations such as the Upper Deeside (later the Cairngorm Outdoor Access Trust, and now the Outdoor Access Trust for Scotland, OATS). Along with higher levels of public interest in hillwalking, and the development of the mountain bike, easing access by providing (and advertising) reliable means of crossing rivers and burns has seemed of unquestionable public benefit.

And yet, and yet ... In 1937, Percy Unna laid down 10 “views” (now generally called “principles”, e.g. by the National Trust for Scotland, which takes them as “*the key reference point when the Trust is considering management of mountainous properties*”). These include that “*the hills should not be made easier or safer to climb*”, and that no transport facilities, signs, shelters, etc. (Unna did not explicitly mention bridges) be provided on “*land [to] be maintained in its primitive condition*” (see National Trust for Scotland Wild Land Policy). More recently, the Scottish Wild Land Group was formed in 1982, and public concern has focussed on protecting “wild land” as a “*nationally important asset*” in the National Planning Framework. Scottish Natural Heritage has defined 42 Wild Land Areas in terms of “*a sense of remoteness, a perception of naturalness, rugged or challenging terrain and a lack of obvious modern influences on the landscape*”. Of course, “sense” is subjective, and a long-established bridge may not be regarded as “modern”, but it seems incontrovertible that bridges, like over-engineered paths, detract from “remoteness”, “naturalness” and “challenge”.

Thus, more and more bridges detract from what most people go to – or at least walk in – the Cairngorms for. The most prominent current case in point is bridging the Geldie, on an ancient right of way between Glen Dee and Glen Tilt, and now a core path in a Land Reform Act system that “*gives the public reasonable access throughout their area, ... [and] as a whole must cater for everyone, including those with disabilities*”. When considering a bridge instead of a ford here, is it significant that there has previously been a bridge at this point, or that without a bridge there may be safety risks for NTS employees and clients (this is a shooting area)?

Or take the bridge over to Corroun, certainly one used many times a month, Summer and Winter, in all conditions and by many groups including youthful ones. Its loss would sharply reduce the use of the bothy, and almost certainly place people in danger or at the least discomfort as they waited for the river to subside.

But the absence – one actual, the other hypothetical – of a bridge at each of these points corresponds to an immense area of truly remote country, “wild” by any (British) standard. The lack of the Geldie bridge is a well-known risk on the Tilt-Dee through-route and distances the An Sgarsoch-Carn Fhithleir-Tarfside area from “easy access”. Without a Corroun bridge, the ascent of Cairn Toul from any direction would be a serious undertaking, and so would traversing the Lairig Ghru itself. But would that be so bad? With the proliferation of long-distance trails, there are plenty of long-distance (and well-signposted) off-road walks available; what is under threat – from hill tracks, “improved” paths, and bridges – is the essential core of the Cairngorms: high, remote and unfrequented hills. Crossing water should be like crossing land: a challenge to be met!

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Author's Note: As will be apparent from the above reference list, the compilation of this article has been greatly eased by reference to past issues of the *Cairngorm Club Journal*, and to the useful websites maintained by Joe Dorward and Neil Reid. The author will be grateful to learn from these or other sources of any corrections or additions.

BOOK REVIEWS

Into the Silence: The Great War, Mallory and the Conquest of Everest, Wade Davis, 2011, Vintage Books; £12.99, paperback, pp. 655, including annotated bibliography and index. ISBN 9780099563839.

I first saw this book in the café at Ballachullish and wondered why we needed another on Everest. When later, I bought it, I found that my initial opinion was too hasty. This book links the early expeditions to Everest with the First World War experiences of those involved. Many of them served throughout the war in some of the most difficult situations. Yet the narrative is more than two stories intertwined. The early exploration of Everest took place from Tibet, and the book deals sympathetically with that country's move into the twentieth century. Another theme is the work of the Survey of India: several strong members of the expeditions worked for this organisation. Thus, the need for over 600 pages of content.

This book is written by a Canadian, and I think that is one of its strengths; the author can look at the story from a different perspective to many previous writers. With the material supplied by Wades' researches, the reader may form a different view of Mallory to that offered by earlier biographers. The attitude of some of the English climbers towards anyone outside their clique makes uncomfortable reading. It was a depleted pool of available climbers after the losses of World War One. Those Scottish climbers chosen were coming to the end of their distinguished mountaineering careers. Unfortunately, they suffered from ill health from the onset of the first expedition, and sadly for Kellas it would prove fatal.

This book could be the first you might read on the topic and you would be well informed by the end of it. Even if you have read many books on this epoch of mountaineering history, you will look on the characters in the saga more sympathetically by the end of it. The annotated bibliography allows the serious reader to delve even further

into this fascinating subject. This book deserves a place on your book shelf.

MARK PEEL

Mountain Holidays, Janet Adam Smith, 1946, J.M. Dent; republished 1996 Ernest Press; £12.50, paperback, pp. 194, including index and additional illustrations. ISBN 0948153458.

This delightful book is by one of my alpine heroines, though a modest and self-deprecating one, whose love of the hills shines through all. Janet Adam Smith was the daughter of the Principal of Aberdeen University and sister of George Buchanan Smith (see “The Cairngorm Club and the First World War”, this issue). She grew up in the Chanonry, Old Aberdeen, and was introduced to the hills by Easter family holidays in Arran. After her first steps in the Alps, she decided, “*to extend my skill so that on my next Alpine climb I should be less of a passenger and more of a partner*”. She would take the night train to Speyside, walk through the hills alone, and arrive home the day after her luggage. She vividly describes the great passes of the Cairngorms, “*with two tops, and two struggles*”, and her nights at Maggie Gruer’s cottage in Inverey - the Maggie Gruer whose chair is now owned by the Cairngorm Club. But as well as in Scotland, she climbed each summer before the Second World War in the Alps, with her husband Michael Roberts, and writes with a clear-eyed joy of their days there with school parties around Val d’Isère, of wanderings across the Italian border in the days when Mussolini was in power, and of climbing big routes with the guide Othon Bron of Courmayeur. The thrill of the summits, the pleasure of moving on each day to new country, the warmth of the valleys and the local people, are all intermingled. She also describes two Winter holidays: ski-touring through a landscape only beginning to be touched by winter sports.

You do not need to be an ace climber to enjoy this book, although you will enjoy it even more if you know the countries and follow her

exploits on a map. Although her life was touched by tragedy (her brother was killed in 1915, during the First World War; Othon Bron fell into and was killed in a crevasse below the Dent du Géant and in 1939, soon after the book was first published, Michael Roberts died), the enduring feeling is of joie de vivre. As she says, “*One of the main points of holidays is to free you from the humdrum worries of our working lives*”, and she certainly succeeds!

LYDIA THOMSON

Scottish Hill Tracks, ScotWays, the Scottish Rights of Way and Access Society, 2011, The Scottish Mountaineering Trust; £18, pp. 251, including maps, photographs and index. ISBN 9781907233166.

This is a real treasure trove of a book for walkers, runners and cyclists alike. First published in 1947, it is now in its fifth edition containing 344 routes, criss-crossing Scotland's hill country from the Borders to Caithness. Divided into 24 sections, the book really comes into its own in giving details of new routes you may not have been aware of and for planning multi-day adventures. Each chapter gives a clear and excellent overview (at a scale of approximately 1:650,000) of how you might connect different areas together and highlights routes that might otherwise go unnoticed in the high detail of an OS map. Looking at the red spider web of routes spreading out over uncharted (or charted) territory can cause the reader to get a distinct case of itchy feet.

The sections are well illustrated by colour photographs which give a good feel for the terrain encountered. Each route is given its own detailed description with useful information on the condition of the paths and bridges on the route, as well as river crossings and alternatives for rivers in spate. This made it a great resource for me in planning my route on The Great Outdoors (TGO), coast-to-coast challenge in 2017.

The selection of routes in the guide comes from the collective judgement of past and present editors as to what offers a good day out.

Often the routes have historical associations. Many are in countryside of scenic merit and are often in terrain that can be wild and challenging. There is also a great breadth of coverage in the routes, from the rolling high country of the Southern Uplands, the hill ground of Central Scotland and along the Highland edge.

The cost, £18 (£15 for ScotWays members) of the book is a little bit pricey, but with the proceeds going towards charitable causes, as well as the continuation of its publication, it is still a good buy and a great source of inspiration.

IZY KIRKALDY

The Walker's Guide to Outdoor Clues and Signs, Tristan Gooley, 2014, Sceptre; £10.99, pp. 437, paperback. Ebook available. ISBN 9781444780109.

I don't know any walker willing to add to the weight of their rucksack without good reason. However, if given this book as a present, as I was, a walker is unlikely to leave it unread on a bookshelf. There is too much compelling information. The author's aim is to increase the fascination of walking by encouraging constant observation and interpretation. An explorer by temperament, Tristan Gooley published an earlier book "The Natural Navigator" and runs courses encouraging the detection of clues in the natural world. In this book the preparatory work involves reading about every aspect of the natural world. Some of this is to help in navigation - but the charm is in exciting curiosity. Having mastered the chapters on the stars and the moon, you will be first in line for a night walk. The author advocates the same approach in cities - where every road name must be considered, and no graveyard should escape detailed attention. The chapter on birdsong neatly bridges these areas and quoting from Jon Young the author writes, "*The birds are practically drawing a map of the immediate landscape for us to use. Here is the water, here are the berries, here are the cold morning-stilled grasshoppers*".

Embedded in the text are attractively drawn diagrams and a few black and white photographs. Two of the photographs are in the first of two chapters on Borneo and yes, you are encouraged to explore the whole world, although in fact this volume is more relevant to the Northern hemisphere. By page 371 you should surely have compiled your own checklist - but for convenience one has been included. Now you have only 4 appendices to master. For example, a list of sun-loving plants and information about shooting stars. There is a danger that you will become the slowest walker on any outing as you put the principles into practice. If there is a pub quiz, you will be forgiven, as you reel off your new-found knowledge.

MARION WHITE

IN MEMORIAM

ANNE E. G. CORDINER

Anne was born in 1925 in Glasgow, of northeast stock. Her mother died of cancer before Anne was 4, a condition that proved hereditary, though Anne was 92 before she finally succumbed. Her teenage years were spent in Bristol, but Anne returned to Scotland to train at the Dunfermline College then based in Aberdeen, graduating with a diploma in Physical Education and Swedish Remedial Work in 1946.

Her interest in the hills and her adventurous spirit were first stimulated by her father, but her first post as a teacher of physical education in Skye gave her unparalleled opportunities to develop her mountaineering skills. Subsequent teaching posts took her to Aberdeen, Bristol, and Derby. Her range of outdoor skills (she held an instructor's certificate in swimming, a proficiency certificate from the British Canoe Union for sea kayaking, and the Mountaineering Instructor's Advanced Certificate) and her work at Glenmore Lodge and with the Mountaineering Association resulted in her appointment as the full-time Warden at the Outward Bound School for Girls in Wales (Rhowniar), a position which she held for twelve years. Whilst at Rhowniar, she got three months' leave of absence to take up a Churchill Fellowship to study Leisure and the Natural Surroundings in Poland, Czechoslovakia and India. That fellowship led to lifelong friendships, which in turn resulted in the Cairngorm Club's exchanges with a climbing club in Rzeszow, Poland, in 1989 and 1990.

On returning to Aberdeen in 1978, she joined the Blood Transfusion Service. Her hobbies were mountaineering, general travel, and photography, and her holidays were often spent abroad, climbing or skiing. The friendships made during her time at Rhowniar and Derby opened doors to trips to Switzerland, France and Italy, Spitzbergen, the Himalayas, Uganda (she had a certificate for successfully climbing Kilimanjaro in her 70s), California, Patagonia, Australia and New Zealand. A highlight was an expedition to Greenland in 1970 with

members of the Ladies Scottish Climbing Club, as described in the *Cairngorm Club Journal*, (94, pp. 1-4).

Anne joined the Club in 1949, and her first term on the Committee was in 1957. She served as Vice-President from 1962 to 1965 and again from 1984 to 1985. At the AGM of the Club on 27 November 1985, she was elected President in succession to Mr E. F. Johnston, and so was President in the Club's Centenary Year. Eric recalls Anne as a good all-round mountaineer, with a natural, well-balanced climbing style and a quiet but competent demeanour. Anne was later accorded Honorary Member status.

Anne was a very private person, of strong character, and with definite views. Her skills in the outdoors, and her enthusiasm for the hills were never in question. In her later years, she was burdened with almost complete deafness, which caused many a misunderstanding.

Anne's extensive mountaineering library and photographic collection were left to the Club on her death on 19 October 2017.

JOHN M. C. GIBSON

John Gibson, an orthopaedic surgeon, became a member of the Club in 1983, and was a member of the committee from 1988 to 1991, and Vice-President from 1994 to 1997. He graduated in Medicine from Edinburgh University in 1950, and underwent training in London, Oxford and Edinburgh before being appointed to his consultant post in Aberdeen and Stracathro Hospital. In addition to his outstanding career as an orthopaedic surgeon, he had a major interest in the hills, and took part in many Club activities. He is remembered by James Friend as a "*delightful companion on any walk or weekend event, with a splendidly dry sense of humour. On one walk, as we ascended a Munro in Knoydart, he looked at his watch and commented, 'as my granny used to say, the trouble with porridge is that it leaves you suddenly at 11 a.m.'*"

At one point he and his wife Joyce acted as the back-up team to his son Rory who, with a friend, undertook a massive challenge to climb all the Munros in 50 days covering all the ground in between by

walking or cycling. They narrowly missed achieving this by a day because of appalling weather conditions. In later years John's health rendered him frail, and Joyce and he moved to Edinburgh to be near their family. Many Club members will recall very enjoyable visits to them there. John died on 18 January 2017, and Joyce died in May. They will be sadly missed.

DENIS HARDY

Denis was born in Folkestone in 1931 and spent his boyhood in India where his father was a serving army officer. Much of his early education took place in the hill station of Simla, which may have contributed to his later love of mountain places. He returned to Britain after the war and completed his education at the University of London where he achieved his BSc and PhD in chemistry. During his time as a student he escaped north whenever possible for climbing weekends in Wales and Skye.

After serving his National Service with the Royal Signals in the Libyan Desert, Denis looked for a job in Scotland to be closer to the hills and succeeded in finding employment in Edinburgh as a research chemist. He became a member of the Edinburgh Mountaineering Club, through which he met his future wife Elizabeth. In 1967 they moved to Aberdeen, where Denis took up the post of Lecturer in Organic Chemistry at Robert Gordon's Institute of Technology, School of Pharmacy and joined the Cairngorm Club.

Denis and Elizabeth became active participants in all the Club's activities and regularly took new members "under their wing", ensuring that they made the most of the Club, including weekends away before the advent of weekend meets. Denis became involved in the renovation of Muir Cottage, spending many weekends on work parties with his whole family. In 1972 he took over the custodianship of Muir from Peter Howgate (see below) and filled that role for the next eight years. During that time, he helped organise the convivial and well-attended Hogmanay and Burns Night gatherings at Muir, of which

some members still have happy memories. After this he served for three years as Vice-President.

Alongside climbing, Munro-bagging and ski-mountaineering, Denis' interests included photography and alpine gardening. He and Elizabeth spent many walking holidays in the Alps and the Pyrenees, returning with surreptitiously collected seeds and plant specimens. His move away from Aberdeen upon retirement in 1984 took him out of the sphere of the Club's organised activities, although he kept in touch with the many members who had become friends. He continued to travel, becoming particularly fond of the Pacific Northwest of the USA and Canada, and devoted much effort to constructing a beautiful alpine garden out of a few acres of neglected croft land 700 feet above sea level, and overlooking the Beaully Firth. Denis died at home in March 2017 and is survived by Elizabeth and their daughter Alison and son Bruce.

PETER F. HOWGATE

Peter was born in Liverpool in 1929 and was there through the 1939-45 war. From an early age he had a passion for climbing and the natural world, enjoyed through snatched weekends in North Wales and the Lake District. He met his future wife Pam through climbing, and they married in 1951. After graduating in Chemistry at Liverpool University in 1953 Peter worked briefly in the chemical industry in England, but he and Pam then moved to Aberdeen for Peter to join the Torry Research Station in May 1955. He joined the Club the following year.

Within the Club, Peter made his mark immediately, joining the committee in 1957 and becoming Hut's Custodian in 1959. Richard Shirreffs writes "*it is as the Custodian who saw Muir Cottage through its refurbishment in 1971 to 72 that many of us most remember Peter – the skilled do-it-yourselfer who planned and then directed a group of us through such works as constructing the bunks – wooden posts, with tubular metal rails and sailcloth canvases slung taut between them, very comfortable for fully 30 years until the canvases began to sag*". Later in the 1970s, Peter's work took him away to Malaysia for two

years but his return to Aberdeen in 1979 came just at a time when the Club was looking for a new President, and Peter was a unanimous choice. Later he was accorded Honorary Membership. Perhaps less well known to members is the fact that Peter had a part in getting an organised mountain rescue facility off the ground in this area. He was one of a few volunteers from the Club called out on New Year's Day 1959 to help with an extensive search initiated by police in Glen Clova, and after other similar searches hampered by a lack of proper organisation, pressure grew for something more, and the Aberdeen and Braemar Mountain Rescue Teams were formed in 1964 and 1965.

In his professional life, Peter was extremely knowledgeable, well-respected and willing to share his skills with others. He worked at the Torry Research Station for 35 years, specialising in research and development in fish processing and handling, and becoming Head of the Quality Assessment Unit. Whilst working (and even after that in his retirement) he authored or co-authored numerous papers for peer-reviewed scientific journals and contributed chapters to numerous books. He retired at the end of 1989 and received the OBE. His contribution in his professional field is commemorated through the establishment of a Peter Howgate Award, to support young scientists and technologists in the field of fish technology to advance their international experience and develop their career, skills and knowledge.

Peter and Pam moved to West Sussex round about 2000 to be closer to their daughter Jill and her family, but he kept up his interest in the Club to the end. He died on 24 December 2016.

JOAN JOHNSTON NÉE VICKERY

Joan was born in London in 1931 and lived through the Blitz. She won a scholarship to Rosebery Grammar School in Epsom and became an industrial photographer with BP. She started climbing whilst working in Wales, climbing Ben Dearg and Ben Wyvis whilst on holiday in Scotland. She met her future husband Eric in the Alps, or as Eric put it at their Golden Wedding Anniversary, "*they first set bleary eyes on one*

another at 3.00 a.m. in Geneva Airport". Six months later they were married in London and Joan moved to Aberdeen.

At that time, Eric was Meets Secretary of the Club, and Joan's first Club outing was to Ben Lawers, sparking what was to become a lifelong hobby, photographing mountain flowers, - culminating on the Isle of Hoy when she at last spotted the relatively rare *Primula Scotica*.

Joan became the unofficial Club photographer at important Club events such as the reopening of Muir in 1972 after refurbishment, the Centenary celebrations, and the 60th anniversary of the Club indicator on Ben Macdhui. These photographs were all developed at home and are now part of the Club Special Collection at Aberdeen University.

Joan's last Club outing was to Mount Keen in 2000 for the group photograph, replicating that taken in 1890. She died on 30 September 2015 at Maryfield West Home after a long battle with Alzheimer's.

EILEEN M. LEESE NÉE SPENCE

Eileen was born in Aberdeen in 1926. She was a keen sportswoman playing hockey for school, Scottish Universities and once for a Scottish XI. Whilst at Aberdeen University she became interested in hill walking and joined the Club in 1949 as a life member, spending weekends working on Derry Lodge and Muir Cottage. She made lifelong friends and loved Deeside, with especially fond memories of Bob Scott at Luibeg as well as Torridon, but Lochnagar was her favourite. In the early 1950s she moved to London for work but missed the hills and spent all her summer holidays between the North-West Highlands and Deeside, walking whenever the opportunity arose. On return to Aberdeen in 1982 she continued to enjoy the hills.

She was very outgoing and made friends easily, always enjoying the banter of good company. In later life she spent more time gardening and playing golf, but hills were always her first love. She very much appreciated and was flattered by the contact the Club made with her in later years, as its second longest member. During her last year of life, on trips to Inverey and Glen Callater, she would lose herself in warm memories of a golden time of post-war hill walking.

GORDON M. McANDREW

Gordon was born and brought up in Aberdeen, attending Aberdeen Grammar School and then graduating from Aberdeen University with a medical degree. His passion for the hills came from his father and was further developed through the school hill-walking club. In 1949 at the age of 16 and while still at school he joined the Club and was a member until his death on 1 July 2016. While the Club had the use of Derry Lodge he was a member of the working parties which carried out renovations in the 1950s and he was also involved with other members in vital work at Corroul Bothy around the same time.

Gordon served twice on the committee of the Club from 1955 to 1958 and again from 1960 to 1963, the first time as a student.

Gordon “completed” his Munros in 1986 and gained permission to reproduce Sir Hugh Munro’s coat of arms to design a tie and later a badge for compleaters. It was also Gordon who proposed and subsequently organised the resoundingly successful celebratory dinner in the Roxburghe Hotel in Edinburgh on 23 November 1991 to honour the centenary of Munro’s Tables. It was attended by 223 people from all over the UK and beyond, and by an effigy of Sir Hugh Munro! A letter from Sir Hugh’s nephew was read out at the dinner.

Gordon met his wife Leonora while they were both working at Woodend Hospital in Aberdeen. They left Aberdeen in 1970 for York and moved to Edinburgh two years later where Gordon spent the remainder of his life.

Gordon’s medical career was long and distinguished, including time as a Consultant in Medicine for the Elderly in both York and Edinburgh. He continued to be involved long after his official retirement in a variety of part-time posts. He was also involved in the Incorporated Trades of Edinburgh, holding posts of responsibility with that distinguished body. In 2007 he was made a burghess and Free Citizen of the City of Edinburgh.

Away from the hills he had many and varied leisure interests which led him to travel extensively through Europe, Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Antarctica.

Gordon is survived by his wife Leonora, also a Club member, his daughter, son and three grandchildren.

KENNETH L. G. MILLS

Ken Mills was a member of the Cairngorm Club from 1995 and was a Committee Member from 2003 to 2005. Born in Birmingham in 1929, his family moved to Glasgow after the Blitz, and after schooling in Glasgow he studied medicine in Cambridge and the Westminster Medical School in London, qualifying in 1954. He was enlisted into the RAF for his National Service in 1956, only to be involved in the Suez crisis, performing emergency surgery on casualties on board HMS *Ocean*, an elderly aircraft carrier, and undertaking many other responsibilities until he was demobilised in 1959. After several training posts, he was appointed as a Consultant in Orthopaedic Surgery in Aberdeen, where his skills and personal qualities endeared him to his colleagues and patients - he was ever the true gentleman and had a warmth of character and interest in a wide range of topics. He wrote several articles on varied topics in the *Cairngorm Club Journal*. These included such topics as the hip bones of penguins, one of the few species who spend most of their lives, like human beings, in an erect posture (*Cairngorm Club Journal*, 109, pp. 339-342). Even in his later years, he travelled widely, spending time in the Antarctic (including time as medical officer on a British Antarctic Survey vessel) and visiting Siberia in winter. He was an enthusiastic hill-walker, and a warm and interesting companion on any expedition, and indeed he and John Gibson were not only close colleagues in work but long-standing friends both on the hills and elsewhere. He died on 4th August 2017, at the age of 87, leaving many happy memories with family, friends, and his patients.

NORMAN C. ROBERTSON

Norman was born and brought up in Aberdeen and died in 2017 after a short illness. He had been a member of the Cairngorm Club since 1978 and was made an Honorary Member in 2013 for his long-time role as local contact at Inverey for Muir Cottage. This involved not just supplying a key in an emergency but undertaking urgent repairs.

Norman was one of the founder members of the Aberdeen Mountain Rescue Team, when his brother-in-law, Bill Marshall, was first forming the team. He maintained an active interest in both the Aberdeen and Braemar teams for many years.

His working life was spent in Aberdeen as an electrician, during which time he and his wife Bett ran their own business. He later became a clerk of works for the City Council. On retirement he and Bett decided to move up to Inverey and became stalwart members of the community there and in Braemar. Norman was heavily involved with the refurbishment of Mar Lodge following the fire in the late 1990s. He helped with the electrical work especially in the billiard's room. As a result, Norman was very frequently called out to help with electrical work at Mar Lodge.

He was also the Look Out Ghillie during the shooting season for Mar Estate, especially up Glen Ey. He retained his love of the hills all his life. Bett and Norman were married for over 65 years and had 4 children, 3 sons and a daughter. Bett survives Norman.

JUDITH E. THROWER

Judith Thrower was born in 1936 and moved to Aberdeen when her husband, Jim, joined the staff of the University of Aberdeen. Judith herself was a geography teacher and took up a post in what was then Aberdeen College. Judith's love of geography meant a very wide interest in "the world" and she was an avid philatelist with a large stamp collection. A stalwart of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society, she joined some of their expeditions, giving several Traveller's Talks, furthermore her travels to China and Mongolia

enabled her to make valued contributions to Aberdeen's Chinese Studies Group.

Judith joined the Club in 1990 and made many friends. She loved days in the hills and after retirement was an enthusiastic "Thursday walker". Sadly, with the onset of Parkinson's disease, her activities were limited, and she had to accept the use of a wheel chair. However, Judith continued to "join in" and Thursday walkers remember her hospitality at her lovely home near Brig o'Balgownie after they had explored the area. In the end "Lunch and Daunders" were manageable. She is remembered coming along in her wheelchair and much enjoying a beautiful morning along the Ythan estuary before lunch. Sadly, Judith then had to move into a care home but was always interested in the Club and travels. She died in April 2016, a few weeks short of her 80th birthday. Ruth Payne recalls, *"I had the privilege, whilst in Tibet, of raising, a few weeks after her death and with help from locals, a chorten in Judith's memory – close to the Rongbok monastery, glacier and Mallory memorial – it seemed fitting that such a talented and enthusiastic person should have a spectacular resting place with a splendid view of the North face of Mount Everest."*

THE NEW PRESIDENT

I am very honoured to be appointed as the 44th President of the Cairngorm Club, following in the footsteps of my many auspicious predecessors, most recently James Friend. The role still feels very new and it's going to take some time to wear in the "new boots".

It feels as if I have been climbing forever, at first with my brothers on the cliffs of Shetland, then when I was about 13 or 14, at all the places we were told not to go. After completing a climbing course at what was then Aberdeen College and needing somebody to climb with, I asked Stephen Kirkpatrick, then working in Tiso's to recommend a club and this eventually led me to my first climbing buddies in the Cairngorm Club. I enjoy the variety of challenges to be found on every hill and climb. Probably my greatest sense of achievement came from leading my first multi-pitch climb up Crystal Ridge of Sputan Dearg on Ben Macdui.

The Club is a big part of my life, getting out regularly to climbing meets (see colour photograph No 4), weekend meets, social meets and the odd day meet. I have about 40 Munros yet to do, and I pick up Corbetts on the way.

The Club's greatest strength is its ability to keep going, providing for a variety of ages, a range of activities, training, support and encouragement. I want the Club to be less formal and open to change, so as not to alienate prospective new members and to move with the times and life style of the younger generation. My aspiration and hope for the Club is that it remains in good heart and continues to expand. I want to promote a friendly club that appeals to all ages, from all walks of life and provides for its members as much adventure as I have had and am still having.

MARJORY EWAN

PROCEEDINGS OF THE CLUB

BUSINESS MEETINGS

Since the previous issue of the Journal, no fewer than five General Meetings of the Club have been held – the Annual General Meetings of 2015, 2016 and 2017, and two Special General Meetings to deal with the Club’s move to charity status, following its change from Community Amateur Sports Club tax status in 2016.

The *AGM held on 12 November 2015* was attended by 26 members. Apart from Meet and other reports summarised below, the main item reported was the fencing undertaken at Altanour using funds from the Willie Robb bequest. The Treasurer reported that Club membership stood at 401 (4 down from the previous year), and that the bank account stood at £107,923, after an annual deficit of £3,343. The standard Club subscription rate was kept at £13, plus £14.25 for the Mountaineering Council of Scotland.

The following were elected or re-elected as Office-Bearers: Ruth Payne (Hon. President), James Friend (President), Colin Brown and Sue Chalmers (Vice-Presidents), Ken Thomson (Secretary), Derek Pinches (Treasurer), Kees Witte (Hut Custodian), Garry Wardrope (Day Meets Secretary), Jim Bryce (Weekend Meets Secretary), Benn Hitchen (Social Activities Secretary) and Colin Brown (Communications Secretary), with no nomination for the post of Climbing Secretary. The following were elected to “ordinary” membership of the Committee (O = Ordinary, A = Associate membership): Marj Ewan (O), Ruth Payne (O), Marion White (A), Rod Campbell (O), Jean Robinson (O), Ivan Hiscox (O), David Brown (O), Stan Urbaniak (O) and Mark Wynne (A).

Under AOCB, most discussion focused on the need for a second Club hut, and/or replacement of the Club’s indicators on Ben Macdhui and Lochnagar. In both cases, no immediate action was generally felt to be necessary.

On *9 November 2016*, 34 members attended a *Special General Meeting* to approve changes to the Club’s Constitution intended to bring it into line with Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) requirements; these involved reformulation of the Club’s “objects and purposes”, the designation of charity trustees, and modification of winding-up procedures. The two motions were overwhelmingly approved.

At the immediately following *2016 AGM*, the Treasurer reported that Club membership stood at 397, and that the bank account stood at £95,406, after an annual deficit of £12,517. The standard Club subscription rate was kept at £13, plus £16.25 for the MCofS. Office-Bearers were all re-elected, with the addition of James Hirst (O) as Climbing Activities Secretary, and, amongst “ordinary” Committee members, Mike Tonge (A) replaced Stan Urbaniak and Mark Wynne. AOCB covered the What3Words global address system: (Benn Hitchen), the possible MBA renovation of

Ruigh Ealasaid in Glen Geldie, and the recent production of a booklet based on the 2014 Club talk by Eric Johnston.

On 28 June 2017, a further SGM was found necessary to satisfy OSCR as to the disposal of Club assets in the event of winding-up; the opportunity was taken to clarify certain other aspects of the Constitution.

Finally, on 15 November 2017, a relatively uneventful AGM confirmed most existing Office-Bearers in post, with the notable exception of Marjory Ewan replacing James Friend as President after the latter's three-year stint, and the standing-down of Benn Hitchen as Social Activities Secretary. Joyce Ritchie (O) and Izy Kirkaldy (A) replaced Marj Ewan, Ruth Payne and Marion White as "ordinary" Committee members. Club membership had again declined slightly, to 387 (having peaked at 504 some 15 years previously). The bank account had risen to £106,045. No significant AOCB topics were raised or discussed.

MEETS

DAY MEETS

In 2014-15, a total of 157 participants attended these meets, to which the Club contributed a total of £956. In 2015-16, 138 participated, with a net Club contribution of £1007, including three coach hirings. In 2016-17, 129 participated, with a net Club contribution of £361.

	2015	2016	2017
Jan.	Lochnagar*	Lochnagar*	Lochnagar*
Feb.	Meall Glas, Glen Lochay	Tomintoul to Cockbridge	Glen Callater
Mar.	Snowholing	Snowholing	Snowholing
Apr.	Ben Avon/Bhuird	Linn o'Dee Circular	An Socach
May	Monadhliaths	Glen Feshie	Glen Lochay
Jun.	Fannichs (o/night)	Ben Alder (o/night)	Braeriach (o/night)
Jul.	-	-	Strathconon
Aug.	Glen Tilt (o/night)	Creag Gharbh, Glen Tay	Stuchd an Lochain
Sep.	Cairngorm Traverse*	Cairngorm Traverse*	Cairngorm Traverse*
Oct.	Loch Lee to Glen Muick	Ben Rinnes	Mount Keen
Nov.	Buck of Cabrach	Glen Slugain	Glen Isla
Dec.	Bennachie Traverse	Ben Earb, Glen Shee	Brown Cow Hill

Coach trips marked with *; most others by minibus

Two notable innovations were added to the list of “Day” Club activities during the period. A series of Snow-holing Meets was arranged in Februaries 2015, 2016 and 2017: see below. And during winters 2016 and 2017, a series of several Night Hikes was instituted by Benn Hitchen, with participants ascending Bennachie, Millstone Hill, Brimmond Hill, Scolty, and Clachnaben on moonlit evenings.

Notes from the Snow-Holes

The Troglodytic Tendency within the Club has long been satisfied with the various Cairngorm howffs, but in 2015, at the suggestion of Derek Beverley, a new set of activities was initiated, with a snow-holing meet. In that first year, the Secretary scoured Deeside for somewhere suitable within the planned 24-hour window, and eventually dragged a group of 9 hopefuls up the lower and sodden slopes of Beinn Bhrotain, in the total absence of any visible snow over a few inches in depth. However, doubts subsided at the sight of a substantial bank of snow at grid reference 978 910. There, after digging into rather wet snow in the gathering darkness, all survived the night though few had tales of comfortable rest (one was a Spanish mountaineer on her first trip to the Cairngorms!). The morning was nasty. However, the Day Meets Secretary (Garry Wardrope) was determined to live up to his title, and, with a couple of others, attempted an ascent of Ben Bhrotain; they were thwarted from going beyond Carn Cloich-mhuilinn by colder and windier conditions higher up.

In 2016, a smaller group of 4 drove round to Glenmore and walked up in miserable conditions to the Ptarmigan Restaurant, which provided shelter and a welcome warm drink, en route to the objective of Ciste Mhearad near the summit of Cairngorm. Almost giving up at the restaurant, we still decided to “have a look”, and were delighted to find several large and empty snowholes already excavated by Glenmore trainees in the recent past. We settled into the best of these, with ample room (see colour photograph No 10) and had time to stagger up to the cairn in blizzard conditions before settling down for the night. In the morning, the entrances were found to be blocked with new snow cascading down from above, but these were quickly cleared, and we then had a fine excursion down to the Saddle at the head of Strathnethy and up to Beinn Bynack before traversing Glen Nethy back to the cars.

In March 2017, with little snow around, camping was substituted for holing, and a group of 8 headed up a very wet and slushy Glen Derry (see colour photographs Nos 8 and 9) to Loch Etchachan, where tents were pitched on a snowfield in a chilly breeze. The morning brought worse conditions, but ambition hath no bounds, so in a strong wind and total cloud we headed up Creagan a' Choire Etchachan and then Derry Cairngorm, the going made no easier by snow shovels acting as sails on our backs, and boulders underfoot amidst the ice and snow. We eventually emerged above Derry Lodge damp but delighted and got back to the Linn in driving rain. Clearly these snow-holing meets have their attractions, and one of these winters we may encounter the right combination of snow and weather!

WEEKEND MEETS

Net Club contributions to these meets in 2014-15, 2015-16 and 2016-17 amounted to £886, £434 and £185 respectively, with ever-healthier numbers reaching an average of nearly 14 in 2016-17.

	2015	2016	2017
January	Muir Cottage	Muir Cottage	Muir Cottage
February	Newtonmore	Newtonmore	Newtonmore
March	Invergarry	Achnasheen	Crianlarich
April	Inverie, Knoydart	Loch Ossian	Glen Etive
May	Lochranza, Arran	Portnalong, Skye	BMC Hut, Glenbrittle
June	Cairndow, Arrochar	Durness	Craignure, Mull
July	BMC Hut, Glenbrittle	Dundonnell	Helyg Ogwen, Wales
August	Ling Hut, Torridon	Corran	CIC Hut, Ben Nevis
September	Rum Bunkhouse	Causeyfoot, Keswick	Morvich, Kintail
October	Roy Bridge	Elphin	Corran
November	Glen Etive	Blackrock, Glencoe	Cannich
December	Crianlarich	Riasg, Roybridge	Crianlarich

As can be seen above, meet locations varied widely, with Rum, Keswick and Ogwen Valley, Wales, as new (or at least long-unvisited) destinations, alongside old favourites such as Glenbrittle, Newtonmore and Roybridge.

Notes from Weekend Tramps

Over the three years under review, the weather varied, of course. Whilst this is only to be expected in Skye and Rum, we might perhaps have expected better things of the August 2017 meet at the CIC hut, where many of us practised the art of “festering” whilst waiting for the weather to improve. Fortunately, there were also some memorably good weather weekends such as the meet at Invergarry in March 2015, and at Newtonmore in 2017. In May 2017, the Club filled every bed in the Glen Brittle Memorial Hut, where members enjoyed a sunny, if breezy, long weekend. The 6-day trip to North Wales in July 2017 was a great success (see colour photograph No 12). The weather was good, and many hills were climbed, and rock climbs completed – including the classics Faith, Hope and Charity. (cont.)

Huts and hostels also varied, from the “traditional” comforts of Inbhirfhaolain in Glen Etive (see colour photograph No13), where water must be collected from the burn and the composting toilet is up the steps outside at the back, to the superb insulation of the Craignure hostel on Mull – so superb that we sweated all evening and night with the windows closed to keep the midges out. Huts with a tradition such as Blackrock and Glenbrittle are always popular, but we also appreciated the comparative luxury of the Corran Bunkhouse and the cosiness of Newtonmore.

The venues are varied and the same might be said of those who attend: a mixture of stalwarts who rarely miss a meet, members who fancy the location and newcomers who have perhaps been on a few Day Meets and then decide to give the Weekends a try. A significant number of those attending travel from as far afield as Achiltibuie, Edinburgh, Dingwall, Glasgow and even Peterborough. All are welcome and contribute to what is always a sociable weekend.

Many of these meets were undoubtedly enhanced by a communal meal on the Saturday evening. Frustrated by the limited facilities of some hostels, Sue Chalmers invested in a large (and now very well-travelled) slow cooker which keeps the meal simmering whilst the cooks enjoy the hills. Upon their return, they frequently find that a team of willing, and probably hungry, helpers have set the table and prepared the veg. Indeed, after a long day plodding through the snow on Ben Cruachan, Marj Ewan and Sue Chalmers returned considerably later than planned to find that the meal had not only been prepared but also served and consumed in their absence. Happily, portions had been left for the latecomers.

Burns Night Weekends at Muir in late January continued as a regular feature, with a variety of organisers.

Whilst getting away and travelling across the country on a Friday evening can be rather stressful, it is always worthwhile when you realise you are approaching the hills, and that a warm hut and good company await and just possibly a cloud-free summit!

OVERSEAS MEETS

In early September 2015, Peter Bellarby organized a meet based at Vigo di Fassa in the Dolomites. From an excellent hotel there, several participants accomplished via ferrata, while others made good use of the widespread network of buses, lifts and paths. Almost exactly a year later, a similar meet was held in Cortina, again with via ferrata a target for several participants, while others explored First World War remains in the surrounding area.

CLIMBING

This field of Club activity varied, as usual, with the weather, but the Weekend Meets to the Lake District in 2016 and to Wales in 2017 were highlights. During the Winters, most activities took place on Tuesday evenings at the Beach venue of Transition Extreme. In 2017, an organised Tuesday programme led to a better spread of climbing venues, north and south of Aberdeen, and on inland crags, and to a variety of climbing types – trad, sports and bouldering. Use of Facebook is also assisting in organising formal and informal meets. Introducing newcomers to climbing remains an issue: Club members cannot be expected – logistically or legally – to offer their services as trainers to novices on a regular basis. However, the Club offers 50% financial support for commercially run events, some on Club meets.

MID-WEEK WALKS (MWWs)

At the end of 2016, Arthur Dickie ended his five-year supervision of these popular monthly walks, with Marion White taking over. Each August, members are invited to attend a planning meeting, where the programme of 12 walks for the forthcoming calendar year is determined, and leaders appointed for each event. The programmes below show some novelties (e.g. the Foudland Hill and Ben Newe) but also several old favourites.

	2015	2016	2017
January	Kingswells	Migvie	Donmouth
February	Sands of Forvie	Loch Kinord	Kincardine o'Neil
March	Carn William	Tarfside	Creag nam Ban
April	Gairnshiel-Shenval	St. Cyrus	Ben Tirran
May	Sgor Mor	Glen Ey	Clais Fearnaigh
June	Deskry Water	Geallaig	Correen Hills
July	Piper's Wood	Falls of Damph	Carn an Tuirc
August	Coyles of Muick	Morrone	Ben Newe
September	West Ballochbuie	Clachnaben	Gordon Way
October	Foudland Hill	Lower Morven	Cullen
November	Castle Fraser	Hill of Fare	Brimmond
December	Scolty	Balmoral Cairns	Invercauld-Balmoral

Notes from Mid-Week Walks

Two MWW novelties were introduced, both in September 2017.

Firstly, Kees Witte arranged mid-week accommodation in Ullapool, from where Stac Polly was (almost) ascended, and a walk took place up beside the Ullapool River to Loch Achall on the following day. Although the weather was at times inclement, and underfoot conditions wet - indeed, this excursion found the main group, "Presidentially led"! floundering in knee-deep bog in search of a non-existent path back to Ullapool, the eleven participating recommend that this extended meet should become a regular feature of the annual MWW programme.

Secondly, a hired coach enabled an A-to-B traverse of the Gordon Way, which was found to be in rather poor condition in many places until the final stretch below the Mither Tap: according to signs, Aberdeenshire Council and/or Forestry Commission Scotland no longer maintain the Way, and the lack of drainage has reduced some parts to definite bog. It is hoped that the Bailies of Bennachie will be able to undertake some remedial work on the western stretches of this route.

DAUNDERS

Ruth Payne once again organized these events for (mostly) less active members, with a short walk followed by lunch at a suitable nearby location. Venues during the period under review included Dunecht, Brimmond, Glentanar, Drum, Newburgh, Haddo, Stonehaven and Forvie.

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES***ANNUAL DINNERS***

The three Dinners were held in the Treetops and (twice) Doubletree hotels, and featured speakers as follows:

14 November 2015:	Kellan MacInnes, on his book <i>Caleb's List</i>
18 November 2016:	Peter Wright, author of <i>Ribbon of Wilderness</i>
24 November 2017:	Benn Hitchen (see colour photographs 17 and 18) and Anne Pinches, on Duke of Edinburgh Scheme experiences

INDOOR MEETS

The usual series of illustrated talks were provided each Winter, at the Sportsman's Club on Queen's Road, with Members' nights each January. Other speakers and their topics were as follows (* indicates presentations by one or more Club members):

2015

October: Benn Hitchen*: *A Trip to the High Atlas Mountains*
 December: Sandy McIntosh*: *125 years of Club Members' Slides*

2016:

February: Alistair Beeley: *Mount Elbrus*
 March: Paula Williams: *Bens and Glens: Mapping Scotland's Landscape*
 October: David Jones: *Munro-Bagging in Red Socks*
 December: Stephen Willis: *Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels*

2017

February: Innes Ewen: *The Uplands of Mar*
 March: Ross Hewitt: *Baffin Island Exploration*
 October: Nicky Penford: *Deer Management*
 December: Izy Kirkaldy*: *Knoydart to Newburgh* (see colour photograph No 11)

SUMMER EVENTS

In June 2015, as in previous years, a barbecue was held at Templars Park. In subsequent Junes, this was replaced by a “walk and meal” format, in 2016 up Scolty (though in such bad weather that only two people made the ascent!) and in 2017 up the Barmekin, with about 10 participants, and more at the meal in Dunecht.

COMMUNICATIONS

The Club's website- www.cairngormclub.org.uk and Yahoo email system were maintained throughout the review period, and three *Newsletters* were produced each year. The Members' Forum, with 152 members in Autumn 2017 after some purging in 2015, increased from 850 to 1093 topics, and from about 4,900 to 6,340 individual posts.

In Summer 2017, the hosts for both the website and the Forum were changed, the former to accommodate digitisation of this Journal, and the latter due to the purchase of our original host company by another supplier. Also, in Summer 2017, the photo-hosting site Photobucket began charging heavily for using links to the Forum photos, with the result that far fewer are now being posted in Meet reports.

MUIR COTTAGE

With Dave Kirk in charge of bookings, Muir occupation continued at roughly previous rates, of about 2,000 bed-nights annually. In January 2016, the overnight charge for non-Members was raised from £10 to £12, but that for Members kept at £5. Gross annual revenues varied between about £15,000 and £19,000, with net revenue

normally around £12,000. The new (2014) shed at the rear of the Cottage has proved very useful, with three bikes installed by 2015, along with much work gear previously kept in the woodshed.

The 2014 planting of a few Scots pine seedlings near the front dyke did not prove successful, and in winter 2015/16 another small area was planted with a mixture of deciduous and coniferous seedlings, the former successfully, the latter not. In early 2015, a survey of the wood next to Muir noticed fungus *Phaeolus schweinitzii*, and sadly 3 Scots pines behind the bike shed were felled/turned into firewood and found severely damaged by brown rot.

Annual Work Weekends (see colour photographs Nos 14 and 15), nowadays timed to follow a local Mid-Week Walk in April or May, continued to prove popular, and, other than the usual cleaning and painting, have included the erection of a stile over the fence around the water supply. An incipient leak in the east wall appears to have been quelled by some timely repairs, and kitchen improvements have included two high stools and some recycling bins. In May 2016, Past-President Adrian Scott and Dave Roberts, of Dervish Carving, carved and erected a fine outdoor bench in the front lawn (the wood came from the good parts of the felled trees), and an outside table manufactured by HMP residents was added. The coin meters for the heaters in the bedrooms were changed for 2-hour electronic ones. Also, a new entrance gate was manufactured. The solar thermal panel which was installed in 2014 is performing well.

PROJECTS

The main projects assisted by the Club during the review period were the fencing of two areas of land on either side of the track at the ruined Altanour Lodge in upper Glen Ey; and a £25,000 contribution to the National Trust for Scotland (NTS), to replace the footbridge over the Quoich at the Punchbowl (see colour photograph No 16). These two payments largely accounted for the generous bequest to the Club by Willie Robb, who died on Speyside in October 2012 (see *Cairngorm Club Journal*, 110, 2013, pp.123-124). The southern area at Altanour still has a few dozen elderly larch trees, but the northerly one has only a few; it is hoped that natural generation will enable growth of this and other species to appear over the next few decades, to avoid complete “desertification”. A small commemorative plaque, and stiles, have been installed.

The Quoich footbridge was disturbed – presumably by a tree – during the Deeside floods in early 2016 – when the river was diverted to the east of the road bridge, rendering the latter useless. Though not obviously damaged, the footbridge was inspected and declared unsafe by NTS, and a new bridge was installed by contractors in winter 2016 to 17. In April 2017, a small group of members oversaw the attachment of a commemorative plaque (see colour photograph No 16).

The Cairngorm Club

