

THE CAIRNGORM CLUB JOURNAL

Edited by Jean G. Robinson

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The Cairngorm Club

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EDITORIAL

This 113th issue of the Journal, follows several years of Brexit division throughout the nation, so it is particularly pleasing to have articles from across the Channel and from across even more remote borders. The articles from closer to home, from present times and from the archival history of the Club, speak of the never-ending delight to be had in Scottish hillwalking and the Cairngorms. This delight is conveyed in this issue through prose, poetry, artwork and even song.

The inclusion of a Photography Section in the last issue proved popular and has therefore been repeated. It aims to show Club and Members' achievements throughout the last 2 years, the sheer fun to be had on Club outings and the beauty of the Scottish landscape.

The *Cairngorm Club Journal* archive has been available online to the membership and general public since May 2018. During that time, as of March 2020, there have been 819 searches: 32 per month with *Goatfell* (66), *Arran* (22) and *Ski* (14), the top three.

For this trial issue, the Club Committee has approved the use of digital printing rather than the former press method. This allows us, for a similar cost to use colour printing throughout the Journal and does justice to the many talented photographers in our midst.

The Editor is grateful for the support and advice of fellow Club members with thanks due to Sandy McIntosh, Donald Thomas, Ken J. Thomson, and Samantha Robinson. However ultimately the Journal depends on the enthusiasm, and generosity of the contributors in sharing their words and images and so thanks to them.

March 2020

WALKING IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF GEORGE BUCHANAN SMITH

MARK PEEL

When I started to research the history of Club members' involvement in World War One (WW1), I was shown an article written by George Buchanan Smith (GBS). The article was found by his parents after his death in 1915, and they gave permission for it to be published in the Club Journal, (*Club Journal*, 9, 1917, p.20). GBS completed his six day walk from Glasgow to Inverey in April 1911, when he was only 21.

I read the article hoping to better understand the man who was the Club's first fatality in WW1. Reading the article, a second time I tried to grasp just what he had achieved. I then had to get the maps out to fully appreciate the distances he was covering each day. It was at this stage that I first wondered whether I could repeat the walk. Later, when I started to plan to do the walk, in May 2018, I began to realise the enormity of the task.

I must admit that I did not walk the exact route covered by GBS and there are several reasons for this. He had a habit of walking up the railway line, no longer considered best practice! It is more difficult to find someone to row you across a loch and quiet roads have now become major traffic arteries. There is also the fact that he was a very fit young man and I am forty years older and backpack rather than using the small hotels he preferred. Snow conditions hampered him whilst eventually the intense heat got to me.

A rough outline of the route is to head north from Glasgow to Tyndrum, then east towards Killin, moving north to Schiehallion and finally north-east to Muir Cottage. The account that follows shows how my route varied from the original and relates some of the incidents that happened on the way. For me, this was the toughest Scottish backpacking trip I had ever done. When I passed through Aberdeen on my way home, I did wonder whether this would be my last such trip. However, later in 2019, I did manage a very wet, five-day trip, walking from Dalwhinnie to Fort William chasing Corbetts.

GBS left Glasgow having spent the previous evening at the Opera. I was tempted to repeat this idea but, in the end, I could not afford the time. The original route follows much of what is now the West

Highland Way (WHW) and I therefore decided to use this route as far as Beinglas farm. I travelled up by train to Glasgow and on to Milngavie. To keep the weight down I carried rarely more than two days food and ate and drank whenever the opportunity arose. After the first day this led to some strange looks and comments. My routine was to order for two and rapidly consume everything I had ordered. I therefore visited a café before finding the start of the WHW.

Keen to get going I walked the first two miles in half an hour. This was not a pace I could sustain so I then slowed down but pressed on to where I hoped to get a meal before walking on to a campsite. Although the inn was keen to advertise itself along the route it failed to say it closed at 4 pm. The campsite on my map had also closed so I walked on to one just outside Drymen. This was the dirtiest site I have stayed on in Scotland.

Leaving early in the morning, I copied GBS by buying oatcakes in Drymen but also stopped for poached eggs on toast. The 8 miles into Balmaha went quite quickly, although the track was busy. It will come as no surprise that food and drink had become a dominant factor in my thoughts. I only left Balmaha after having tea and scones for two and touching Tom Weir's statue. Now on to Rowardennan Youth Hostel but not before drinking two pints of lemonade at the Rowardennan Hotel. The Hostel was busy, but I was met by fellow Club member, Lydia Thomson and spent the evening with her party of walkers. One friend turned out to have been a pupil of my father. It made for a very convivial evening and after this, I had only myself for company.

I left the Hostel early and headed up Ben Lomond, a new Munro for me and one GBS climbed. I wondered what he would have thought of the paved path to the summit. There was a tremendous cloud inversion on the ascent. From the top I headed north-west to re-join the WHW. I soon passed a very modest establishment selling tea, cakes and bananas. I impressed the lady owner by buying two of everything. GBS walked on to Inversnaid where he spent the first night. He would have carried on, but the ferry man was too drunk to make the crossing.

I walked on to Beinglas farm which was a very different campsite to the previous one. I showered, ate, slept, rose early and leaving the tent erected climbed the Munro, Cruach Ardrain, another new one for me. Returning to the campsite I dozed after eating. Leaving at 5 pm I

walked up the A82 before taking the hydro road up Gleann nan Caorann. I was now back more closely on GBS's route but on day four rather than his day two. With hindsight I should not have taken time out for this Munro. However, I had completion in my sights and the temptation was too great.

On Saturday morning I walked to the end of the path and followed an ATV track almost to the summit of Beinn a' Chleibh and then on to Ben Lui before dropping down to Tyndrum. Not for the last time I realised that GBS was a better man than me. On his route he had climbed all four of these Munros. Tyndrum was crowded and the heat was oppressive. I ate, drank and bought a fruit cake and a selection pack of cereals, taking these out of their boxes. These cereals proved very appetising and along with the fruit cake were a great success. After a final pot of tea, I picked up the WHW again and camped near Beinn Odhar. GBS left Tyndrum on his third day and like him I climbed Beinn Odhar, Beinn Chaorach and Carn Chreag. It was a steep climb to the first summit but with an early start I kept going and did not really stop until starting to come off the third Corbett.

Here, I lay down against my rucksack, quite high and amongst rocks. I blended into the hill and was still wearing the clothes I had started in almost six days before. As I lay there, I sensed movement and slowly moved my head to see a wildcat. It must have sensed me at the same time. The head was turning away, but the rest of the body was visible, although the tail was in the heather. Shortly after completing this walk I visited the museum on Bute and there on display was an identical female wildcat with a kitten. I have told a few friends of my sighting, and whilst they have been polite, I am not sure they are as convinced as I am of what I saw.

I went on to Creag Mhor with strong winds on the summit. I then pushed on to Beinn Heasgarnich, making better time than I had hoped for. I dropped off the summit by connecting up the remaining snow patches. GBS descended by glissading and then made the long walk into Killin. I, however, found a site for my tent, where it felt I was part of an Alpine meadow.

GBS met his friend James Wordie in Killin and together they walked the next day along the road towards Ben Lawers. This would not have been a safe route for me, and I also wanted to do Meall Ghaordaidh.

Rude comments have been written about this Munro but from my route it was an excellent walk. The first person I had seen since leaving Tyndrum was on the summit. He appeared confused by the direction of my arrival and departure since neither showed any sign of a path. I then followed a convoluted route into the Larig Bhreislich. Amongst the shielings I thought about the people for whom this had been their home. Along the way I picked up a magnificent eagle's feather and was very tempted to stick it in my hat. Later, looking across to Meall nan Tarmachan I stood and watched an eagle quartering the ground. I camped close to the road, out of sight, but in a pleasant spot with water close at hand.

On GBS's fourth day he and James walked from Killin to first ascend Beinn Glas and then Ben Lawers. They were hindered by deep snow and cold winds forcing them to drop into Glen Lyon, eventually stopping in Fortingall. By now it was my eighth day and I hoped to do all seven Munros in the Ben Lawers range. It was a tough walk up to Meall a' Choire Leith but then the way seemed clear. This was until the cloud blew in on Beinn Ghlas and stayed until Meall Garbh. On the summit of Meall Greigh it felt good to have achieved seven new Munros in a day, but I still had further to go before I could stop. Dropping down towards Invervar proved tough. I wild camped on a rather dirty pitch and I think this is where I picked up two sheep ticks. I dined on cheese and my Drymen oat cakes, followed by variety-pack cereals that now seemed rather exotic.

Next morning, I set off early, partly to pass through a farmstead without causing alarm. I have had rather inquisitive conversations in this area in the past. The route headed for Carn Mairg and Meall Liath, I went between these two hills before cutting east. There were fine views of Schiehallion which GBS had climbed on his fifth day. I declined the opportunity for a second ascent partly to conserve my energy, and to save time as I had a lot more ground to cover.

I now took a fairly direct line towards Tummel Bridge. Eventually I hit the road, close to a sign reading; 'Two miles to Tummel Bridge'. The heat radiating off the road was intense, and I felt I was walking in an oven. I should have liked to find somewhere to fill my water bottle. I virtually crawled over the bridge at Tummel Bridge and sought sanctuary in the restaurant of the caravan park. Whilst I ate a large

meal, washed down by several pints of lemonade, I considered my next move. My aim had been to get close to Struan before camping but I knew that this was no longer a realistic objective. I therefore came to the decision that once I got back on the road I would hitch. The traffic would either be heading towards Blair Atholl or Pitlochry.

It was with a heavy heart that I hit the road; this was the confirmation that I was not the man GBS was. I had only gone about half a mile when a car stopped, and I was offered a lift to just outside Pitlochry. The driver was ex British Army, now working in mine clearance. We talked mountaineering books all the way. The army link made me think of GBS. When doing his walk, he had no idea that within four years he would be a Gordon Highlander and his friend James Wordie would be sailing to the Antarctic with Shackleton.

*Courage, faint heart, press forward to the hill!
The ridge looms dark? It only holds the day.
Wait for the dawn to come? O forward still,
And meet the sun half-way!*

These lines of poetry were written by GBS, inspired by his walks in Scotland. I have wondered whether he thought of these words as he led his platoon in the first charge on Loos, where he lost his life, September 25, 1915.

From Pitlochry I caught the train to Blair Atholl. I did notice that when I sat down on a bench to await the train my fellow passengers seemed keen to stand up wind of me. I was made very welcome at the campsite near the Bridge of Tilt and thoroughly enjoyed the shower. I changed into my spare clothing and ate a second meal at the restaurant. Eating two large meals in one day did not prove to be a problem.

GBS spent his last night at Struan and next day walked over Beinn Dearg and Carn an Fidhleir. In his account, he writes of walking in deep snow interspersed with steep glissades. I made an early start and walked through Glen Tilt to Muir Cottage. I had done this before so decided to give myself objectives which helped to maintain a good pace. A brief thought about climbing Carn a' Chlamain soon passed. Walking along the road to Muir and the work-weekend I wondered what home cooking might be on offer. Hazel did not disappoint and the first person I saw was Kees waving. After several cups of tea and a shower I was tempted to lie down. However, everybody seemed so busy I felt I needed to find

a job. Picking up logs and putting them in a wheelbarrow proved good therapy for my aching back.

I enjoyed the stay at Muir and probably talked more than I should have. When I passed through the portals of Aberdeen Railway Station it was an opportunity to reflect on my trip. Both GBS and I finished with a train journey. He had caught the train from Ballater to Aberdeen and I was travelling to London. Like him I had spent time in some of the best of Scotland and time with some of the best of friends. I quickly fell asleep on the train feeling rather proud that I was a member of the Cairngorm Club with its rich heritage.

Buchanan Smith, G. (1917), Glasgow To Braemar, *Cairngorm Club Journal*, Vol IX, no. 49, p.20-26.

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THE ANCIENT RIVERS OF THE EASTERN CAIRNGORMS?

DOUGLAS R. HARPER

Many of you will be familiar with the feeling of relief as you emerge from the glen and the gradient under your feet suddenly lessens, with the promise of the summit plateau not far distant. This is called the 'break of slope'. It is significant not only for the walker on the day but for our understanding of the ancient rivers of the Cairngorms and the landscape through which they flowed.

Before the arrival of the now familiar granite, this whole area was covered in sea, with sediments accumulating between 750 and 500 million years ago. Then came the Caledonian mountain building epoch: compressive forces raising these sediments to great heights, akin to the Alps or Himalayas of today. Deep within these mountains, great reservoirs of magma formed, either from the rocks round about melting, or by coming up from the earth's crust below. The magma cooled to form into granite at a depth of not less than 7km, to create the familiar crystal mosaic of quartz, feldspar and mica, 427 million years ago. These mountains (the 'Caledoniades') were then eroded down to their roots. At this point the land was once again submerged and covered by deep marine sediments such as the Old Red Sandstone, eroded from the upper slopes of the Caledoniades. This landscape once again rose above the waves and these more recent sediments were largely removed by erosion to reveal the granite roots of the original mountains. Today we can still see the remains of these more recent sediments around the edge of the Cairngorms on the Moray coast and the Mearns. As the granite became unroofed, it in its turn became subject to erosion, facilitated initially by ancient rivers and later by ice.

The Cairngorm plateau was formed of this giant intrusion of magma deep into the pre-existing rock, the Dalradian.¹ As we walk over it, we are crossing the top of the magma chamber, now devoid of its overlying strata. The primary drainage was west to east from a watershed at the western and northern edge of the Cairngorm plateau and the headwater streams on the Gaick, Braeriach and Macdhui-Cairngorm plateaux today, have hardly changed from pre-glacial times.

These ancient rivers flowed through broad, mature valleys at about 600m (2000ft). Even then, they would have been recognisable as

approximating to today's Dee and Don. Over several episodes of Ice Age during the past 2.6 million years, the area would have been deeply covered by a thick ice cover.

In today's post-glacial landscape, the break of slope separates valley from plateau glaciation. Valley glaciation followed the course of the ancient rivers, creating the glens we recognise today by gouging out huge volumes of rock and sediment. Plateau glaciation was quite different. The plateau was occupied by an almost static and protective ice which moved slowly into the heads of the valley glaciers. On the plateau, little glacial erosion took place. So, today's plateau landscape has changed little since pre-glacial times and, crucially, it was through this same landscape that the ancient rivers flowed. Indeed, their headwaters still do.

So, as your weary limbs gain some respite, remember that you are now walking on an ancient landscape in places little changed from pre-glacial times. Ahead of you lies the Cairngorm plateau, punctuated by smooth tops and magnificent peaks. Viewed from a distance, the whole Cairngorm massif blends into a high tableland, albeit deeply dissected by today's corries and valleys. Turn and look behind you across the valley from which you have just emerged. Imagine the slope on which you stand gently curving to the same height on the opposite side of the glen (Fig1, see next page). This would approximate to the cross-section of the ancient valley containing a riverbed at say 600m (2000ft), several hundred feet above today's stream. This extrapolation also gives us some idea of just how much material has been removed.

As these huge valley glaciers moved east, they filled and deepened the valleys of the ancient rivers, often spilling over watersheds into adjacent basins. Ice passing over a lateral col in this way is known as a 'glacial breach' - the critical event predisposing to later river diversion, when the main stream is diverted onto a new path. All the ancient rivers of the eastern Cairngorms fell victim to this process. The concept of glacial breach leading to river diversion depends on erosion of a suitable col. Once the ice spilled over the top into the neighbouring basin, it would begin to incise and erode the watershed. Meltwater would follow during several periods of warming and the combination, perhaps over multiple phases of glaciation, would lower this watershed to a point that offered a real alternative for the main stream to divert to

lower ground. This process would be exacerbated if there was a hold up to the flow of ice down the main valley further down.

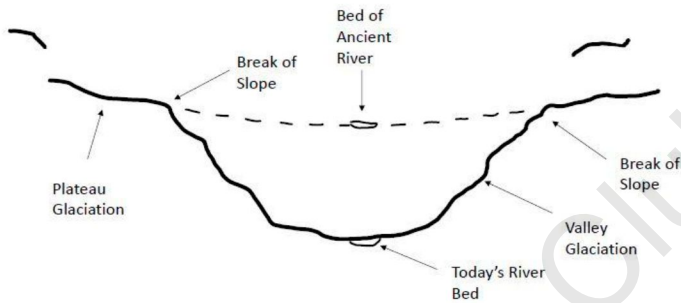


Fig 1. Diagrammatic cross section of a glaciated valley.

The power of meltwater during the melting of the ice sheet and retreat of the valley glaciers might be guessed at by the plethora of meltwater phenomena in the Dee and Don basins e.g. Burn o' Vat, the river terraces of Glens Geldie and Tilt, the massive outwash deposits in the lower Feshie and as we will learn, the spectacular Ailnack Gorge. The last Ice Age was terminated about 11,000 years ago by a sudden rise in global temperature of 7 degrees Centigrade over a period of only 50 years – a human lifespan.

The river diversion resulting from glacial breach should be distinguished from river capture. In the latter one stream, usually steep and rapid, erodes into the hillside towards its source and gradually intercepts the drainage system of a neighbouring stream and so 'beheads it'. In contrast, glacial breaching starts with ice passing over a col, which develops into a gorge lower than the main valley, and so the main river is diverted, following the direction of flow of the ice that originally crossed the col.

In this article I would like to address the development and demise of the ancient rivers Dee and Don over territory well known to members. The general area can be seen in Fig 2, (see next page). It might be helpful to follow the text with OS Landranger series numbers 35, 36, 42

two indicates a former flow to the south-east. This combined stream probably joined the ARDee at the Feshie elbow (where today's Feshie swings from west-east to southeast-northwest), reversing the flow of the original tributary from the col as the post glacial River Feshie exploited the gap created by the glacial breach. In Fig 3 below, in the view from the west, there may be discerned an obvious break of slope around 670m (2200ft) (A & D) gradually falling to the south-east at about 550m (1800ft) (B & C). These points form part of the line of the original valley sloping towards the ARDee, in contrast to the north-west flowing Feshie today.

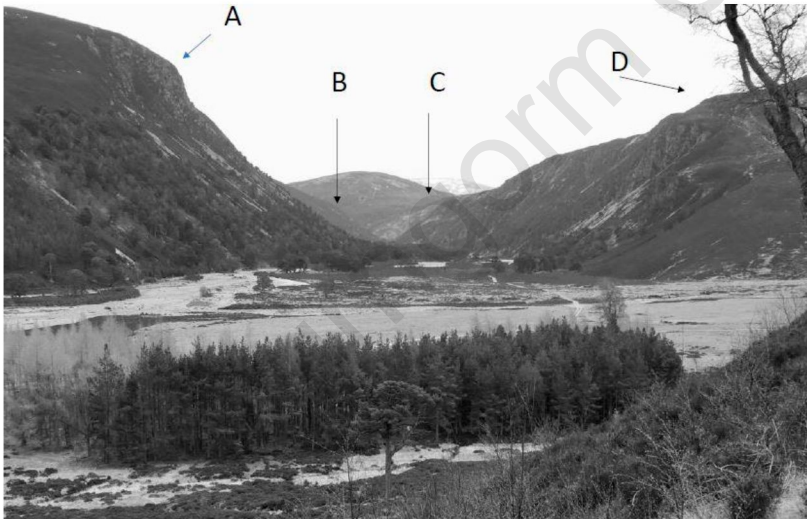


Fig 3. The Feshie Gorge from the west, showing breaks of slope at the col A & D and further down the original tributary valley of the ARDee at B & C. Carn Eadar is seen snow covered in the background behind C. Picture from NN840921 R. Jowett.

The Feshie's dramatic elbow comes within a few feet of the feeders of the Geldie off Carn Eadar. At its elbow, the Feshie, energised by the opening up of a lower route to the sea, dug into the morainic deposits at the elbow, and thus was separated from the Geldie. This is today's watershed. The walk up the Geldie from White Bridge can be tedious with little in this fading burn to engage the interest. Then in the distance a much larger stream fills the valley and roars over its rapids as it

reaches the elbow. The Feshie makes a grand entrance to the common valley - the valley of the ARDee – then makes a sharp exit to the north-west. The contrast between the two streams couldn't be greater.

Walking up the Dee valley towards White Bridge, it is clear that while the main valley lies ahead to the west, occupied by the Geldie, the Dee emerges from a narrow side valley from the north – Glen Dee. Confirmation of latter's subsidiary origin is found at the Chests o' Dee, where the upper Dee plunges down from its higher valley floor to reach that of the Geldie in its more mature valley – that of the ARDee. The upper Glen Dee is a 'hanging valley' and other examples in the area include the Lui, Quoich, Ey and Cluny. In each case the larger, heavier Dee glacier truncated the tributary valleys, leaving the confluence 'hanging'. Ice accumulated to great depths in the Garbh Choire (NH956985) and at a faster rate than could be taken by the lower Glen Dee outlet. Ice sought a place to breach and found it to the north in the Lairig Ghru at Pools o' Dee – another classic glacial breach. Despite this breach to the north, there was enough ice coming down Glen Dee to dominate the dynamics at White Bridge, obstructing the ARDee glacier as it came in from the west and the Ancient River Tarf (ARTarf) glacier coming from the south. As a possible consequence we have the Feshie breach and the one at Forest Lodge in Glen Tilt (see below). Elements of a break of slope on both sides of Glen Geldie can be discerned – part of the original ARDee valley floor.

To the south of the Geldie section of the ARDee lies the R. Tarf, which flows through a wide strath lying west to east, before originally swinging north to join the ARDee just to the north of Bynack Lodge. However, the R. Tarf no longer occupies the final section of its strath but turns sharp south to join today's R. Tilt (NH983796). Walking south it is clear that you're following a groove that crosses the wide west-east strath to enter a slit that is Glen Tilt. Looking ahead of you to the south, as you approach the Belford Suspension Bridge, a wall of hills closes in towards Glen Tilt on either side. This represents the southern boundary of the original strath of the R. Tarf, before it was incised by the Tilt. Here the hills on either side of the Tilt slope towards the Dee rather than the Tilt (Fig 4, see next page), confirming the dominance of the original Dee drainage in this area.

The original watershed in Glen Tilt would have been about 1km above Forest Lodge (NH933741), between Carn a' Chlamain in the west and Beinn a' Ghlo in the east (Fig 5, next page)



Fig 4, Picture taken from the shoulder of An Sligearnach, at NN966781, looking east, showing the southern edge of the ARTarf basin as it turns north to the ARDee. The defile in the middle distance, arrowed, with the tree, is the valley of the Tilt, incising the southern slope of the ARTarf basin.

South of this the southern Tilt (Tilt S) would have existed, while a northern stream (Tilt N) would have been its companion on the other side of the divide, flowing towards the ARDee and collecting the Tarf, the Allt an Ruigh Ghil, the Allt a' Ghlinne Mhoir and An Lochain on its way. Normally a tributary merges with the main stream at an angle of less than 90° , i.e. pointing downstream. The junctions of all these tributaries with the Tilt today are abnormal, turning more than 90° to the larger river, and indicating an originally northerly facing confluence.

Passing down Glen Tilt towards Forest Lodge many of the small tributaries drop almost directly down from the divided col above, that is, from the pre-glacial plateau. Their trend is northwards above the



Fig 5. Glen Tilt. The original watershed is about 1km north of Forest Lodge. South of this the tributaries join the main stream in the normal way, i.e. pointing downstream, while north of Forest Lodge, their courses trend northwards as they approach the main stream. From Landranger 43 © Crown copyright, 2119 OS Licence 100061712.

lodge and southwards below it. The original col here is estimated to have been around 550m (1800ft).

The breach in Glen Tilt would have been encouraged by the obstruction of ice flow along the Tarf towards the Dee resulting in some of this ice being pushed over the col at Forest Lodge, followed by associated melt water. In addition, the geology of the valley is a shatter zone of limestone and soft black schists which would have afforded less resistance to the powerful push south towards the R. Garry. Below Forest Lodge there are several well-developed terraces which reflect

episodes of high-volume flow, with the river digging through its former bed and leaving shoulders on each side.

Strath Tarf is always something of a surprise with its broad valley floor and evident maturity. The floor of the glen is between 490-670m (1600-2200ft) and the headwaters are 9 miles to the west. Indeed, the valley extends even further west of the present headwaters of the Tarf on the northern slopes of Beinn Dearg, territory occupied by the Tromie and Bruar. This is hardly surprising since the pre-glacial watershed of the Cairngorms was even further west, overlooking the Spey. In Strath Tarf, the break of slope on either side is at about 600m (2000ft). Where this forms a continuous 'bench', it gradually merges with the Gaick plateau and the Tarf headwaters to the west and is the little changed valley floor of the Ancient River Tarf (ARTarf). At its east end, the river today tumbles over the Falls of Tarf to reach the Tilt 60m (200ft) below. Walkers who stick to the delightful riverside walk towards the Tilt will miss the grandeur of Strath Tarf above them to the west.

As a result of glacial breaching and the consequent diversion of the upper ARDee into the Feshie and the ARTarf into the Tilt, the Dee catchment was reduced by 163 square miles. While the present R. Dee catchment has been reduced considerably, losses of the Don catchment were also significant, some 60 square miles.

Turning now to the Ancient River Don (ARDon). The original headwaters lay on the Cairngorm plateau around Loch Avon (and the streams are still there). It flowed along the line of today's Loch Avon and upper Avon as far as Inchrory, then continued east along the valley of the present R. Don, but a few hundred metres above its present level. That this is a single mature valley is as plain on the ground as it is on the map. What happened at Inchrory to make the upper ARDon turn north into the Avon valley? (Fig 6, see next page). Once again perhaps a mere hesitation in the progress of the ARDon glacier forced ice to breach the col to the north, sending ice pouring over into the Avon and secure a faster route to lower ground north of Inchrory.

Added to this there was to the south another glacial breach, this time contributing to the pressure of ice above Inchrory. Ice from the southern slopes of Beinn a' Bhuird and Ben Avon filled Glen Gairn which had a limited outlet to the south. A flow of south to north ice through the Builg gap resulted. As we found with the Tarf, local geology including

faults, limestone and black schists in the Avon below Inchrory no doubt helped but was very much subsidiary to the primary effect of ice.

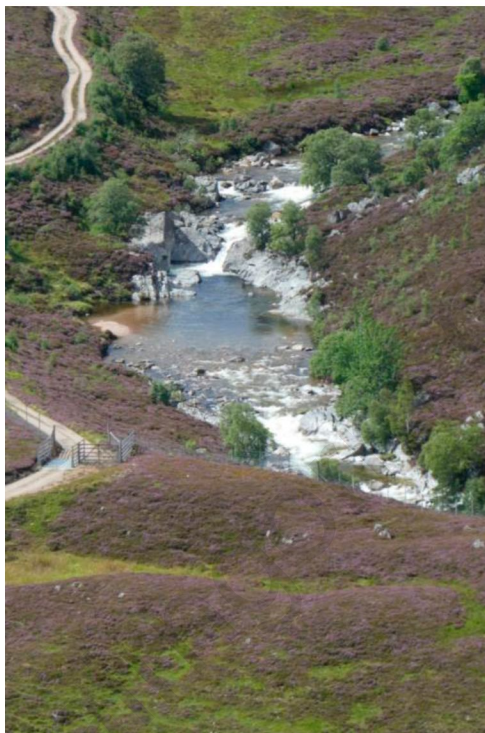


Fig 6. The Avon making its dramatic turn from the east to the north just above Inchrory. R. Jowett

Nor were these events confined to the main streams. Lying north-west of Inchrory is a system of tributaries of the ARDon, derived from the Water of Caiplich, which arises on the eastern flank of Bynack Mor. It courses east for 5 miles before turning suddenly north to become the Ailnack Water. (Figure 7, see next page). Its broad mature valley however continues east via Glen Loin to join the ARDon upstream of Inchrory. There is a dramatic gorge just below the elbow of the Caiplich/Ailnack (The Castle) which suggests a sudden event.

The diversion of the Caiplich into the Ailnack in this case may not have involved a glacial breach. There is evidence to suggest that above the elbow there developed a glacial lake due to stagnant ice in Glen

Loin, which burst through the northern boundary and caused the diversion. The event, sudden and catastrophic, was responsible for the

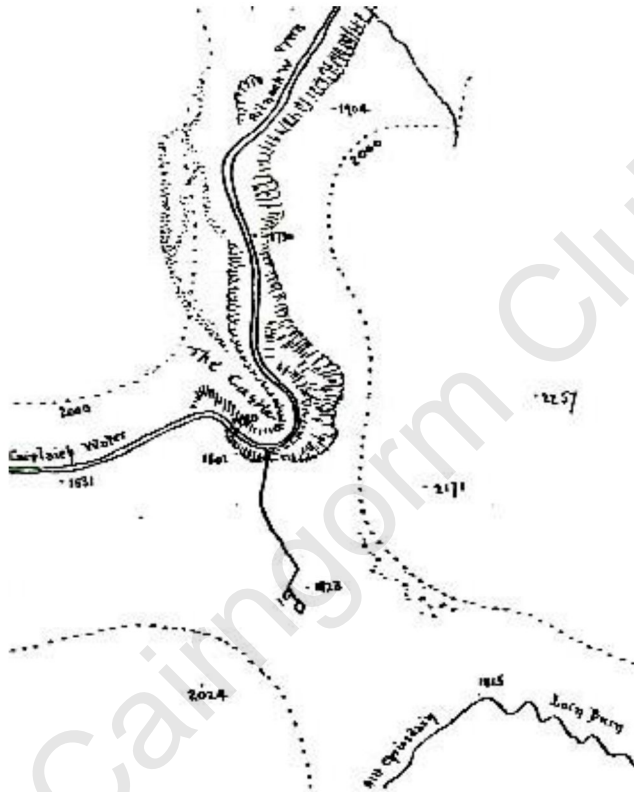


Fig 7. The diversion of the Caiplich Water into the Ailnack at the 'Castle'. From A. Bremner, 1912, The Physical Geology of the Dee Valley.

Loin, which burst through the northern boundary and caused the diversion. The event, sudden and catastrophic, was responsible for the Ailnack's Gorge below the 'Castle', a prominence on the west side, just at the bend. Thus, it is possible that this feature owes more to water than to ice – i.e. a meltwater channel. The upper Ailnack was originally a tributary of the Burn of Brown and it appears that sluggish progress of the ice down Glen Brown may have encouraged a glacial breach into today's lower Ailnack. It is thought that the torrential flow that followed the sudden drainage of the glacial loch in Glen Loin then exploited the channel formed previously by ice inundating the tiny

lower Ailnack and thus creating the dramatic gorge (Fig 8, see below) we see today before reaching the Avon.

The area of the Caiplich and upper Ailnack are still relatively unknown and those that do visit the gorge, usually only see the lower part. Nothing much has changed since a group of intrepid members traversed the gorge and continued via the Dagrums shoulder of Creag Mhòr to reach the Lairig an Laoigh and so down Glen Derry to Derry Lodge. Their exploits are recorded by William Garden in 1929 in the *Cairngorm Club Journal*.



Fig 8. The Ailnack Gorge looking south. Ben Avon with its tors can be seen in the distance.

A hundred years ago, the theories round ‘river capture’ owed much to the concept of ‘headward erosion’ whereby one river catchment nibbled its way backwards to intercept a neighbour. For many years it was thought that this process applied to the course changes of the ancient rivers of the Cairngorms. As I was preparing this article, I was reading round the subject as I travelled to Aberdeen by train, when a couple joined me. The lady commented that it had been many years since she had read the book in front of me and it turned out that they were both geomorphologists. I explained that I was struggling with river capture and the concept of head-ward erosion in the Cairngorms. We talked about the role of glaciation, his specialism. All too soon they

made to leave the train and as they took their leave, he said “It’s all down to ice”. Of course. Problem solved, for now.

I am grateful to Dr Brice Rea of the Department of Geography, University of Aberdeen, Dr Graham Smith of the British Geological Survey and to Drennan Watson for advice in the preparation of this article, and to the unidentified geomorphologists on that train.

¹ The Dalraidian was a geological epoch over 500 million years ago, characterised in this area by marine sediments altered by heat and pressure, i.e. metamorphosed.

Further Reading

The Cairngorms – a Pre-glacial Upland Granite Landscape, Hall, A.M., *Scottish Geographical Journal*, no.129, 2013, pp.2-14.

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THE CAIRNGORMS AND LA GREINA - TWO REMOTE MOUNTAIN SANCTUARIES

BRYAN CYRIL THURSTON

Now in his eighties, Bryan Thurston recently joined the Club. Born in Suffolk and studying architecture in London and living in Switzerland since 1955, he has noted some marked similarities between the Cairngorms and an area in the western Lepontine Alps in the south of that country (see drawing and photograph below). Lying between peaks over 3000m high, the Greina plateau and pass (2355m) connects the Swiss cantons of Graubünden and Ticino. It has several trails, served by mountain huts. Bryan has sent us the following remarks, poems and artworks.

One day in about 1970, I discovered a wild mountain paradise which was different to many alpine districts but resembles parts of the Cairngorms. There is a similarity between the Lairig Ghru with the Devil's Point and Cairn Toul and the southern flank of Plaun la Greina with Piz Zamuor (see below).



For many years., the Greina was threatened by a hideous hydro-lake, but I fought, through the means of art, against this scheme, and with success - the Greina is now a Natural Trust Area, recognised as of national importance. And again, at the end of 2018 I was engaged in the "making" of a second Swiss National Park centred around the Greina plain and comprising the high Adula mountains. To my disappointment, the Grison inhabitants in the north rejected the project, although in the south the Ticinese were in favour.

It was my grandfather Arthur Herbert Thurston who initially established my love of Scotland, telling me of how I, when three years old and sitting on his lap, went in my father's three-wheeled car and sidecar, for a holiday in Scotland! From this early time, the love of wild and unspoiled land was laid down for the rest of my days becoming the inspiration for many artworks.



Glatscher dil Terri (drawing)



Corries of Ben a' Bhuid (watercolour)



River Dee, Aquarelle

Passo della Greina with Pit Terri, Aquarelle

In later life, I had exhibitions of my artwork and architecture at the Pier Arts Centre, Stromness (where I was friendly with the late Orkney poet George Mackay Brown as well as with his nephew the Orcadian artist Erlend Brown), and at the Mackintosh School of Architecture in Glasgow. For numerous years I was deeply engaged

with architecture “The Mother of the Arts” and as a member of the Swiss Verbund (SWB) and working with the Swiss League for the Protection of Nature (SBN).

As well as a keen and accomplished artist, Bryan has written many poems inspired by the Cairngorms. Here are a few.

A MOUNTAIN DAY OF 1948

I cry: "*Watch out, do not tread on the tiny snow bunting*"
Which is creeping through the somewhat "sculpture-formed"
summit rocks.
To descend down Coire Raibert to the translucent, lapping waters
of Loch Avon.
Clambering the arctic sedge grasses to creep into the dark of the
Carn Etchachan Shelter Stone.

Oh, to ascend the cascade water-roar of the burn Garbh Uisge
Mor
A riddled, frantic water-flash, in high-steps of large dark-rock
boulders!
From the dissolute gravel-wastes of Ben Macdhui,
To traverse elevated, slanting upland,
Jumping the fast flow of the Feithe Buidhe and the March Burn,
Onto the western shoulder of Cairn Lochan.
Striding, descending its northern ridge, way back down to Loch
Morlich.

SGORAN SONG

Epos, vast epical Cairngorm mountain.
Fleeting, surging, serene; aloft - alone
tread, slog, no shelter - nor rest.

SGORAN DUBH

Oh, sparkle Sgoran dark Dubh of fascination,
in drenching rain-blast.

In mountain mist a halo-divine, my shadow is a Brocken spectre.
Could it resemble a "Celtic crown" of many rounded summit-
heights?

Solitary birch, rowan, a few lower-down sentinel Scots pines.
Upland of wild-bog-moor of cotton grass in
Wilderness of delight, where the burn Am Beanaidh
Turns its downward course, in abrupt curvatures,
With small intervening pools.

*swamp-bog of curlew. dunlin, green and redshank - 'tis their
lively habitat!*

To reach the expansive freshwater stretch of remote Loch Einich,
after fleeing from midge-swarm:

'twill never be forgotten, the water-sparkle in all God's eternity!

CORRIES AND TORS

One tremendous slash of silver rocks, rock-strewn elevated
alluvial plain.

Meandering-sparkling burn - vividly lit lochans of my guts!

Tors at intervals of the ridgeline Beinn Mheadhoin, Beinn
a'Bhuird, Ben Avon.

These large rock outcrops (wherein Bryan's bones should be
embedded) are great huge stony lumps – shattered.

CAIRNGORM MUCKLE SPATE

"In Scotland's boun's sin syne

We hinna hed anither spate

Like auchteen twenty-nine"

L. B. Perkins, *CCJ* no. 91 (1957)

Wildest fury in remote Luibeg,
 Roots of Scots pines undermined by floodwaters,
 The largest stones rolled into the channel
 After torrential rain-fury, the river Am Beanaidh
 Swells into a fast-flow Muckle Spate, the water rush
 Takes even some fallen trees as twigs,
 Even branches in the mad fury downstream
 To get further down, somewhere "clogged".

CONCLUSION

Frost, warmth, snow, rain, wind and tempest
 On Sgoran's bleak, lofty, remote hardest retreat.
 With power and violence undreamt-of at lower height
 The utter bareness of the Sgoran Dubh mountain group
 Is of majestic scale and repose:
 Cairngorm Oblivion.

Bryan extends an invitation to Club members.

I am very sure that some member of the Cairngorm Club would really like la Greina. I could, for example accompany to the southern or northern foot of this expansive unspoilt mountain area (a Swiss National Trust Area). Unfortunately, and most probably at my age, in spirit 18, although in body 86 years; I might get up let's say to the Scaletta Swiss Alpine Club (SAC) Refuge; probably even not; but getting down would be a thing of impossibility! However, I could advise on routes, on mountains to climb, the easier and the more difficult. The Tectonic area of la Greina is of utmost interest, as well as the morphology of glaciers, drumlins, moraines, potholes etc. If one also stays at the SAC Refuge Motterascio of an early morning one usually sees a golden eagle pair skirting the eastern mountain flank which is in morning light, on the lookout for the many marmots. Of an early evening one again sees the eagles flanking the eastern side of the Alpe di Motterascio again searching for marmots! To climb to the east,

Piz Terri there are two main routes, both not very difficult, the others impossible! Starting at the Refuge one climbs up without a path ever a bit steeper up the side valley Valle di Güida, where often high up summer snowfields must be traversed. One emerges at the upper reaches of the Gletscher Dil Terri (Bergschrund), from here up slippery slate slabs, one step up and three down! (rather like climbing the Paps of Jura: not quartzite but slate) then one reaches a chimney, which is very easy to climb up onto the western ridge. I have only climbed Piz Terri three times, once with the Swiss composer Armin Schibler who wrote a long work for instruments and voice, protesting the hideous planned hydro-lake. His Shetland sheepdog also came up with us, and so the first dog that I climbed Piz Terri with. We stamped his foot in the slushy-moist slate grit and his foot was then stamped onto the guest book which by the way had a hole partly through it from lightning strike. One should never climb this mountain in a thunderstorm!

The other most wonderful mountain, which is lower and quite easy to climb is Pizzo Coroi; leave Motterascio, skirt the beautiful Lago di Motterascio (on the way back from Coroi: have a cooling swim naked from the strenuous days climbing) to Crap la Crusch. This is the very centre of the Greina, where the Plaun la Greina and the high moor Alpe di Motterascio converge. It is a transfluence pass, whereby only a few centimetres of height decide whether the water flows into the Rhine over the Plaun la Greina; or to the south over the Alüpe di Motterascio into the Po. From here one clammers up steeply, without a footpath to reach the long eastern ridge of the mountain, Pizzo Coroi. Follow it to the summit cairn and an extensive view unfolds over the whole slightly curved Greina high plain. It is magnificent then to descend from Coroi's summit to the north, sliding slipping over the vast sea of slate slabs, where if you lift the upper one the lower slate slab has a limonite rust ring from the weathering of time. Now somewhat further down: there was a wonderful small, so shimmering white glacier; Gletscher da Riaple (now completely vanished). Now the scree descends into two tiny manganese colour tarns. From here one has to find a gully way

down from the desert of slate, steeply down to reach somewhere on the Passo della Greina and so via Crap la Crusch and this time to Motterascio perhaps to climb down the timber ladder to enjoy the mountain-shepherd's fresh milk and yoghurt.

Viva Cairngorms. Viva la Greina



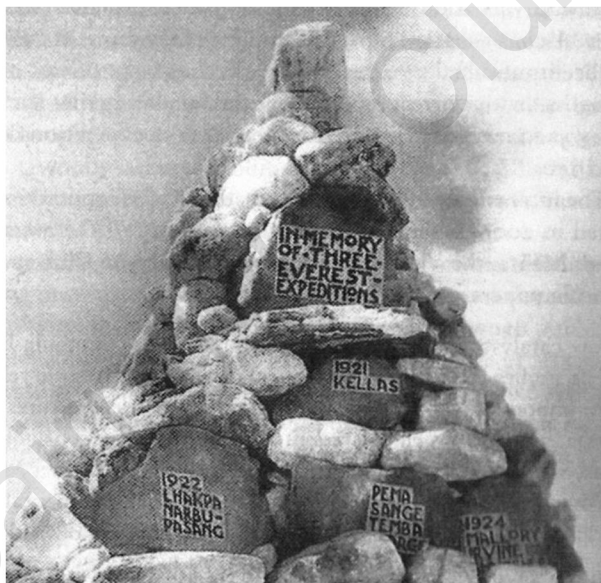
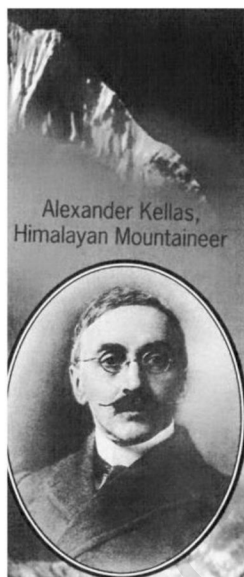
Bryan at Refugio Motterascio.

Editor's note: Bryan has recently donated one of his many books, *Greina-wildes Bergland* (1st edition 1973, 2nd edition 1986) to the Club Library held in Special Collections, University of Aberdeen Library.

THE LOST MOUNTAINEER

DUNCAN L. MACRAE

The man I am writing about had strong Ballater connections and first travelled to the remote Himalayan peaks of Sikkim and Garwall in 1907. He achieved several first ascents in the High Himalayas, the most notable being Pavhunri, at 23,500ft the highest summit then ascended by man.



Photographs of Kellas and the Rongbuk Memorial

The lightweight style of his small expeditions and explorations, unlike those thereafter, his intimate knowledge of the Sherpa and high-altitude physiology made him one of Scotland's greatest mountaineers. He was the first man to die on an expedition to Everest, not an achievement to be proud of! In 1921, he had a mountain in North West Sikkim, named after him; Kellas Peak at 21,917ft, still unclimbed as far as I know. He is buried in the Rongbuk Glacier at Kampa Dzong within sight of the Sikkim Peaks he had climbed. I visited his memorial in 1967 (see above).

His name is Alexander Mitchell Kellas, and he was born in Aberdeen in 1868. He was one of nine children and lived with his

parents at 28 Regent Quay. His mother, Mary Boyd Mitchell hailed from Ballater. Her brother Alexander farmed at Sluivannichie. The



Sluivannichie Farmhouse

house still exists a hundred yards or so from where I now sit writing. (see above) The farm of some 90 acres which was rented from Invercauld Estate was sold off and is largely occupied by Ballater golf course. The farmhouse continues to be occupied by descendants of Alexander Mitchell, namely Sandy and Lindsay Mitchell.

Alexander Kellas was in some ways a lucky young man. He could look out from his house on Regent Quay to “clipper” ships such as the *Thermopylae*, built in Aberdeen, to bring tea from China – streets, or perhaps oceans ahead of the Glasgow built *Cutty Sark*. Alex’s family prospered and they moved in 1878 to No 48 Carden Place. Incidentally I was born in No 32 Carden Place, not a stone’s throw away. Alex was enrolled in Aberdeen Grammar School and instead of becoming a lawyer, a doctor or a clergyman, he became a very successful research chemist.

Alex, through his many visits to his uncle at Sluivannachie fell in love with the Cairngorms. He served his apprenticeship as a climber and survivor in those very mountains. In 1885 summer-holiday time, he and his brother Hendry decided to head for the Shelter Stone at Ben Macdhui. They left Sluivannachie at 7.45 am arriving at Braemar at

mid-day. In Braemar they purchased a loaf of bread, a packet of biscuits and a bottle of lemonade. With this substantial fare they made their way through Inverey, up Glen Lui to Glen Etchachan and eventually reached their objective – the Shelter Stone. They had walked a total distance of 35 miles in around 12 hours. Such are heroes made of. Alex Kellas subsequently joined the Cairngorm Club and became a close friend and climbing partner of Professor Norman Collie of Ferlie Mor fame – the Long Grey Man of Ben Macdhui.

In 1907 Alex headed for India. It was his first trip to the Himalaya. He was 39 years old. His party was small. He left Sprinigar with three Sherpa and two ponies. His exploits and achievements at that time were something to behold. They are far too extensive to record in this small article. He was a shy and lonely man, known only by his immediate family and his beloved Sherpa.

He was a better man than me

Gunga Din.

A POEM

DRENNAN WATSON

The follies of youth and mountains do not always go well together - you know when you still think you are indestructible; it can lead us into "difficult" situations. Like in the Zillertal one day when the climbing was more (a lot more) difficult than anticipated and the weather turned against us and "well". Thoughts turned from "*will we be late getting back to the hut?*" to, "well", "*Will we get back to the hut?*". But we did and ate dinner like horses accompanied by two large glasses of red wine. These last, relaxed us a bit. Suddenly, I picked up pen and paper and the poem below came out complete. I didn't compose it. Honest! It was all preformed. Someone else in there must have. Still, it summed up the day.

*Das Zillertal**or**It Went Wrong - Nearly*

Who stretches forth a trembling boot?
 Upon a stoney mountain,
 Inserts a toe in tiny niche,
 Sets boot on rock about him.

Grip tight on slender nodule,
 Gaze round on nothingness,
 Feel boot slip slow on grating grip,
 And wonder, "Where to next?"

A smile will sooth a wondering heart,
 The beauty all around,
 Will reassure an anxious soul.
 What lies beyond below?

Grey green pillars to the sky
 Stretch out to heavenly blue.

Each ice crystal beauteous
On each ice field we knew.

Beauty loves you all around,
But, stony hearted mountain,
Dare I let slip on slender grip,
No mercy on the mountain.

This rope suspends you over death,
But shields you not from questions.
They spring like streams from mountain sides,
In minds eternal fountains.

Beauty and horror, never apart,
This Jekyll and Hyde are partners.
But which is truth, and which is lie,
Will you ever find on mountains?

TEENAGE DIARIES or THRICE UNDER THE STONE

KEN J. THOMSON

Hugh D. Welsh (1886-1969) joined the Club in 1908, and was its President 1938-1946, and Honorary President from 1956 until his death. A handwritten diary, recently come to light, includes three 2-week stays at the Shelter Stone, when Hugh would have been aged about 17 to 19. The following edited extracts throw light on various activities and attitudes in the hills, some still extant, others somewhat changed! The diary has been placed amongst the Club's "deposited records" (reference MS 3405) in the Special Collections section of the University of Aberdeen Library at Kings College.

1904

Saturday July 2: At Braemar, we got our packs together and made for the Baker's, where we had a good tea, as much as we could eat for 1/- per head and left about 2. After a look at the Falls of Corriemulzie, we came within hearing and sight of the roaring Linn of Dee. Off we started again, singing odd songs to keep up the spirits, and disturbing numerous herds of deer by the noise. Not wishing to be seen by the inmates of (Derry) Lodge, we skirted the woods on the left, and picked our way through the boggy ground (location unclear, but probably west of the Derry). After wandering through a wood, we came on dry ground. With the heavy load, we made slow progress. We only managed another mile and a half before settling on a camping place. A fire was started with dry, rotten wood, of which there was abundance. It being the first time I had camped; I had some difficulty in falling asleep.

Sunday July 3: We wakened in the icy cold of the morning but tramping over rough ground with a steep slope on the right, and slipping and scrambling with a heavy pack soon makes one hot and in a "semi-fluid" state. Trying to whistle or sing something but needing all the breath we had for other purposes, we gave that up. At last up a crumbly, boggy, slimy rise, the small lochs called Dubh Lochan "charmed our gaze". What with a biting wind, a cold rain, and a dense mist, it was no laughing matter. From Dubh Lochan, we had to turn into Glen Avon. Ploughing through oozy ground, jumping from sod to sod with a cycle

cape flapping over one's face, made us wish we had never come. The rain ceased, and we once more beheld the "azure blue", and the sun. The Shelter Stone was pointed out to me, a mere speck at the bottom of the "steep frowning glories" of the Shelter Stone Crags. On we hirkled. Willie (Hugh's elder brother) and I staggered on very slowly. We saw our (camping) pitch on the opposite side of the burn (which) we waded just where it entered the Loch. Cold wasn't the word for it: a score of galvanic batteries applied to the feet would have been nothing to it. The opposite side being reached, we gladly and stiffly took off our packs, and proceeded to get the tent up. This done, heather, rather damp, was gathered to make a bed, and we turned in. How delightful it was to get into fresh stockings. What a night, howling wind and pelting rain, with the canvas making a noise like a pistol shot. Every moment we thought we would be covered by the soaking canvas, for the tent swayed about fearfully. Little sleep was got.

Monday July 4: Rising at 4, it was discovered that we had no firewood. Glen Derry was thought of, and it was decided that Willie and John would go there for wood. Getting tired of doing nothing, I resolved to get my first near acquaintance with the Shelter Stone. Out into the rain I went and scrambling and slipping among the huge scattered rocks and boulders, reached the far-famed stone. Overhead a solid rock 28ft thick; on one side, another huge rock, on another side a wall of stones of all shapes and sizes, sods, etc., artificially made; and the back resting on the ground, with a few open spaces. In this natural chamber I found a whole candle, 2 stumps, a cracked teapot patched up with stamp paper, a rusty spoon, and bits of newspapers.

Tuesday July 5: Still raining, but we resolved to "do" Cairngorm. A stiff climb landed us at the Stag Rock overlooking the Loch, where we had a good rest, and a fine view, considering the drizzle. We amused ourselves rolling boulders down into the loch. The summit of Cairngorm was ultimately reached in a biting north wind. All the way across from Cairngorm to Ben Macdhui was stony, and bare. The biting wind did not let us stay long to enjoy (the summit view), so we made our way down to the crags above the Shelter Stone. Several huge snowfields were crossed on the way, on which we etched out our initials in small stones.

Thursday July 7: My first night under the Shelter Stone gone. After breakfast, Willie and John started for Coylum Bridge, and Mr F. and I discovered several plants of the “Globeflower”. In fact, a great variety of flowers was found. A few cairngorms were imbedded in the rock, but they were ‘*ungetatable*’. In the evening, John looked out and saw 6 fellows clustered round the tent. In a very short time, they fixed it up with their walking sticks. We allowed them to occupy the tent, and to dispose of some eatables. Offering us a “nip”, we all declined with thanks.

Friday July 8: We were wakened by the tent lot, who had not slept a wink: ‘*Too d.... cold*’. They had come across a party of 6 (one being a guide) under another stone, looking very done up. John went down and asked them to come up and have something hot. They were ‘on it like birds’. They had expected to get a sunrise from Cairngorm but were disappointed. How they expected to do hillwalking in thin boots, high collar and cuffs, and ‘Sunday best’, I don’t know. We discovered that we were reduced to oatmeal, butter, sugar, tea and cocoa.

Saturday July 9: Rose at rather a late hour (for us) and disposed of some brose and cocoa. We left to attempt Braeriach and Cairn Toul. Before reaching the Dee, we had to descend a steep slope of boulders of all sizes, a tedious undertaking occupying the best part of 1½ hours, after which we had a very stiff climb up Braeriach. Mist soon descended, but we reached the summit. John and Willie were determined to round to Cairn Toul, by the aid of map and compass. Mr F. and I made our way down to the Dee again. After a short rest, we made for the boundary stones on Ben Macdhui. What a climb that was. We landed nowhere near the marches, so started looking for them. It was no use, completely surrounded by mist. Dimly we could see what appeared to be small lochs all near each other. When the mist rose completely, we discovered only two lochs, the others being patches of snow. We had come right over the top of Ben Macdhui without knowing it. In due course we reached ‘home’, dead beat. Cauld steer (i.e. oatmeal mixed in cold water) refreshed us greatly, and while discussing our day’s labour, rain came down. After about an hour we heard a ‘*coo...ee...*’ and saw W. and J. on the skyline. On reaching us they threw down a few pounds of meal and potatoes that, after descending to the deer watcher’s bothy

(i.e. Corrou) in Glen Dee, they had commandeered, (leaving) an explanatory note and a shilling.

Sunday July 10: Breakfast was made of brose, tea, potatoes, having nothing else. The tent was visited and found quite dry. What a pleasure it was to laze about on the heather in our shirt sleeves. Mr F. and John were away most of the day (to Ben Macdhu), and when they came back, said we had missed the grandest view ever seen, the Sidlaw Hills to the South, West beyond Ben Nevis, North across the Moray Firth, and East almost to the sea. After brose, Mr F., J. and I set out to get a sunset from Beinn Mheadhoin. The blues, reds, purples and greens were magnificent, Lochnagar was one mass of beautifully blended colour. We reluctantly made down the hill to the lochside, and after brose, sat around a cheerful fire. Willie's shoes being in a dangerous state, we settled we should go after dinner. Accounts were squared, and we retired for our last night at the Shelter Stone.

Monday July 11: The very small amount of food we had left was placed in a bag for instant use, and Beinn a' Bhuid was made for. A halt was called by the side of a burn to get something to eat. A fire was soon started with heather. By this time the skin was peeling off our faces, our necks were sore and red, and our lips were black and swollen with the heat. The potatoes were started to fry, the tinned meat was set out on the plates, and we anticipated a good meal, but "ooch" the meat was black with midges. Taking off as many as we could, we mixed in the rest, and finished it off. Climbing semifluid in a boiling sun with loads on our backs was no joke. After a weary climb, we reached the north top of Beinn a' Bhuid. The tent was pitched, and we quickly fell asleep.

Tuesday July 12: A very cold morning. As Mr. F. patched up his unmentionables, I went to the top of the hill to get a view. All the valleys were choke full of thick white mist which rose and fell like billows, with the jet-black tops of the surrounding hills showing above the surface. Brose put out of sight, all that remained in the shape of eatables was tea. Before leaving, a small cairn of stones was set up, in the middle of which was the tentpole with an empty cocoa tin on top. A rest was taken at the Sneck and we started to tackle Ben Avon: a fearfully hard climb. The heat was frightful and the climb worse. At the top, a splendid view was got, in spite of the haze. We pushed down into Glen Gairn. What a difference it was walking on a road again. We

decided to take the road leading to Corndavon Lodge. Taking into account our trampish appearance, we thought it best to go to the back door. In we went and sat down to the first square meal we had had since leaving Aberdeen. (After) a very pleasant hour or two, we set smartly off, and reached Shenbhall (farm) to be put up for the night. How queer it felt to be in a bed again, after heather, oilsheet and rug.

Wednesday July 13: W., J. and I found the Braemar road ankle deep in dust. Just as we emerged on the road, heavy rain began to fall. Nevertheless, donning cycle capes, we strode through the mud, and arrived in Ballater at 1.30, the awfulest looking tickets imaginable: no wonder people looked at us. Caring for nobody, we went to a Café and had something to eat. The packs were found to each weigh about 33lbs. The usual railway journey was endured till Holburn Station was reached. Thus, ended a very cheap (*words inserted!*) enjoyable, interesting, healthy holiday.

Expenses for one:

Train fare (Ruthrieston to Ballater)	3	5	$\frac{1}{2}$
Coach fare to Braemar	2	6	
Tea at Braemar	1		
Share of food consumed	5	10	$\frac{1}{2}$
Fare back to Holburn St.	3	6	
In all	16	4	
Expenses per day (12 days)	1	4	$\frac{1}{3}$
Average for 1 day without train fare or tea at Braemar		5	$\frac{3}{4}$

Note: A pound (£) contained 20 shillings (s), each of which contained 12 pence (d). Thus 5(s) 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ (d) or about 28p, is now (2019) worth about £23, and 5 $\frac{3}{4}$ (d) or about 2.4p, now about £2!

1905

Saturday July 15: We arrived in Braemar at 11.50. The Baker was made for and the “inner man” refreshed. In Aberdeen, I had purchased half a dozen bottled soups in my oilsheet, along with 2 dozen mealie

puddings. I soon found those bottles digging into the small of my back. I put up with it until the Falls of Corriemulzie were reached, at which place I repacked them. A look at the falls was taken – very little water, but nevertheless magnificent. The water rushes down a slope of solid rock almost perpendicular, about 100ft high. The whole sides of the gorge are one mass of dense, rich vegetation, trees, ferns of huge size, flowers of every description. Getting into harness again, we trudged on to the Linn of Dee, and the “Black Bridge” was reached along a dusty road in a scorching sun. At the bothy (i.e. Luibeg Cottage) we had a hearty tea, which cost us 8d each, and worth it. We set off again about 7.10, to do about 8 miles. Picking our way through the wooded portion of the Glen Derry, and crossing a light wooden bridge, we pushed on. The upper end of the Glen was quite hidden by the rain, and with the wind driving it into our faces we got pretty sick of the whole thing. Darkness coming on apace, we began a weary climb up the Corrie. Willie and Co. had left a vasculum of oatmeal about halfway up. Telling Forbes to keep to the path, the vasculum was found, (but) arriving at the head of the ridge we saw no sign of Forbes. A few yells were given, awakening the echoes, when all at once Forbes was seen stumping up the path leading to Ben Macdhui. At last Forbes came splashing through the burn. I led the way over the boulders and in course of time the Stone was reached.

Sunday July 16: Souter, Forbes and Willie set out to do Ben Macdhui. They had topped Ben Macdhui but had got a poor view. On coming down, they had disturbed a herd of goats.

Monday July 17: West and I thought we should try Ben Macdhui, but when halfway up the Feith Buidhe, we discovered two other fellows at the Stone, a Dr Levack and Mr Reid (members of two stalwart Club families for many years). We set off together but were disgusted to find the hill shrouded in dense mist. Levack and Reid struck across to Corrie Etchachan, while we made tracks for “home”. Willie and Souter were seen coming down from Corrie Etchachan, with huge loads of firewood, and pretty done out. Food soon warmed them up, and we turned in.

Tuesday July 18: Willie and I climbed up to a small cave in the crags above. This climb was very stiff, as the slope here and there was very loose, in other parts mossy and slippery. All sorts of wildflowers flourished - red campion, forget-me-not, ragged robin, lesser celandine,

bluebell, globe flower, a kind of saxifrage, mint, and many others. At the very back of the cave we found a goat's skeleton.

Friday July 21: We made up the slope of rock over which the Feith Buidhe runs. The first snowfield was examined, and the depth of snow was found to be about 20ft. The summit was reached after a tedious climb, and we were rewarded with a magnificent view. The hut, now in ruins, used by the ordnance survey men, was paid a visit. At a cornice in the crags we amused ourselves rolling boulders over, and enjoying the smoke and fire, and rumble and roar that they made. "Home" we went for the usual tea or cocoa, brose and mealie puddings.

Monday July 24: As we had got rather tired of brose, we decided to go to Coylumbridge for something fresh, and set out for the summit of Cairngorm. On the cairn under the stones, we found several slips of paper with names and addresses, one of about half a dozen females. To continue, a narrow pass between two crags was traversed. In this pass we had a feed of delicious large blueberries. Rothiemurchus Forest was soon entered and a 10 or 12 wire fence climbed. We could not go very fast, as the heather covered the path. Almost halfway to Coylum Bridge we came across a deserted bothy in a clearing. Crossing the Allt na Beinne Moire by a footbridge, we saw that several trees were being cut down. Eventually Coylum Bridge was reached in rain, and a fresh supply of provisions was laid in, and we invested in three new half-loaves – price 3^d for the lot. Getting loaded about 6, we struck up Creag na Leacainn, and the driving mist soon surrounded us. The rain came down in buckets, and standing behind some boulders to get shelter, we discussed the situation. Should we turn back to the deserted bothy? We found a splendid room with a wooden floor, a large fireplace, and above all dry firewood and matches. A roaring fire was started, and we started to dry our clothes. A loaf was divided into three, and the cheese cut with a penknife. Never will I forget that night. Not a wink of sleep did we get. I began to be troubled with cramps, and the pain was so bad that I rolled about the floor to get relief. Just before we left, I had a delightful snooze – lasting about one minute – stretched out on the floor, and with my head resting on my camera.

Tuesday July 25: About 4 we trudged off, and the tedious tramp and climb up the Learg to the watershed was accomplished with many a groan (*although Welsh devotes 2 or 3 pages of his diary to the scenery,*

which included “a splendid view of the Spey” and “exceptionally brilliant” colours). The path, or rather what is more like a deer track in some places, runs along the Braeriach side, and in some places there is no path at all, as it gets lost among the stretches of piled up rock fallen from above. At the first Pool, we sat down on a boulder and groaned. We were quite dizzy with not having slept the night before. We tackled the slope. West came to a slab and getting the hook of his stick fixed under the top edge of the slab he started to pull himself up. Now the slab began to move. W. managed to jump off, but in doing so dislodged a few more boulders, which came crashing past me. However, no damage was done. The top being reached, we found ourselves on a flat bleak plain of coarse sand studded with boulders. We pushed on as best we could by compass and came to the shore of a small loch. The map had no indication of it. Just at that moment the sun shone through a rift in the mist, and we got a glimpse of Loch Avon, and the tops of the precipices. We were now in the glorious sunshine, and found it was only 8.15. At the Stone, all three of us flung ourselves down, and simultaneously remarked that it had been an awful time. We got some hot tea despatched and turned in to sleep.

Thursday July 27: We rose just after sunrise. There are few things in this world more suggestive of absolute purity than the sunrise on Loch Avon. The intense radiance that comes up the glen from the east, the limpid clearness of the water, the lovely glow of the golden granite gravel, are things that cannot be forgotten. It showed every sign of being a warm day, and we groaned at the idea. Ten o'clock past so we “hustled”. Glen Derry was descended into. A keeper said that taking the staghorn moss is taking the deer’s food. He wore a kilt, and told us how many people had passed, who they were, and how long they had been away. After a long 8 miles, Braemar was reached, semifluid, what a heat, what a dusty road, and by the time we reached civilisation we were sorry frights. However, as we kept to the back roads, very few people saw us. A hearty tea was disposed of in double quick time.

1906

A return to the Shelter Stone was voted for, but West called off. Sandy Reid was suggested by Souter and approached. He was one of several who walked to London in the summer of 1905, so would be fit for hill climbing. As he had not been beyond Banchory, he was enthusiastic.

Saturday June 30: The usual uneventful journey to Ballater ended, and Braemar was set off for. A good tuck in at the Baker's set us up for our day's work, and a start was made shortly before 1. Once on the road we fairly devoured the distance to the Falls of Corriemulzie. Sandy was greatly interested in the delta formed by the Quoich as it runs into the Dee. His first sight of the snow patched mountains greatly delighted him. The keeper of Derry Lodge said that a great quantity of snow lay on the slope between Loch Etchachan and the Stone, and it was impossible to get down. The wooded portion of the Glen was soon traversed and the footbridge reached. One by one we crossed, the bridge sagging fearfully, and before us lay a long stretch of bare, bleak glen, the upper end, in fact most of it, hidden by driving rain. However, being Scotch with a fair amount of dourness, we pressed on, and were well soaked. By the time Corrie Etchachan was reached the rain had ceased, but the mist hid the hills round us. On the way up no rest was taken, and not long after starting the rain came on as bad as ever. With many groans and sighs we toiled up the seeming never-ending slopes, and at last arrived at the shores of Little Loch Etchachan. The steep pathway down to the Stone was negotiated safely, and at last with a cheer, the Stone was reached. Inside we got, and our wet clothes were taken off. All we had to sleep in was: Willie: - drawers, 3 pairs socks, 2 shirts and waistcoat; Sandy: 1 shirt, 2 pairs socks, pyjamas and waistcoat; myself: 3 pairs stockings, 3 shorts and waistcoat. Having disposed of a strong mug of Bovril, cocoa, and oatcakes, we tucked in for the night.

Monday June 2: After breakfast, the snowfields at the top of the Craggs were settled on. By dint of kicking footholds and digging our hands in, we managed to get up over 100ft. We found the snow became harder and more perpendicular. We tried to go backwards, but in endeavouring to turn around, Willie lost his balance, and started to slide. As he came swishing down to me, I made a clutch at him, but he whizzed through my fingers. Down we whizzed, ploughing up the surface with our hands, elbows and feet in vain endeavours to stop ourselves. However, we landed safely at the bottom with swollen fingers. Sandy roared with laughter.

Tuesday June 3: Our way lay down Corrie Etchachan and Glen Derry as usual. Where a burn runs over the road to join the Lui, Willie suddenly gave a yell 'What ho! here's a moonwort'. We had a hunt for more and

found about a dozen. As we passed through Inverey, we called on Miss Gruer and arranged for the night. Here we had a splendid tea.

Wednesday June 4: O what a glorious breakfast. Porridge and good thick milk, oatcakes, scones – this dish had to be refilled several times. For a good bed, and a glorious tuck in, I recommend Miss Gruer's. The Linn once behind, off again in the heat up Glen Derry we went and struck off to the bank of the stream at the ruined huts (location uncertain). The Derry was forded, and a good supply of firewood gathered. Into Corrie Etchachan, with the sweat running from our faces in streams, we reached the top. The Stone was reached at 5.15.

Saturday June 7: Sandy and Willie set off for the summit of Cairngorm to go to Coylumbridge. Jim and I decided to go for a further supply of firewood. We traversed the Corrie at breakneck speed. Our wood gathering spot was duly reached, and we set about gathering as much as we could carry. After a seemingly never-ending climb, we reached L.E. (Loch Etchachan). By this time, rain was falling, and it was bitterly cold. We made all haste and reached the crest of the last slope pretty quickly. Just at the head of the path we almost stepped onto a mother ptarmigan and 7 young, nestling in at the side of the path.

Tuesday June 10: Just as we got outside, I saw 4 figures moving about down the Loch. They had walked all night from Tomintoul. The chap who arrived first appeared to be the leader of the party, as he ordered the others about. They had never done hillwalking before and would hardly believe we had been there so long. Jim and I started off to do Beinn Mheadhoin. A little hail fell, and we took shelter under the second highest barn, enjoying the splendid view. The hail going off we started back. The other party were going to sleep outside. We were not many hours in when two of them came in shivering, and after one o'clock the other two came in. Their leader would not allow a word to be spoken. We gave them two of our rugs to cover themselves with as they had only 1 thin one each.

Wednesday June 11: The other party were up and away long before we wakened. Somebody coming down from Loch Etchachan turned out to be J. Rennie of Gordon's College followed by Geo. Burnett, Echt, and I. M. Clarke, the missionary of Braemar, whom we had met the day we went for Souter. Rain in torrents when I returned. A motor accident had taken place at the Devil's Elbow, but details were lacking.

Thursday June 12: Blazing hot day, so determined to top Cairngorm. Scrambled up by Coire Raibert, and once on the open hillside, a grand view was obtained.

Friday June 13: The whole day was spent getting roots. As this was our last night at the Stone, we decided to have a bonfire of rubbish etc. 3 keepers from Abernethy and a young boy arrived, on a hunt for cairngorms.

Saturday June 14: a dull day, but soon reached Derry Lodge without mishap. At the burn, we gathered a good many moonworts, and about half a dozen *Malaxis Paludosa* (green orchid). Inverey was soon reached, and tracks were made for Miss Gruer's for tea. After a good tuck in, we set off again. What terrible red, dusty tickets we were on arriving at Braemar. Quite German gipsies. We heard long afterwards that we were very much talked of by the visitors.



Fig 1.

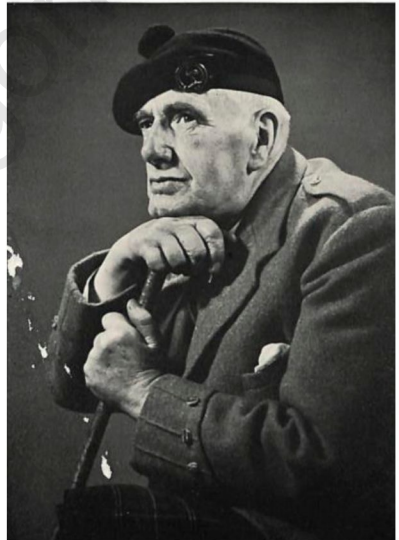


Fig 2.

Fig 1 shows Welsh lower right. The cartoon appeared in the Club Centennial book and is attributed to Ian Munro.

Fig 2 shows a photograph of Welsh to be found in the Club Journal, 94, 1971 opposite p.44.

THE CLUB IN ACTION – A SELECTION OF PHOTOGRAPHS

Tom Baird's Completion, Maol Chean-dearg, Sept 8, 2018 Photo Sheila Baird



Sue Chalmers' Completion, Angel's Peak, May19, 2018 Photo Jamie Vince



Debbie Fielding's Completion, Ben More (Mull), October 5, 2019. Photo Ken Thomson



Mark Peel's Completion, Stuc a'Chroin, Aug 21, 2018. Photo Sue Chalmers.



Blackrock Cottage WE Meet, Stob Ghabhar, Nov. 2019. Photo Jamie Vince



Great Glen Hostel WE, Gleuoriach, April 2018.

Photo Jamie Vince



Jura Camping WE, July 2019.

Photo Jamie Vince



Coruisk Hut WE Meet, May 2019.

Photo Jamie Vince



Muir Cottage, First Aid Course, March 2019.

Photo Jamie Vince



Glenfinnan Sleeping Car WE, Corryhully Bothy, Nov. 2019 Photo Jamie Vince



Italian Dolomites, Delle Trincee, July 2018.

Photo Izy Kirkaldy



Snow holing Basecamp. 2019

Photo Jamie Vince



Lochnagar Meet, January 2020.

Photo Ken Thomson



MWW, Creag nan Gabhar, June 27, 2019.

Photo Sandy McIntosh



Snowholing on Ciste Mhearad. 2019.

Photo Jamie Vince



Verwall Alps, 2018.

Photo Jamie Vince



Verwall Alps, 2018.

Photo Jamie Vince

CORBETT CLIMBING CONTINUED*BRIAN DAVEY*

As mentioned in a previous article, (*Cairngorm Club Journal*, 112, p. 338) a consequence of the 500ft, 152m drop in height separating Corbetts, is that there are few places where more than two Corbetts can be climbed in a single day's traverse. However, the area around Tyndrum provides this rare opportunity, which I tackled one fine September weekend.

Four Corbetts were chosen for a two day Aberdeen holiday break, namely Beinn Udlaidh, (the Dark or Gloomy Hill, 840m) plus Beinn Breac Liath, (the Speckled Grey Hill, 802m) for day one, with Beinn a'Chaisteil, (the Castle Hill, 886m) and Beinn nan Fuaran, (the Hill of the Springs, 806m) for the following day. On this occasion a nice accommodating ridge of high pressure over Scotland gave clear blue skies, light winds and excellent visibility.

A 10 km drive from Tyndrum up Glen Orchy took me to the start of my first walk. Starting in the nearby forest, a short distance away from the Invergaunan entrance, to avoid contact with farm buildings, I made the mistake of trying to follow a faint rough track through the woods along the Allt Ghamhain burn. I soon realised the best route was to cross the burn eastwards, away from the forest, and heather bash with considerable effort 1.5 km up the left bank of the burn until a point was reached above the forest. This took me to the foot of a remarkable line of white quartz rock which is a very prominent feature that can be clearly seen from many miles away on the main A82 road to Glen Coe above Loch Tulla. On past journeys along his road I have mistaken this line of white quartz as snow, even in summer!

Why this mountain, Beinn Udlaidh, has been named the Dark or Gloomy Hill by our Celtic forbears is beyond me since I think it should have been called the Streak of White or the Gaelic equivalent! Beyond this streak of white quartz, the stony north ridge is an easy climb while the ever-improving tremendous views to the north soon lead to the relatively flat summit and cairn at 840m. There I enjoyed a relaxing lunch in the warm September sunshine while viewing the breath-taking panorama of mountains to the south. (Fig 1 next page).

After lunch an increasingly steep descent with a short hands-on rocky stretch down the East ridge of Beinn Udlaidh took me to a flat, half kilometre wide, peaty bealach, at around the 600m contour. Then a very steep ascent heading north-east eventually relaxed to a more gradual gradient, taking me to my second fairly flat Corbett peak of the day, Beinn Breac-liath. (Fig 2 below).



Fig 1. Ben Cruachan from Beinn Udlaidh. Photo Brian Davey



Fig 2. Beinn a'Chasteil from Beinn Bhreac Liath. Photo Brian Davey

Having admired the view and taken a few photographs I decided that instead of returning to my starting point at Invergaunan a more interesting and probably more difficult return to Tyndrum could be achieved by heading down Coire Chalein to the A82 road, then

following the West Highland Way back to the hostel. It was here in Coire Chalein that four red deer sprang up from a steep gully in front of me. One was a rare white albino red deer, (what a contradiction) but before I could extract my camera from my rucksack they were gone from view, disappearing over the distant landscape at great speed. A rare picture unfortunately missed but offset perhaps, by my surprise welcome meeting with some members of the Westhill Walkers on the West Highland Way, a few kilometres from Tyndrum! This of course facilitated the lift back to my car later that day.

The next day dawned bonny, sunny and clear: a perfect day for Corbett climbing. Beinn a' Chaisteil, the Castle Hill at 886m and Beinn nam Fuaran, the Hill of the Springs at 806m form a compact group with 3 other Corbetts, which, despite a great deal of ascent and descent, make a traverse of them all possible in a single day. In fact, it is the only straight forward combination of Corbetts that allow a hillwalker to tick off "five in a day". It almost sounds like a healthy eating exercise instead of a strenuous walking exercise. For the present, two in a day along with such glorious weather was quite sufficient to provide a perfect day, alone with my thoughts and nature in a stunning wild landscape. Again, the walk was without contact with another living human being although I did briefly see another hill walker on an adjacent mountain top some, 3km away.

My walk-in this time was from the A82 on an excellent 4 km single track tarmac road which deteriorated into a rougher land-rover track past Auch Farm, which is "The West Highland Way" passing under the spectacular Auch Gleann Railway Viaduct. From this point the track becomes steeper along Glen Coralan until a small dam, at that time still under construction, was reached. Then taking to the very steep heathery hillside, a strenuous climb brought me to the south ridge and eventually to the summit cairn of the Castle Hill, suitably named since it is well fortified by sheer rocky cliffs and crags on three sides. Here it is possible to gaze across the deep Auch Gleann to the nearby summit of Munro Beinn Dorain (1076m), less than 3 km away, and peer down at the Auch Gleann and Glen Coralan Viaducts nearly 600m below. As luck would have it a train appeared on the West Highland Railway line while I relaxed at the summit and some photos were taken as the train rattled over the two viaducts. Other pictures were taken of the

surrounding hills while I enjoyed the bright sunshine and a lingering lunch (Fig 3 &4).



Fig 3. Auch Glenn Viaduct/West Highland Line. Photo Brian Davey



Fig 4. Glen Coralan Viaduct/West Highland Line. Photo Brian Davey

From Beinn a' Chaisteil a steep but easy descending north-east ridge leads to a flat bealach of peat hags below before a very steep ascent provided a moderate scramble. This brought me, sweating, to my next Corbett, Beinn nam Furan, the Hill of the Springs. Below its summit and stretching far to the north-east were the blue waters of Loch Lyon, now a hydro-electric dam and part of the North of Scotland Hydro-electric Breadalbane scheme. Spectacular mountain vistas were

savoured on all sides and more photos taken. Then a route of descent was decided, running parallel along the Allt a' Mhaim burn to the flat grassy watershed at the source of the Allt Coralan. From here a strenuous heather bash along the contours above this burn eventually brought me to the more familiar landscape of my first ascent of that day. Easygoing, mainly downhill walking from the new dam then under construction in Glen Coralan soon returned me in less than an hour to my car and some welcome liquid refreshment.

It was the completion of another perfect Corbett Climbing Day. However unfortunately our changeable Scottish Climate does not always provide such favourable weather conditions especially in Winter or even late Spring.

Creag Uchdag (the Crag of the Hollows or Slopes), 879m, (OS Sheet 51; NN708323) was one of my chosen Corbetts for a Spring Holiday weekend based at the Combruih Bunkhouse in Comrie Perthshire, May2-4, 2015. Given the inclement weather conditions of that weekend I have decided to rename this mountain Creag Ouch-Jag to remind me of the "Ouches" I uttered as I was repeatedly jagged in the eyes by the snow pellets which bounced off my glasses driven by gale force winds. For me this was supposed to be the easier option of that weekend with most of the weekend-walkers tackling the nearby Munro Ben Chonzie at 931m above sea level.

However, an easier option this was NOT TO BE, as I soon discovered when I saw the NO VEHICLES BEYOND THIS POINT sign at Invergeldie-Coishavachan junction in Lednock Glen. The SMC Corbett guidebook had stated that it was possible to park your car at the Loch Lednock Dam, so this sign in effect lengthened the route by 4 km and entailed another 100m of ascent up to the Reservoir Wall. Nevertheless, the walk-in to the dam was relatively pleasant with the south-easterly wind on my back as it funneled up the Glen. The magnificent surrounding scenery included the spectacular Sput Rolla waterfall. Since this was sheep country the nearby fields were full of very young lambs bleating for their mother's milk and huddling close for her warmth and shelter from the strong winds (Figs 5&6 next page).

After reaching the Loch Lednock Dam, my slow ascent began along a faint path on the north shore of the loch for about a 1km before the steady slog up the steep gradient to an intermediate hill at around 800m

unnamed on the Ordnance Survey Landranger map. Meanwhile I was buffeted by the frequent wintry showers and the strong gusty winds while the descending cloud base and hill fog tested my rusty compass



Fig5. Sput Rolla Waterfall, Glen Lednock. Photo Brian Davey



Fig 6. Loch Lednock Reservoir. Photo Brian Davey

navigation skills

On attaining this unnamed intermediate peak, thankfully the cloud base lifted and suddenly my Ouch-Jag Corbett appeared just like magic. The final 1km climb to the summit was relatively easy given the encouraging sight of the distant 879m concrete triangulation point. Soon I was standing in the shelter of this concrete plinth reading zero degrees Celsius on my map case thermometer in the gale force winds. With damp gloves, the extreme wind chill had even penetrated to my numb thumbs. Naturally I did not linger long at the summit before I

made a triumphant rapid descent to lower altitudes where I found a sheltered spot along the deeply cut valley of a mountain burn where I was able to enjoy a leisurely lunch (Fig 7&8 below).



Fig 7. Creag Uchdag.

Photo Brian Davey

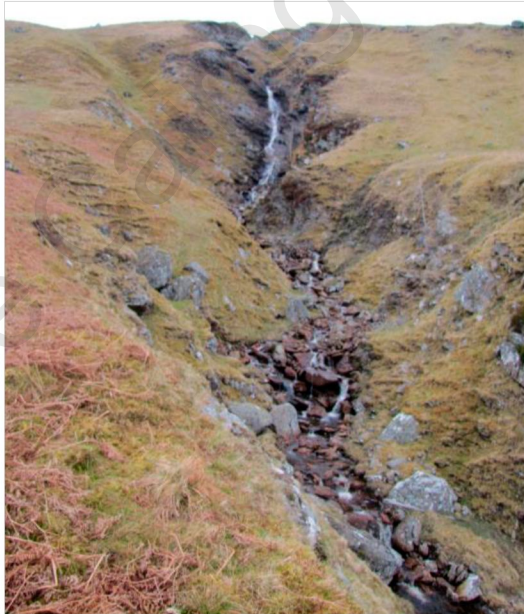


Fig 8. Sheltered spot for Lunch.

Photo Brian Davey

The remainder of the walk back out to my car parked at Invergeldie was also leisurely. Just below the Dam I met the first person I had seen in the 6 hours the expedition had taken. This isolation is typical for Corbett bashers. Meanwhile my Munro bashing friends had encountered numerous walkers on their successful though testing ascent of the nearby Ben Chonzie.

In summary this had not been my most difficult expedition ever undertaken, but it was well up the difficulty stakes in the given weather conditions, memorable for the challenge, sense of satisfaction and achievement when back in the cosy comfort of the Comrie Combruth bunkhouse, reunited with my warm-hearted fellow Club members while comparing hill walking notes of the day.

The following morning unenthusiastic for more cold, wet-weather punishment, the lower level option was to set off and explore the enchanting pretty Perthshire village of Comrie, the Deil's Cauldron and the Melville Monument. Nevertheless, despite the inclement weather it was another very enjoyable Corbett Climbing weekend.

SPANTIK (7027M) - ALTITUDE, STYLE AND EXHAUSTION**GRAHAM WYLLIE**

In the summer of 2019, I headed to Pakistan for the first time in 11 years to attempt my first 7000m peak, Spantik. We were attempting the mountain in as pure a style as we could manage so no fixed ropes, no high altitude porters (HAPS) and only one tent above Base Camp. My climbing partner, Andra Gherghiceanu, abandoned her attempt after we failed to establish Camp 3 (6300m) meaning that a long push from Camp 2 (5500m) became the only option given the time we had left and the weather forecasts.



Above, Porters on The Chomolunga Glacier.

Photo Graham Wyllie.



Above, The South East Ridge.

Photo Graham Wyllie

I was higher than I had ever been: somewhere above 6500m on Spantik's Summit ridge. It had taken three weeks to get here. Three weeks of flying, driving, trekking, climbing and acclimatising. I had felt strong since we left Camp 2 at around 01.30 but now the altitude meant that the few steps I was taking were backed up by rests and heavy breathing. Progress was slow and I could see Messner in his hooded down-jacket ahead of me.

Aside from my body my mind was feeling the altitude too, playing tricks on me and polluting my concentration with confusion and playful misinformation. It was not Messner I reminded myself every so often, it was Giampaolo or 'Jumpy', an Italian Guide from the Dolomites. This was our first ever day climbing with each other; we'd met barely a week ago but circumstances had brought us together. Along with instances of *deja-vu* I felt another familiar presence with us, an old woman, perhaps



Jumpy at 6,200m.

Photo Graham Wyllie.

somebody's mother approving of our zig-zagging trail through the ankle deep snow. There was a rocky section with steep snow ahead. It didn't seem to be getting closer. I kept following Jumpy's tracks; I was now too far behind to take my turn breaking trail. If he had been closer perhaps I would have told him I was going back.

Some time went by with little progress; a constant struggle and the same hallucinations. Before long the icy wind provided us with a new problem and every 5-10 mins we stopped to warm our freezing hands. As time raced by, we inched towards the rocky outcrop. This must be it. Just another 20 or 30m of struggle then the summit and we could go down. Eventually we surmounted the steep section but the ridge continued upwards. I caught up with Jumpy. He said another 50m altitude to go. I tried to break trail but he overtook me. The struggle went on for so long and then we arrived. A bare plateau of snow. The



Graham at 6,300m.

Photo Giampaolo Corona.

fruits of an idea I had while alone in a Canazei bar over a year ago and all the planning, travelling and climbing since. I felt emotional. The pure joy that I've only experienced a few times before, when dreams are realised, when I am exactly where I know I should be.

We didn't spend long there, maybe ten minutes leaving to start the descent at 11.30. The first part of the descent went well. We retraced our steps down the ridge and reached our bags on the plateau. Then we moved towards the top of the SE ridge and the normal site for Camp 3. The section between this and Camp 2 is the technical crux of the route. Andra and myself had had a bit of an epic here the preceding week when we tried to establish Camp 3. For most climbers this section is

made safe by fixed ropes but no team had fixed it in almost a month leaving them now in an incomplete and dangerous state. Free climbing this upwards in good conditions is easy, downclimbing this while exhausted and after the midday sun has taken its toll on the ice is a different matter.



Approaching Summit Cone.

Photo Graham Wyllie.



Graham on the Summit.

Photo Giampaolo Corona.

Jumpy went on down. There wasn't much he could do for me. I methodically front-pointed my way down the steep sugary ice, stopping often for breaks. I toyed with the idea of making an abalakov to abseil but it wasn't practical. It would have justified carrying the rope though, it was still coiled in my sack as we had solo'd together all day. Eventually I reached easier ground beyond a bergschrund and made quick progress down a snow slope then the rocky spur that runs for about 100m down the centre of the face. Beyond this the lower half of the face was more sugary ice albeit at a less serious angle than higher up. Without exhaustion I would normally make quick work of this terrain despite its poor condition. Today was different. I advanced facing down the slope and constantly struggled for my footing. The first section went OK. Starting down the next section my crampons gave way and I began to slide down the slope. After 10-15m my ice axe arrest held and I came to a halt with an avalanche of sugary ice flowing around me. I front-pointed down the rest of the slope.

The rest of the journey to Camp 2 was without further incident. There are crevasses but they are obvious and easy to cross or avoid. The only other issue was the snow. Now softened by the heat of the day it was torturous. Nevermind, I told myself, soon I could blissfully collapse in my tent at Camp 2. At around 16.30 when I arrived Jumpy had packed his tent away and was waiting for me. He informed me of incoming bad weather and that I needed to go down to Base Camp (BC). It was the last thing I wanted to hear but he was right and staying wasn't really an option. I packed up the tent, cooking and sleeping equipment and ended up with quite a hefty sack.

I knew the route down from Camp 2 well by now. Andra and myself had travelled it a few times in our efforts to acclimatise and prepare for our summit attempt. Between Camp 2 at 5500m and Camp 1 at 5050m the route is an undulating snow ridge 4km long. It's quite exposed and scenic in places. There are occasional crevasses and cornices but nothing overly serious. The main issue travelling down at that time was the condition of the snow. Jumpy went on ahead. He kept an eye backwards to make sure I was progressing but there was no point in us both going at my exhausted methodical pace. Sometimes while sinking over my knees into the snow the familiar old woman was there. She knew about the deep snow and she made me feel a bit better about it.

Eventually I arrived at Camp 1 and it was getting dark so I put my headtorch on. I began to feel a bit better and was able to move a little faster. Perhaps this was the lower altitude catching up with me or the fact that the route from here is pretty much completely downhill. The path down to Base Camp from here was good. It was steep in places but well marked and snow free consisting mainly of dirt, scree and shattered although somewhat stable rock. About two thirds of the way down a headtorch grew close. It was Andra who offered her congratulations. An emotional Paco, our cook/localguide/fixer, emerged from the darkness and gave me a hug. The happiest anyone has ever been to see me I think! He carried my sack the remaining few hundred metres to Base Camp arriving sometime after 21.00 where I was met by the Catalan expedition and Jagged Globe's cooks and HAPs who congratulated me also.

In the end I am very pleased with the style of my ascent. A long push from Camp 2 was never going to be easy especially to come back down to BC the same day. In hindsight had Andra and I managed to establish Camp 3 then I believe we would have summited together. This would however have left us stuck at Camp 3 through a weekend of bad weather. A long push from Camp 2 became the only option given the time we had left and this is certainly not the easy way. The lack of fixed ropes also meant that risk on the serious descent down to Camp 2 from the plateau when energy levels were low, had to be carefully considered. Both Jumpy, who has considerable experience on 8000m peaks, and myself felt that Spantik was harder than its reputation suggests. This may have been down to the long alpine style nature of our ascent but even so I feel that it is not a peak to be underestimated. It is a 7000m peak with a long route and technical passages that are subject to Karakorum weather and conditions.

It is a lot of time and effort to climb peaks of this scale. It had taken 4 weeks of travelling, trekking, acclimatising and climbing and that is just to have a chance at the summit and does not include preparation before the trip; the logistics, kit, permits and visas. How well you acclimatise, staying healthy and being fit are all decisive factors and of course tie in with the level of risk you are prepared to take in a hostile environment. The weather always has its say and you can easily spend days sitting in Camp waiting for it to change as I did on a previous

unsuccessful expedition to a different peak in the range. Even with success, about half of our time on Spantik was spent resting or waiting for weather at Base Camp. The journey itself: the places and the people encountered are all to be appreciated, because if it is only viewed as a means to a summit then it's going to be a long and potentially disappointing trip.

For more of my writing see my blog: <https://grahamwyllie.blogspot.com>

The Cairngorm Club

THE CLUB SONG AND RELATED MATTERS

KEN J. THOMSON

At the Club Dinner in November 1926, the Chairman (nowadays the President) referred to the “*club poetess, Miss Skakle*”, being “*not yet ... inspired*”, but the Club Song “*Where the High-Road Ends*” was sung in public for the first time at the following year’s Dinner. A supplement to the *Cairngorm Club Journal (CCJ)* Vol. XI (no. 66) (January 1928) contained its words, by Miss Mary Agnes Skakle, and its music, composed by her sister Miss Margaret Skakle. Both these ladies joined the Club in 1920, Margaret serving on the Committee in 1934-36. The Song seems to have been sung at all the pre-war Club Dinners, sometimes as part of a “musical programme”, led by the composer’s brother, Mr George Skakle (not a Club member).

Margaret Skakle died in January 1939, a ¾-page obituary on page 62 of *CCJ* Vol. XV (80) (1939) recording her enthusiasm for mountain nature and walking and noting that she made several contributions to the *Journal*. One of these – “*A Spring Traverse of Lochnagar*”, in *CCJ* Vol. XIII (74), uses several musical analogies, such as pilgrims in Tannhauser ascending to the Foxes’ Well, and the corrie itself as an appropriate setting for Brunhilde.

Mary Agnes Skakle, who died around 1960 (see *CCJ* no. 92), composed at least one poem for the *Journal*. One, in *CCJ* XI (62) (1924), is a long (350 lines) “*Souvenir of a walk through the Larig Ghru from Aviemore to Braemar, September 1923*”, written in the Doric. Another, in *CCJ* XII (67), 1929, is “*The Pilgrim of the Hills*”, whose chorus goes:

*On the steep Cairngorms, where we wander all together,
There’s a something you never find below;
And it’s calling you and me o’er the bracken and the heather,
Where the eagle and the ptarmigan go.*

According to a descendent, Professor Jan Skakle of Aberdeen University, recently Head of the School of Natural and Computing Sciences, and holder of a Personal Chair in Physics (email 3 February 2013):

“Margaret was, I think, my father's aunt; George was his father, there were (I think) two other sisters [one presumably Mary] who survived till perhaps the 60's and a brother Hugh who is commemorated in Kings Chapel and St Machar's Cathedral as he died in the Great War. I believe Margaret, or one of her sisters, may have been a music teacher in the school that became Hazlehead [i.e. the Central School and later Aberdeen Academy, opposite the Art Gallery]. I know they were all very musical and all keen hillwalkers as there are albums of photos of them out on the hills.”

There seem to be no other "Club Songs"¹ but clearly there was a good deal of singing at Club Dinners in pre-war days (despite long speeches, many faithfully recorded in print). At the 1925 Club Dinner, James A. Parker (President 1927-30, bridge and indicator builder, guidebook author, and Munroist), in giving the toast to “The Guests”, suggested that *“there might be adopted as the refrain of a club song these lines (with apologies to Longfellow²): “*

*Leave no litter lying on the hills;
For empty tins and tangled strings
And paper bags are not the things
To scatter where the bunting sings*

Of course, other clubs have their songs; the SMC was early in the field, when its first Journal Editor, J. G. Stott, composed for the 1892 New Year Meet four verses (later supplemented by three more, sent from New Zealand) with the chorus³:

¹ Except perhaps *The Cairngorm Club Meet's Circular Calypso*, composed by Tom Patey (see his *One Man's Mountains*, Gollancz, 1978), which uses the wording of the Club's “motor coach excursion” circular (presumably around 1955), such as “Members are requested not to ring the Meets Secretary at his residence”). Patey says (p. 72) that *“the song enjoyed a fair measure of popularity amongst the nonconformists”*, i.e. the Etchachan Club. If space allows [it doesn't: Ed], the wording, with permission, is appended to this article. Patey has several other similar songs to his credit: see sixteen of these in *One Man's Mountains*.

² The reference has not been traced.

³ Parodied Teutonically by Tom Patey in *Ach, Mein Grossen Boten!*.

*Oh, my big hobnailers! Oh, my big hobnailers!
 How they speak of mountain peak,
 And lengthy stride o'er moorland wide!
 Oh, my big hobnailers! Oh, my big hobnailers!
 Memories raise of joyous days
 Upon the mountain side!*

The *SMC Journal* also features the songs of several other clubs, including the Gaiter Club⁴, and the Yorkshire Ramblers, who seem to have several songs to their credit.

The Cairngorm Club Library contains a small book, *The Songs of the Mountaineers*, compiled in 1922 by John Hirst B.A. Cantab, M.I.E.E. for the Rucksack Club. It contains the words, but not the music⁵, of about 110 songs, 67 of them classified as songs of general interest, and 43 as “club songs and personal ditties”. Most referred to the Lake District or Yorkshire, but several are from Scotland, including *Citronella: a memory of Skye, August 1918* (commemorating midges!), *A Search Party, How to Become an Editor* (by Hirst himself), and *The Revolt of Women*. Half-a-dozen were taken from the *SMC Journal*, including:

*Och! the Coolin, that'll stand no foolin'
 The rocks at the bottom are terrible hard
 The summit's fine and airy, and the slopes contrary
 Exhaust the vocabulary of an Irish bard.*

A later book - also in the Club's Library and published about 1937 to raise funds for mountain rescue - is *Songs for Climbers*, by Ben Humble⁶ and W. M. M'Lellan.

These days, amongst the older generation at least, mountaineering often goes with love of music. Several current Club members are also

⁴ An aristocratic walking club founded in 1849 by John Burns, the first Lord Inverclyde, and with Lord Palmerston as a member. It was moribund by 1911 but donated £100 towards the *SMC's* first mountaineering guide.

⁵ Despite the fact that “*our contributors demanded music, our members demanded music, and the songs themselves arose before us and protested at being sent forth naked, stripped of their proper clothing*”.

⁶ A well-known Scottish mountaineer, who initiated the country's mountain rescue system, and became a dentist despite total deafness.

members of the Aberdeen Chamber Music Society, and/or are frequently seen at Music Hall concerts. Still, the genre may be worth exploring further, without descending to "*The Sound of Music*": a high-class travel agency offers a "*Schubertiade with Hill Walking*"!

The Cairngorm Club Song

Where the High-Road Ends (circa 1927)

by Miss Mary Skakle; set to music by Miss Margaret Skakle.

Oh! Some for recreation cross the Channel like a fish
To fly the broad Atlantic is another's dearest wish
The road-hog takes his pleasure with a cloud of dust behind
But give me the locomotion of the good old-fashioned kind

Chorus

Tramping o'er the heather, that's the sport for me
Where the track winds upwards by the boulder and the scree
Then come my brave hobnailers, you're the surest friends
When we've got to take Shank's Naggie, where the High Road ends.

The secrets of the mountains are for those upon the hike
Though some can climb Ben Nevis on a screechy motorbike
They'd rush the gates of Heaven just to shock the angels there
But I'll stick to golden slippers when I climb the Golden Stair

Chorus: Tramping o'er the heather, ...

Though once upon the fam'ly tree they say we used to leap
We've left our tails behind us like the fabled nursery sheep
But soon when all are flying and dependent on the hub
There'll still be Johnny Walker and the Cairngorm Club

Chorus: Tramping o'er the heather, ...

O hills of Caledonia may you be forever free
From fiendish record-breakers as they scorch from sea to sea
When roadways twine among you and invade your calm retreat
Still keep a patch o' moorland for those ancient things called feet.

Chorus: Tramping o'er the heather, ...

The Cairngorm Club

CAIRNGORM CLUB ARCHIVE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

PAUL LOGIE and ANDREW MACGREGOR



Photograph showing a selection of material from the Cairngorm Club collection of papers.

The University's historic collections of archives and books, dating from antiquity to the present day, include approximately 5,000 archive collections and over 230,000 rare printed books. The archives include fine medieval and early modern manuscripts and outstanding 17th – 19th century holdings relating to science, medicine, and Scottish Enlightenment philosophy. There are also thousands of collections including the papers of families, estates, churches, organisations and businesses as well as the academic, antiquarian and literary papers of individuals. Housed in climatically controlled stores in the Special Collections Centre, in the Sir Duncan Rice Library, the collections cover all aspects of the history and culture of the University, the City of Aberdeen, the region and their connections with the wider world. The collections are continually growing and are freely accessible to all.

The Cairngorm Club papers (MS 3405) were deposited by the Club in 1993 at the same time as the Club's library. Dating from 1889, two years after the formation of the club in 1887, the collection provides a comprehensive record of the administration of the Club and its activities throughout its history. The collection has been fully catalogued and arranged into five sections: minutes of meetings, correspondence, visitor books, photographs and deposited collections.

A companion collection is the Club library which contains publications on all aspects of mountaineering with a focus on Scotland and includes important 19th century topographical books as well as a number of late Victorian and Edwardian mountaineering texts. The library contains over 1,000 volumes and over 40 periodical runs and both the library and archive collection is still added to by purchases made by, and gifts made to, the Club.

MINUTES

The first minute book in the collection (MS 3405/1/1) covers the period 1889 to 1918 and includes mostly hand-written minutes of committee meetings, listing members present and activities undertaken by the Club. Included are printed leaflets providing details of excursions and events, postcards inviting members on excursions and printed agendas for meetings (which include financial accounts). The whereabouts of the first volume of minutes, as well as the first constitution drawn up by the original founders, remains unknown.

The names of the six founding members of the Club: William Anderson, Alexander Copland, William A. Hawes, Robert Lippe, Alexander I. McConnochie and Charles C. McDonald are recorded in the printed list of members for 1889 enclosed at the beginning of the volume. This is followed by a printed notice to members dated February 10, 1890 announcing the date of the first annual meeting of the club on the February 19, 1890 at the Palace Hotel and is signed by the Secretary, Alexander Inkson McConnochie. The notice also refers to the first official excursion which took place on the July 9, 1889 to Cairngorm and Ben Macdhui with the next excursion to Lochnagar in the September of that year. This became the initial pattern as outings were held three times a year during the Spring, Summer and Autumn holiday-weekends. The first handwritten minutes appear for the meeting of April 16, 1901 and are signed by William Porter, President from

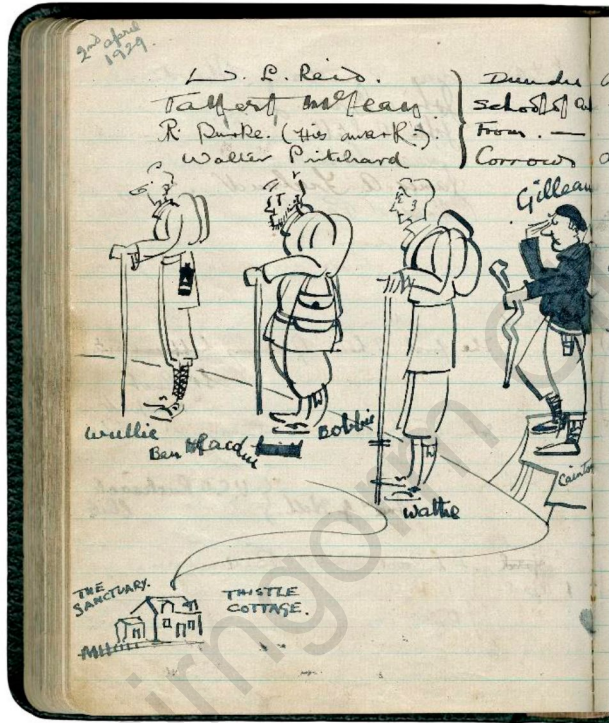
1899-1900. Last year we received minutes for more recent meetings of the Club covering the period from 1970 to 2014.

CORRESPONDENCE

The correspondence files (MS 3405/2) cover a very short time-period in the history of the Club and date from 1948-1959. During this period Eddie Bothwell was the Honorary Secretary and Treasurer and many of the letters are addressed from his office at 34 Bridge Street, the unofficial headquarters of the Club. The letters refer to all aspects of Club administration including issues concerning the management and booking of lodges, membership payments and the running costs of the Club, as well as correspondence with publishers regarding Club publications and thank-you letters for events and talks. Although many of the letters are of a routine nature, they give a valuable insight into some of the issues faced by the Club at this time, such as the running of Derry Lodge.

VISITOR BOOKS

The visitor books (MS 3405/3) for the Shelter Stone (1924-1963, 2015-2019), Derry Lodge (1952-1967) and Thistle Cottage (1907-1939) contain the musings, ramblings, jokes, poetry, anecdotes, drawings and notes of thanks of weary climbers, grateful for the comforts afforded them in these lodgings and are an interesting source in themselves to see who visited the mountains and when. There are three volumes covering the period 1907-1939 for Thistle Cottage at Inverey, an important rest-stop to countless hillwalkers owned by Maggie Gruer (1862-1939). An entry by an Alex. Skene in March 1911 in the Thistle Cottage visitor book (MS 3405/3/2/1) is just one of many references to her hospitality: *“Miss Gruer’s three chief points: wholesome food, clean bed, and small charge. What more would you expect?”* Many visitors simply recorded their presence at the Cottage, such as Sir Herbert John Clifford Grierson on the September 26, 1909, while others recorded poems extolling the virtues of the cottage or included sketches such as the one below:



Climbers from Dundee School of Art, April 2, 1929 (MS 3405/3/2/1)

PHOTOGRAPHS

Some of the most interesting material in the collection is contained in the series of around 280 glass lantern slides, the majority dating from 1889-1930 (MS 3405/4). These wonderful photographs, many of which remain yet unidentified, include beautiful photographs of the mountains and the surrounding area with some capturing members of the Club during their climbs on the mountains. These early photographs are notable for the differences in protective clothing and footwear before the development of modern-day equipment and waterproof material designed for climbing in sometimes very inhospitable conditions!



Lochnagar. "In the Black Spout", 26th March 1910. L-R: A.I. McConnachie; J. Dixon; W.M. McPherson. (MS 3405/4/1/1/2)

A photograph album (MS 3405/4/2) presented to the club in 1976 by Jack Lamb, the vast majority dating from the late 19th to the early 20th century, contains some beautiful images of the mountains, notably Ben Nevis. The prints, which have typed or pencil annotations, also include images from James A. Parker's visit to the Innsbruck area of Austria in 1910 and include an additional print from 1925 showing the unveiling of the Ben Macdhui Indicator.



Ben Macdhui Indicator Unveiling (alternative view, from lantern slide collection), August 1925 (MS 3405/4/1/5/57)

DEPOSITED COLLECTIONS

The final section (MS 3405/5) contains personal papers deposited with the Cairngorm Club. These include the papers of former President Hugh Welsh including his personal diaries of three visits to the Shelter Stone in 1904, 1905 and 1906 (extracts in this Journal) and a collection of newspaper cuttings relating to Maggie Gruer and Thistle Cottage collected from various North-East and Scottish publications. The second collection relates to teacher John Fleming (1912-1948) and is a record of a walking holiday in the Cairngorms in July 1941 including around 50 lantern slides, a photograph album and his own notes of the holiday (see *The Cairngorm Club Journal, Vol 22, 2018. No. 112*).

ACCESSING THE COLLECTION

The collection, which is available to consult in the Wolfson Reading Room in the Special Collections Centre at the University of Aberdeen, offers an important insight into the activities of the club and demonstrates most of all the love of climbing and the outdoors by its members and the duty of care and respect felt towards the majestic Cairngorms.

A further selection of photographs is presented below:



Lochnagar: Loch and Black Spout, March 26, 1910. L-R: A.I. McConnochie; W.M. McPherson; J. Dixon. (MS 3405/4/1/1/15)



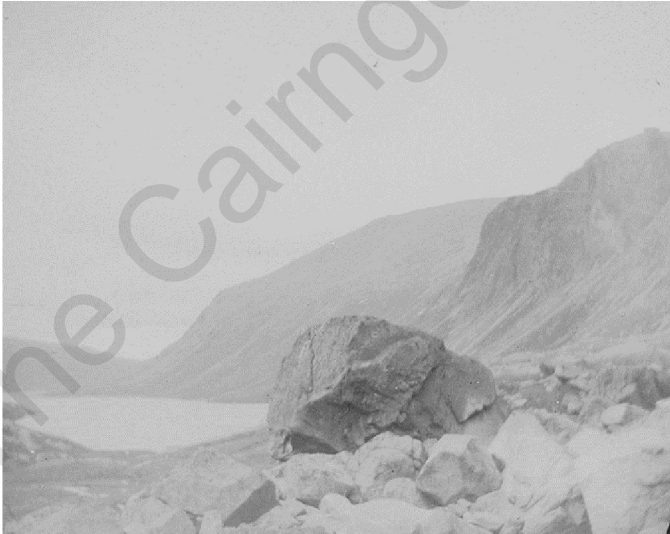
Ballater: Skiing. On hills at Braickley looking down on Ballater, March 14, 1909 (MS 3405/4/1/5/18)



Skiing: Butchart on top of Mount Keen, March 15, 1909 (MS 3405/4/1/5/19)



Skiing: Mount Keen. Glen Tanar Hills looking across to Mount Keen in distance, March 15, 1909 (MS 3405/4/1/5/55)



Loch Avon: The Shelter Stone, July 1924 (MS 3405/4/1/5/62)



Skiing: Approaching Loch Avon, March 15, 1908 (MS 3405/4/1/5/65)



Lower end of Loch Avon and Cairngorm, July 7, 1906 (MS 3405/4/1/6/55)



Ben Macdhui and Glen Luibeg, July 5, 1908 (MS 3405/4/1/6/75)

BOOK REVIEWS

The UK's County Tops, Jonny Muir, 2011, Cicerone; £14.95, pp. 205, Paperback, ISBN 978 1 85284 629 9

The UK's County Tops was Jonny Muir's second book and it is the one I want to recommend to you. The first book is an account of his personal journey to ascend all the County Tops of the UK in one continuous walk, the book is entitled *Heights of Madness*. From the walk and this first book, emerged his second book: *The UK's County Tops* which is a guide to walking all the County Tops. He chose to take as his starting point the Counties that existed in 1974 before local government reorganisation and the subsequent reduction in the number of Counties. He had 91 Counties, 92 if Ross and Cromarty are divided.

The guide gives 82 walks to the Tops of 91 Historic Counties. There are two explanations why there are less walks than Tops. Firstly, there are a few Tops which are shared by a second County. An example of this is Ben Macdhui which is the County Top of Aberdeenshire and Banffshire. Secondly there are some Tops which are close together and with one walk you can gain two Tops. An example of this is Kerriereoch Hill shoulder and the Merrick which are the Tops of Ayrshire and Kirkcudbrightshire respectively. Note it is not the summit of Kerriereoch Hill as this lies 100m south of the county boundary.

If Ross and Cromarty are counted twice, there are 34 Counties given for Scotland. The smallest in the UK is Clackmannanshire, with Shetland the most northerly. The highest Top is in Inverness-shire (Ben Nevis, 1344m).

In the book each walk is given a two-page spread. The information given includes the number of the OS Landranger map required. A small section of this map is included in the description. However, from my experience it is unwise to set off with only the guidebook. Many of these Tops can be made part of a longer day's walk. This then lets you understand the setting in which the Top is found. There are usually two, coloured photographs, one showing the Top and the other a more panoramic view of the area.

The first pleasure to be gained from the book is to explore it and spot those County Tops that you have already climbed. Thus, some Munros,

Corbetts, etc. feature in the list. Those readers of a certain age may find themselves reminiscing on walks done long ago and wondering whether they climbed the summit. For those newer to the hills, can come the realisation that not only will a planned walk be a new Munro, it will also be a new County Top. This book certainly deserves a place next to your maps where you can pick it up at any time and gain a sense of hills walked and those that have yet to feel your feet.

My only word of warning is to be discreet when talking to the local inhabitants. They often have very strongly held views that your choice of County Top for their County is not correct.

Whether you choose to concentrate on one or all four parts of the UK you will quickly realise how diverse an island we share.

MARK PEEL

The Salt Path, Raynor Winn, 2018, Michael Joseph part of Penguin Random House Group, £9.99, Paperback, pp. 288, ISBN 9780241349649

This book is one of the most inspirational books I have read. It is the true story of Raynor and Moth, her husband of 32 years. Days after losing their Welsh farm and family home which they had spent their hearts and lives building, and where they had raised their two children, Moth was tragically diagnosed with a terminal illness. Finding themselves homeless and penniless they made a brave and mad decision to walk the 630 miles of the South West Coast Path, England's longest waymarked long-distance footpath.

This Path runs from Minehead in Somerset, along the Devon and Cornwall coasts, to finally finish at Poole Harbour in Dorset. The rise and fall of the trail at each river mouth give it a reputation for being a challenging one, with the total height climbed calculated to 114,931 ft or 35,031 m nearly four times the height of Everest.

I found I really connected with Raynor and Moth as their journey unfolded. The freedom of their time spent wild camping, swimming in the moonlit sea and surviving on fudge and pasties as they come to terms with their situation makes it an immersive, joyful and uplifting read. It makes you question what you would do if faced with their situation. Raynor's way of describing their experience of homelessness

and the reactions of others towards them is both thought provoking and sensitively told. It sheds new light on our own attitudes and preconceptions, hopefully changing them for the better. What I found stuck with me the most was how often people would react with fear or disgust when they said they had lost their home. Yet if they presented themselves as a couple who had given everything up to go walking, they were fully embraced, even revered. The fine line between the two situations is choice, whether they made the choice to give it all up or whether that choice was made for them.

Overall the writing is wonderful (the book won a Costa Book Award and The Wainright Golden Beer Prize), with vivid descriptions of the weather, scenery, wildlife, observations on society, nature, other people and their own relationship. This is a beautiful story of coming to terms with grief (or premature grieving) as well as the redemptive powers of Nature when it seems that all is lost.

It makes you want to immediately get your tent out!

IZY KIRKALDY

IN MEMORIAM

JIM BRYCE

Jim Bryce died on the April 20, 2018 aged 74. He joined the Cairngorm Club in 1999.

Jim was born in West Kilbride, Ayrshire, moving to Saltburn by the Sea in Yorkshire and attending Coatham Grammar School in Redcar. It was in Saltburn that Jim's passion for Middlesbrough Football Club was kindled. He was often found on a Saturday morning outside a neighbouring hotel getting autographs of his footballing heroes. Returning to Scotland he attended Allan Glen's School, Glasgow where he was very keen on Rugby both at school and as a FP. He reached a high standard in swimming and gained gold awards in life saving.

His enthusiasm for the outdoors and the hills was encouraged by his parents and the scouts. The scout troop went every second year to the International Scout Camp at Kandersteg in the Bernese Oberland, Switzerland. At the age of 14 Jim set off from a mountain hut at 2am with Bergfuehrer Hans Harry and scouts for his first Alpine peak, the Morgenhorn 3627m (Peu Difficile). His mountaineering gear included his school trousers over his pyjamas. He did have an ice axe. He loved Arran. and at the age of 6, Goatfell was one of his first hills.

Jim studied Maths, Economics and Statistics at Glasgow University. He was a member of the GUM, (Glasgow University Mountaineering Club) and he enjoyed rock climbing, snow and ice climbing and heading off to remote mountain bothies devoid of creature comforts to be in the hills and mountains. In addition, he was a keen squash player, enjoyed cycling, downhill skiing and ski mountaineering.

Jim started work with the Highlands and Islands Development Board. After 2 years, he went to Jordanhill College, to do teacher training. He taught maths at Perth High School and moved to Invergordon Academy and progressed to Principal Maths Teacher. He was involved in extra-curricular activities such as swimming, rugby, climbing, camping and hillwalking trips He loved walking up the hill opposite his house and listening to the skylarks. He was a keen cyclist and was the Sustrans co-ordinator in Ross-shire.

As well as being an active member of the Eagle Ski Club in the 1980s, he was a member of several mountaineering clubs including the Junior Mountaineering Club of Scotland, The Moray Mountaineers, the

Austrian Alpine Club, The Glasgow Glenmore Club, and latterly The Cairngorm Club.

Jim had a great knowledge of hill access: where to stay and the vagaries of Scottish weather, great assets when he stepped in as Club Weekend Meets Secretary in 2014 carrying out the role with care and expertise until his untimely death. His thorough knowledge of the Scottish hills meant that the weekend meets calendar remained interesting and varied. He organised highly successful meets to Harris, Rum, Wales and the Lake District alongside long-standing favourite Scottish mainland destinations.

Jim attended almost all weekend meets, the exception being the January Burns Supper meet when he was usually skiing in the Alps. He had an exceptionally good season in winter 2017/18, whilst still keeping tabs on meet organisation from abroad. He signed himself off from one such email with the words “Skiing has been great - lots of snow, clear blue skies and sunshine. Jim Bryce well knackered each day.”

On most occasions, however, Jim would be there to greet members arriving at a hostel or hut on a Friday night, his presence always a cheering one after a long drive in the dark at the end of the week.

Having completed the Munros and Corbetts, Jim was well on the way through his Grahams with which he appeared to have a love-hate relationship; they were all apparently either “cracking hills” or right “b*****s”. After returning from long days ascending his latest Graham he was quick to remind us that Grahams and Corbetts could be even more challenging than Munros

He is missed.

CHARLES GIMINGHAM

In the death, aged 95, at Tor-na-Dee on June 19, 2018 of Professor Charles Gimingham OBE FRSE FRSB, the Club has lost one of its most scientifically distinguished members, and a longstanding one: he joined the Club in 1969. As a world-renowned botanist and ecologist based at Aberdeen University (which he joined in 1946, as a Research Assistant), Charles specialised in heather and moorlands: as a press obituary nicely put it, his “name ... was synonymous with *Calluna vulgaris*”. He published several major books, including the authoritative “Ecology of Heathlands” (Chapman and Hall, London, 1972), and was author or co-author of many papers on heathlands, their plants and

management. He is first recorded as giving a talk to the Club - "Arctic-Alpine Plants in Scotland" in 1965, and he gave another - "Mountain Plants at Home and Abroad" - in 1984. The Club's Journal contains two short articles by him: "Ecologists at work in the Cairngorms" (*Cairngorm Club Journal* no.95, 1973, pp. 71-75), describing the then recent work on the effects of soil erosion and deer grazing on mountain plants, and "A Critical Time for the Cairngorms" (*Cairngorm Club Journal* no. 103, 1994, pp.126 - 127) and a review of the Gimingham-edited book: "The Ecology, Land Use and Conservation of the Cairngorms" (Packard, 2002). He received the MBE in 1974, and an OBE in 1990, while serving on the Countryside Commission for Scotland. He was also on many advisory committees, including that for the NTS Mar Lodge Estate.

On the hill, Charles is recalled as providing excellent company, colouring many walks with his erudite elaborations on passing flora and fauna in the landscape. A modest and gentle man, Charles wore his learning lightly: but no-one who consulted him could doubt his deep respect for one of the major ecological features of the Cairngorms.

CYRIL HENDERSON

Cyril Henderson was born on May 9, 1923 in Littleton, County Durham. He studied Physics at University College London (UCL) which had moved location to Bangor during the Second World War. He did a PhD at UCL and became a member of staff there. He was part of a group carrying out research into bubble chambers which were used to investigate elementary particles. His book, "Cloud and Bubble Chambers", was published in 1970. While he was at UCL he met Margaret Johnson, who also worked there, and they were married in 1959.

In 1967 Cyril took up a post at the University of Aberdeen. A prime reason for the move to Aberdeen was Cyril and Margaret's love of the hills. He was a member of the Aberdeen Radio Astronomy Group. Cyril became a member of the Cairngorm Club in 1984; Margaret had joined a few years earlier.

Cyril celebrated completing the Munros on September 19, 1992 with members of the Club, friends and his children, Christine and John. His other daughter, Jill, was unable to be present. The final Munro was Carn Cloich-mhuilinn, which Hugh Munro himself had chosen to be his

last although he didn't climb it. Rather ironically Carn Cloich-mhuilinn has subsequently been demoted from the list of Munros. In the evening the celebratory meal at Cyril's cottage in Braemar was turkey and vegetarian haggis for the vegetarians. Sadly, Margaret was not there with him; she died in 1987.

An old family friend, Liz Lindsey, recalls a 'Munro Bagging' week based at Newtonmore in 1994 and particularly remembers Cyril leaping down Geal Charn like a mountain goat! This was typical of Cyril. He had energy and was a skilled mountaineer and ski-mountaineer.

Cyril remarried, Renée Johnson, Margaret's cousin, in 1995. In February 1999 Cyril was walking alone in whiteout conditions near Easedale Tarn in the Lake District when he collapsed. Fortunately, a couple were walking towards him when he went out of sight, so they went to see what had happened. No phone signal could be had so one stayed with Cyril while help was sought at a farmhouse by the other. A helicopter came, Cyril recovered and had another 20 years of active life. The couple were strangers but became friends of Cyril and Renée following the incident.

Cyril died on July 28, 2019 at Kendal at the age of 96. A memorial event to celebrate his life was held on October 26, at Natland, Cumbria. It was attended by many of his family and friends including those from the worlds of mountaineering and physics, a tribute to the regard in which he was held.

His legacy is enthusiasm for the hills and willingness to lead others and encourage them to go just a little bit further. Cyril had five grandchildren, the oldest of whom are keen walkers and rock climbers, like their grandfather. They are following in his footsteps!

DR IAN LOWIT

Ian was a member of the Club between 1973 and 2013, and on its Committee 1973-76. He died on October 20, 2019, aged 100, after an eventful life, which included escaping from Austria shortly before the Second World War, and developing the Lowit Child Psychiatry Unit at Aberdeen Sick Children's Hospital. A keen hill-goer, he completed all the Munros.

SANDY (W.A.H.) REID

A Life Member, and one of a family once well represented in the Club, Sandy joined the Club in 1949, and acted as Honorary Treasurer between 1965 and 1986. He died on October 18, 2019.

HELEN RUTH WARD (née BALLANTYNE)

Ruth was born 1929. Her father managed the Home Estate farm at Douglas and her mother had been an army nursing sister (Qarans) and had served overseas in Egypt.

She had an idyllic childhood and had many stories to tell; cooking eggs from the henhouse in a tin can, having to be rescued from the bullpen which she had entered and how she had been given half a crown by Lord Dunglass (later Prime Minister Alec Douglas Home) which she promptly lost!

Ruth followed her mother into nursing, qualifying first as a sick-children's nurse at Edinburgh, then as a general nurse at GRI and then as a midwife before joining the RAF as a nursing sister (PMRAFNS). It was in the RAF that she met her husband, doing his National Service at RAF hospital Wilmslow.

On marriage she left the RAF and became Sister in Charge of the diet kitchen at The Duchess of York Hospital for babies in Manchester. The couple later moved to Sheffield where their family was born and then to Aberdeen. By this time, it became apparent that nursing was incompatible with bringing up a family and she retrained as a teacher of food and nutrition at Robert Gordon's and later became a teacher at Aberdeen High School for Girls.

As soon as the family were old enough, Peter and Ruth joined the Cairngorm Club. By this time Ruth had become an insulin dependent type 1 diabetic but she did not let that hold her back and the couple had many enjoyable years tramping the hills and staying with friends at Muir Cottage.

Sadly, Ruth's health deteriorated, and she could no longer roam the Cairngorms and she died on December 2, 1919 at the ripe age of 90 after a full and eventful life.

ADAM WATSON

Adam Watson was elected as an Honorary Member of the Club in 1982, having been a member somewhat briefly around 1950. Born in

Turriff, he gained First Class honours in zoology at the University of Aberdeen in the 1950s, and then a PhD in 1956 for his thesis on the Annual Cycle of Rock Ptarmigan. In 1953, he was invited by Col. Pat Baird (Club President 1958-59) as zoologist on Baffin Island. A second doctorate in 1967 was awarded for his scientific papers on the populations and behaviour of northern animals. In the 1940s, he began the systematic monitoring of long-lasting snow patches in the Cairngorms, more recently extended in collaboration with Iain Cameron. This work, and his long-term monitoring of animal populations, are highly relevant to the current issues in global warming and impacts of climate change.

He climbed and skied extensively in the Cairngorms, in Scotland's other mountain ranges, and in Norway, Lapland, Canada and Alaska. In the 1950s, he did much climbing with Tom Patey while the latter was compiling the first SMC *Climber's Guide to the Cairngorms* (1961); later, he wrote successive editions of the SMC guide *The Cairngorms*, which demonstrate his immense knowledge and affection for the range. He also made the first one-day ski traverse of the 'Bix Six' Cairngorms in 1962. In 1972, he was the chief expert witness for the Crown in the fatal accident inquiry on the Cairngorm Plateau Disaster, and in the early 1980s he was a major figure in the Lurcher's Gully campaign. According to his long-term colleague Des Thompson, "*Obsessive, authoritative and energetic, he spent decades observing natural phenomena in mountain environments*".

His many honours included four honorary University doctorates, an Emeritus Fellowship at the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology at Brathens near Banchory where he worked for several decades, and a Lifetime Achievement Award by the John Muir Trust, of which he was an early Trustee. Aberdeen University holds over 40 books (most within the Club's collection) authored or co-authored by Adam Watson, and there are innumerable scientific papers in many scientific journals.

The Club has also received notification of the following deaths:

Molly Gilbert (1978, Ord): died Aug 16, 2019

William Hendry (1939, Ord Life)

Isobel Paton (1971, Ord): died April 9, 2019

Mike Fellowes (1984, Ord): died September 19, 2019

Thomas Pearce (1967, Ord Life): died March 1, 2019

Robin Morris (1985, Associate)

Gordon Mathieson (Ordinary Life, 1945; died May 17, 2018

Tom Smith (1980-2011, Ordinary)

Irene Martin (1974, Associate): died August 12, 2018

Walter Burnett (1985-2017, Associate)

Although never a Club member, the loss of Andy Nisbet was noted with great sadness.

Deaths occurring after December 2019 will be recorded in Issue 114.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE CLUB

GENERAL MEETINGS

Since the previous issue of the Journal (in early 2018), there have been two Annual General Meetings of the Club, in 2018 and 2019 - with nothing special to report from either! However, this journal of record must be maintained, and so ...

The AGM held on November 14, 2018 was attended by 22 members. Apart from the meet and other reports summarised below, the main items reported were the untimely death of the Weekend Meets Secretary Jim Bryce, and the publication of the previous issue of this *Journal*. The Treasurer reported that Club membership stood at 383 (4 down from the previous year), and that the Club's bank accounts on 30 September 2018 stood at £100,586, after an annual deficit of £5,459. The standard Club subscription rate was kept at £13, plus £16.25 as the Mountaineering Scotland affiliation fee (or £18.25 if MS's proposed rise in that fee was approved – which it was not).

The following were elected or re-elected as Office-Bearers: Ruth Payne (Hon. President), Marj Ewan (President), Colin Brown and Sue Chalmers (Vice-Presidents), Ken Thomson (Secretary), Derek Pinches (Treasurer), Kees Witte (Hut Custodian), Garry Wardrope (Day Meets Secretary), Sue Chalmers (Weekend Meets Secretary), Rod Campbell (Climbing Activities), Eilidh Scobbie (Social Activities Secretary) and Colin Brown (Communications Secretary). The following were elected to “ordinary” membership of the Committee: Izy Kirkaldy, James Hirst, Mark Peel, Adrian Scott and Jamie Vince (all Ordinary Club Members).

The AGM on November 13, 2019, was attended by 31 members, the Treasurer reported that Club membership on 30 September 2019 stood at 361, and that the bank account (including a donation of almost £10,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund for the Clachnaben path) stood at £116,561, after an annual surplus of £15,975. The standard Club subscription rate was kept at £13, plus the MS affiliation fee of £16.25 (or £17.55 if MS's proposed rise in that fee was approved at the MS AGM – which indeed happened). All Office-Bearers and “ordinary” Committee members were re-elected, with Ivan Hiscox added to the last category. The main AOCB covered the Club's attitudes to various issues to be raised at the forthcoming MS AGM and EGM at Glenmore

– where in the event the future Club’s voting power was raised from 40 to about 300 (our “active” list).

Other general Club developments included the “promotion” of about 25 Associate Members to “Ordinary” status in early 2019, in recognition of their competence on the hill, and the contribution of several Club items to a centenary exhibition organized by the Munro Society in the Perth Library.

MEETS

DAY MEETS

In 2017-18, there were a total of 103 participants on these meets, to which the Club contributed a total of £763. In 2018-19, there were 112 attendances, with a net Club contribution of £532, including two coach hirings. The locations were as follows:

	2018	2019
January	Lochnagar*	Lochnagar*
February	Ben Vorlich/Stuc a’Chroin	Mount Keen
March	Snowholing	Snowholing
April	Deeside	Morven
May	Angel’s Peak	Feshie – Coylumbridge
June	O/N: Knoydart	O/N: Linn o’Dee – Atholl
July	Ben Lawers	Ben Wyvis
September	Cairngorm Traverse*	Cairngorm Traverse*
October	Ballochbuie	Beinn Bhrotain
November	Muick-Clova	Mount Battock
December	Strathbogie	Bennachie

Coach trips marked with *, most others by minibus

The 2018 Snowholing Meet turned out a bit differently than planned: a latish start, the closure of the Cairngorm ski road, boot/crampon problems, lack of snow depth and high winds all led eventually to a retreat from Ciste Mhearaid to the Glenmore campsite.

WEEKEND MEETS

Net Club contributions to these meets in 2017-18 and 2018-19 amounted to £183 and £163 respectively, with ever-healthier numbers leading to several “full up” messages. As can be seen below, a number of new locations were selected (e.g. South Laggan, Lael) but also several old favourites. The Jura meet in July 2019 was probably the two-year highlight, with 18 camping, sunbathing, swimming, etc.!

	2018	2019
January	Muir Cottage	Muir Cottage
February	Roybridge	Newtonmore
March	Aberfeldy	Corran, Fort William
April	South Laggan	Kintail
May	Dundonnell	Coruisk
June	Torrison	Cannich
July	Glen Affric	Jura
August	Lagangarbh, Glencoe	Loch Ossian
September	Glen Brittle	Borrowdale
October	Elphin	Lael, Ullapool
November	Glenfinnan	Blackrock, Glencoe
December	Onich	Crianlarich

OVERSEAS MEETS

Activity on this front saw Derek Beverley and Jamie Vince in 2018 enjoying the Austrian Verwall Alps, while Izy Kirkaldy, Mark Peel and Rod Campbell climbed via ferrata, in mixed conditions in the Italian Dolomites. In 2019 Derek Beverley visited the Stubai Alpen, as did Rod Campbell and Mark Peel

CLIMBING

This field of Club activity varied, as usual, with the weather (which was good in summer 2018 but poor in summer 2019), but the Weekend Meet to Borrowdale in 2019 was a highlight. During the winters, most activities took place on Tuesday evenings at Transition Extreme (TX) down at the Beach. In spring 2019, after a good deal of to-ing and fro-

ing, an agreement was signed, giving cut-price TX entry for Club members, in exchange for a £500 Club donation.

MID-WEEK WALKS (MMWs)

In mid-2019, Joyce Ritchie took over from Marion White as Coordinator of these popular series of meets. With the opening of the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route, the usual Aberdeen meeting point settled down at the Kingswells Park and Ride.

	2018	2019
January	Kinellar & Tyrebagger	Hazlehead – Countesswells
February	Seaton Cliffs – Auchmithie	Sands of Forvie
March	Braes & Woods of Gight	Benaquhallie
April	Birse (not Ben Tirran: snow!)	Tap o’Noth
May	Ballochbuie	Braemar – Corriemulzie
June	Ailnack Gorge	Callater – Craig nan Gabhar
July	Monelpie Moss & Loch Muick	Airlie Monument & Glen Prosen
August	Corrie Fee & Mayar	Pressendye
September	Craig Leek	Elsick Mounth
October	Correen Hills	Hill of Fare
November	Kincardine o’Neil – Aboyne	Braeroddach
December	Crathes Castle	Haddo Estate

The November 2018 MWW commemorated, at the Kincardine o’Neil war memorial, Club members who lost their lives in the First World War (see Mark Peel’s article in the previous issue of this *Journal*). The 2017 innovation of a once-a-year MWW hired coach was repeated in 2019, to enable an A-to-B traverse of the Elsick Mounth, from near the Raedykes Roman Fort to cars left at Durris.

DAUNERS

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, Crathes, Haddo, Newburgh, Kinord, Stonehaven, Scolty and Forvie.

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

ANNUAL DINNERS

The two Dinners were both held in the Beach DoubleTree hotel, and featured speakers as follows:

November 2018: Sandy Allan, on his traverse (and descent!) of Nanga Parbat's Mazeno Ridge with Rick Allen

November 2019: Stephen Venables, on "Thirty Years Voyaging to the Unclimbed Summits of Antarctica"

INDOOR MEETS

The usual series of slideshow talks were provided each winter, at the Sportsman's Club on Queen's Road in 2018/19, and at the DoubleTree by Hilton hotel at the Beach in 2019/20. Speakers and their topics were as follows (* indicates presentations by one or more Club members):

2018-19

October: Members' Night*

December: Eric Jensen*, "The Nature of the Cairngorms"

January: Robbie Middleton*, "The Cairngorm Club: 130 Years of Mountaineering"

February: Graham Wyllie*, "From Cairngorms to Matterhorn"

March: Anke Addy, "The Living Cairngorms"

2019-20

October: Malcolm Combe, "The Law on 'The Right to Roam'"

December: John Love, "A Saga of Sea Eagles"

January: Members' Night*

February: Robin Howie, "Reminiscences"

March: Carol Ritchie, “Scotland’s National Parks-a view from Europe”

SUMMER EVENTS

In both Junes 2018 and 2019, barbecues were held at Touckswood above Stonehaven, thanks to former Club President Adrian Scott, who was pleased to show off his trees, pigs and bothy. Neither meet attracted many participants, but more are hoped for in 2020.

COMMUNICATIONS

The Club’s website www.cairngormclub.org.uk and Yahoo! email system were maintained by Colin Brown throughout the review period, and three Newsletters were produced each year. The Members’ Forum increased between autumns 2017 and 2019 from 152 to 170 members, from 1093 to nearly 1200 topics, and from 6340 to 6900 individual posts.

MUIR COTTAGE

With Kees Witte continuing as Custodian, and Dave Kirk in charge of bookings, Muir occupation continued at satisfactory levels, with about 1700 bed-nights in 2017-18 but up to 2000 in 2018-19, with gross annual revenues of £16,000 and £19,000 respectively, and annual net revenues of £9,000. In the first of these years, some roof repairs were carried out; in the latter, the fencing around the property was renewed. In 2019, a long-standing hot water problem was finally tracked down to a frost-caused leak within the wall of the disabled toilet: repair has required pipe diversion to a more internal location, and re-plastering of the wall, but should result in lower electricity bills!

Both years’ Work Weekends were again successful, with much of the necessary housekeeping accomplished by a band of brothers and sisters. To reduce demands on Kees’s time dealing with “problems”, a Braemar firm has been commissioned to keep a monthly eye on the place, and to deal with relatively minor repairs.

PROJECTS

In 2018-19, the Club made a £1000 donation to the Mend Our Mountains project for the repair of the badly eroded route up the south side of Ben a'Ghlo; the path was publicly "opened" in autumn 2019. The Club also explored the repair of the well-used path up Clachnaben; in the event, a £10,000 grant from the National Lottery Community Fund made unnecessary an initial Club contribution. The Aboyne office of the Outdoor Access Trust for Scotland drew up a 40-page technical specification and employed the contractors to the job late in 2019. Donald Thomas has been "our man" in this project and deserves thanks for his knowledge and energy in pushing things along. Some further work, both by contractors and by volunteers, is planned for early 2020.

The four areas of land which the Club has fenced off against deer in Glen Ey – Piper's Wood Lower and Upper, and the two enclosures at Altanour – have received attention. In summer 2019 a new stile was erected into Upper Piper's Wood – the older stile between the Lower and Upper sections meant two "ascents" to access the latter and was disappearing into the undergrowth! Also, in 2019, a botanical survey was undertaken at Altanour, with most of the 115 plant species found there in 2016 re-identified, and about 25 "new" ones discovered. All very gratifying, even though it will take a wee while before young trees – some now protected in tubes – become apparent there. In November 2019, Richard Shirreffs took over "supervision" of the Woods, and quickly compiled spreadsheet lists of the botanical survey results, as well as identifying several items to be discussed and monitored in future years.

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