

Notes

MUIR OF INVEREY

Muir Cottage continues to flourish, and many intending residents from other Clubs are refused a booking because earlier birds have applied (and paid) first. Our own members can usually get a booking at short notice because some beds are kept in reserve as explained in my last report. Meanwhile Derry Lodge still rots, though it could be filled many weekends with those turned away from Muir.

The penetration by rain of the west end of the building has been almost totally stopped by cladding the two west walls with interlocking weatherboarding. Being of the same width as the original logs, it is hardly noticeable. The installation was carried out during snowstorms last winter by a small squad of determined volunteers. The firm which supplied the timber extension is said to have become bankrupt.

The presence of silt and bits of heather in the water supply at the taps has been cured by fixing an inlet pipe with small holes at the burn. The snag now is that the inlet holes become blocked. Since clearing these is a moment's work, whereas with the former system the uphill cistern became full of silt after a while, the new arrangement is an improvement. Not all residents would agree after a trip up the hill in the rain, but town dwellers are spoiled with a regular water supply. Directions for finding and clearing the inlet are posted in Muir, with an injunction *not* to interfere further with the plumbing! The storage tanks in the building take time to fill with the small bore supply pipe, and patience is required. Water for emergency use is available in quantity in the Dee, but since the permanent caravans arrived at the site near the Linn it is best not to use that water for drinking. The Club hopes that the Grampian Region will take action against the unlicensed caravan site in what was a pleasant, rough campsite where no more than a few tents were ever seen.

A new fire has replaced the one installed in 1972. Although secondhand, the latter was excellent but vulnerable to the Bothy Basher. This species ignores fire doors and kicks logs into the grate, thus breaking glass or mica windows and firebricks. The new fire has no door; this was thought to be a master countermeasure, but already the removable spark guard has been bashed (and repaired). A plaintive anti-bashing notice has been put by the fire – but maybe BBs can't read? When properly fed, the device produces a grateful warmth. One visitor from the other oldest club in Scotland wrote to say that in his opinion the Muir was the best designed hut in Europe.

Surplus reading matter will still be gratefully received by the Custodian.

DENIS HARDY

EASTER 1977

My efforts at the 1977 Easter Meet were confined to a walk with Mr Proctor from Ballachulish to Loch Creran, and a lazy day pottering round the chambered cairns and stone circles near Kilmartin. I did manage the ascent of Dunadd, which, at 176 feet, might qualify as the lowest hill ever ascended on a Cairngorm Club Easter Meet!

When the meet dispersed on Easter Monday, I felt that I needed more exercise, so I drove to Mallaig where I met up with Archie and Robin Grant for a brief foray to the Island of Rhum. The boat crossing takes four hours, and, after calling at Armadale and Eigg, we transferred to the Nature Conservancy boat, the *Rhouma*, to be transported into Kinloch. Our peaceful landing soon turned into a breathless sea chase, for the *Rhouma's* boatman noticed the flashing lights of a Land Rover indicating that someone had been left behind. With siren sounding, we turned back for the open sea in pursuit of the *Loch Arkaig*, which eventually noticed us, turned back, and waited for the stranded passenger who might otherwise have had to wait on Rhum for two more days!

It was my first visit to the island and I hoped that I might take in all the six peaks of the main ridge during the two days I was to be there. Easter Tuesday dawned grey and showery, and we set out along the attractive but muddy path to Dibidil, a well kept bothy. Many of the place names on Rhum are unusual and attractive – Dibidil, Papadil, etc. – and we soon had the mountain slopes peopled with legendary creatures called Dibidilloes and Papadilloes – rivals to the wild haggis! The cloud was down on the ridge, and it was spitting with rain, but I persuaded my two companions to climb the extremely steep slopes of Sgurr nan Gilleann (V S grass according to Hamish Brown!). It was wet and windy on top, and we were in thick mist as we traversed the ridge to Ainshval, the second highest peak on Rhum. We found the descent to the Bealach an Fhuarain quite tricky, as there are some steep rock steps and everything was very greasy. We had to make two quite long detours to by-pass the difficulties, and we eventually reached the Bealach – 1 hour and 20 minutes after leaving the summit! Then it was a case of traversing to the Bealach an Doire and the Bealach Barkeval back to a cheery welcome from Mrs Mackintosh whose superb hospitality we enjoyed during our stay at Kinloch.

The Wednesday was quite different weatherwise. The tops were clear most of the time, and a Force 9 gale was blowing. It was a day of very heavy but short snow showers, between which it was grand with good views. We climbed up Barkeval, then along the ridge to Allival and up the steep broken face to Askival, Rhum's highest peak. While making this last traverse, we met two climbers who asked us to take a packet of sandwiches to their companions further on the ridge. We were also asked to pick up some more sandwiches which had been left on the ridge – 'You'll find them easily', they said. We did in fact find them, and were able to fulfil our mission as we met up with the rest of their party just below the summit. Robin and I continued onto Trollval, thus completing all the six peaks – although I hope to return someday to do the whole ridge in one expedition.

Rhum is going through difficult times just now, and has felt the pinch of government cuts. Only eight families are left, and the work of the Nature Conservancy is being hindered by reduction in available funds. The upkeep of Kinloch Castle takes up a huge amount of the money available for the island, and one wonders if this might not be better spent in other ways. However, Rhum will long continue to be a mecca for those who want to find seclusion and it still attracts the ornithologist and field worker. We found it a friendly and fascinating place, and certainly want to go back again.

SHELTER-STONE

Following the recent controversy regarding the meaning of Clac Dian, I should like to make the following observations.

The Gaelic for a stone is 'clach'. I have never come across the word 'clac' and can find it in no dictionary.

So what does 'clac dian' mean? Now 'clac', or rather 'clach', is a noun, and thus can be qualified by an adjective or by another noun. Let us consider both possibilities.

Firstly, there is a Gaelic adjective 'dian' meaning 'violent' or 'furious'. The feminine form of 'dian' is 'dhian' (pronounced yee-an), and this is the form required to qualify the feminine noun 'clach'. Thus, 'clac dian' could be bad grammar for 'clach dhian' meaning a 'furious stone'. However, this is certainly not the meaning we require.

Secondly, there is a Gaelic noun 'dian' meaning 'a worm', and again 'clac dian' might conceivably be bad grammar for 'clach dhian' meaning 'worm-stone'.

So there is no doubt that 'dian' is not the word we require.

'Dion' is 'a shelter' in Gaelic and the compound noun shelter-stone is correctly given by 'clach dhion'.

PATRICK W. SCOTT

CAIRN GORM - 1884

Eddie Bothwell passed on to the Editor an interesting account of an excursion to Cairn Gorm in June 1884. He had received it from Mr Ian Edward, secretary of the Gordonian Association, who had in turn got it from Mr W. H. Philip who lives in Sussex, and who had been a pupil at Gordon's College at the beginning of this century. After describing the train journey to Nethybridge (via Keith and Dufftown), they engaged a guide (at 5s. and his food) to lead them up the mountain, and they set out, in better than Alpine style, at 1 am!

They rode to Ryvoan in 'our brake drawn by two pretty greys - one of them a stallion'. The horses were stabled and, 'after packing up and having a mouthful of the "cratur"', they left for the hill just before 3 am. At 3.45 am, they had their breakfast which is described thus: 'We got our cooking apparatus set to work which is heated by spirit of wine and is a very handy and useful instrument. While the water was heating we had a view of some more deer who had scented us and went off up in front of us, some of them having good heads. The scene from here was very pretty. Away down below us about two to three miles lay Loch Morlich near the corner of which is Glenmore Lodge - the point from which tourists start who do the hill from the Aviemore direction. While we surveyed the scene our water got warm and we had some nice essence of coffee to wash down our breakfast of bread and tinned salmon.' They reached the cairn at 6.45 am, where they 'struck up and sang the first verse of the hundredth psalm'. They made an abortive attempt to find some Cairngorm stones, and, unfortunately, they had no view due to mist. None the less, they voted it 'one of the most enjoyable excursions it has been our privilege to engage in'. Their expense account at the end makes interesting reading:

	£	s.	d.
2 Rail Fares Aberdeen to Nethybridge @ 12s.0½d.	1	4	1
3 Teas at Keith @ 4d.-1s.; 1 Bottle Coffee 9d.	0	1	9
3 Teas at Nethy @ 1s.9d.-5s.3d.; Sugar 4d. and 2 Loaves 6d.	0	6	1
4 Ginger Ales and 1 Porter	0	1	8
3 Plain Teas @ 2d.	0	0	6
Attendance	0	1	9
Hire of machine 12s. Driver 4s. Guide 5s.	1	1	0
Spirits of Wine for Cooking Apparatus	0	1	0
	2	17	10
Deduct proportion of Hire paid by Mr Burgess	0	4	0
	2	13	10
Deduct 2 Fares	1	4	1
	£1	9	9
Net Proportion excluding Rail Fare		10s.	each

AN ESSAY SOUTH WITH CORBETT'S RULE

Perhaps it would be of interest, before the records are lost in a superfluity of metrication, and for the sake of comparison, to have a list of the peaks in these islands outside Scotland which measure up to the exacting standard of J. Rooke Corbett (2500-3000 feet with re-ascent of 500 feet on all sides). The compiler has referred to the 1 : 25000 series (2½ inch maps) in the case of the Lake District and North Wales, and standard 1 inch maps. In the case of Ireland, reference has been made to the 1 inch map of Killarney; otherwise the ½ inch maps, showing 100 foot contours, seem to give a reasonably clear decision. In the case of the Mourne, reference has been made to the 1 inch Northern Ireland map, which is very clear. The 1 inch map showing the Galtees is a pretty map, but it does not give any contour lines. So perhaps the list can be regarded as a tentative effort, open to comment and correction.

ENGLAND

	<i>feet</i>		<i>feet</i>
Saddleback (Blencathra)	2847	Fairfield	2863
Grisedale Pike	2593	St Sunday Crag	2750
Grassmoor	2791	Red Screes	2541
High Stile	2643	Stony Cove Pike	2502
Pillar	2927	High Street	2718
Kirk Fell	2630	Cross Fell	2930
Great Gable	2949	Mickle Fell	2591
Conistoun Old Man	2635	Cheviot	2676

With the exception of the last three tops, all these are in the Lake District. Several well-known peaks fail to qualify, of which the most surprising is

Bowfell. The lowest point on the line from Scafell is at Esk Hause, 2490 feet where it goes over to Eskdale, and Bowfell is 2960 feet. Several peaks nearly make the grade, but fail by a matter of 50 feet or so; among these are Scoatfell, Crinkle Crag, Swirl How and the Mardale Harter Fell. Nothing qualifies in the Helvellyn group, nor in the Conistone group apart from the Old Man. Incidentally, the $2\frac{1}{2}$ inch map shows Wetherlam as 2499 feet, instead of the usually accepted 2502 feet.

There is no need to search in England south of Mickel Fell.

WALES

	<i>feet</i>
Lliwedd	2947
Pen-Llithrig-y-Wrach	2621
Moel Siabod	2860
Moel Hebog	2566
Moelwyn Mawr	2527
Arenig Fawr	2800
Moel Sych	2713
Cader Idris	2927
Craig-y-Ffynnon	2557
Aran Mawddwy	2970
Waun Fach	Black Mountains 2660
Waen Rydd	Brecknock Beacons 2504
Pen-y-Fan	Brecknock Beacons 2907
Bannau Brycheiniog	Carmarthen Van 2632

The Welsh peaks present a more clear-cut issue than those of the Lake District. Only two of them are appendages to the 3000 foot peaks, the first two in the list, and no one who has descended the west side of Pen-Llithrig-y-Wrach or gazed up at Lliwedd from Bwlch-y-Saethau will question their inclusion. The others, almost entirely, are individual mountains separated by many miles. Waen Rydd is an outlier separated from Pen-y-Fan by a col of 1961 feet and by a distance of $4\frac{1}{5}$ miles.

IRELAND

	<i>feet</i>
Slieve Donard	Mourne Mountains 2796
Slieve Commedagh	Mourne Mountains 2512
Croagh Patrick	Mayo 2510
Mweelrea	Mayo 2688
Nephin	Mayo 2646
Tievummera	Mayo, Sheeffry Hills 2504
Tonelagee	Wicklow 2686
Mullaghcleevaun	Wicklow 2788
Mount Leinster	Blackstairs Mountains 2610
Fauscoun	Comeragh Mountains 2597
Knockmealdown	Knockmealdown Mountains 2609
Temple Hill	Galtee Mountains 2579
Greenane (doubtful)	Galtee Mountains 2636

Purple Mountain	Killarney	2739
Mangerton	Killarney	2756
Knockduff	Iveragh	2572
Mullaghanattin	Iveragh	2539
Coomacarrea	Glenbeigh	2541
Baurtregaum	Slieve Mish Mountains	2796
Brandon Peak	Dingle	2764
Beenoskee	Dingle	2713

A useful little booklet, *Mountaineering in Ireland*, by C. W. Wall, published by the Irish Tourist Association, lists all the 2500 foot tops in Ireland, 54 of them. Of these, 11 are 3000 feet or more and, of the remainder, the above qualify.

There is a pattern in several instances of pairs of mountains in a group, where the higher one only qualifies. However, in the Mourne, the col between Slieve Donard and Slieve Commedagh drops below 2000 feet for a quarter of a mile, and in the Wicklows, Tonelagee is 4 miles from Mullaghcleevaun, with an intervening drop below 2100 feet. Temple Hill and Greenane are at the west and east ends of the Galtee range respectively. Temple Hill undoubtedly qualifies, but there is some doubt about Greenane, the contour line on the west is enclosed by the 2100 foot mark, but there is a gap of about half a mile between the opposing ends of the 2200 mark: it is included as a probable. The rest of the Galtee tops show insufficient drop from the 3018 feet of Galtymore to qualify. Brandon Peak is nearly two miles south of the 3127 foot Brandon Mountain, with an intervening dip below 2200 feet.

It is a peculiar fact about the Irish peaks that, in the whole of the 54 above referred to, there is nothing whatever in the range 2800-3000 feet.

The totals are thus: England, 16; Wales, 14; Ireland, 21. There are 219 Corbetts.

The compiler of this list cannot claim, as could Mr Corbett and Dr Donald, to have ascended all the peaks. For the record, he has ascended all but four of the English ones (exceptions Grisedale Pike, Kirk Fell, Red Screes, St Sunday Crag), all but four of the Welsh ones (exceptions Lliwedd, Craig-y-Ffynnon, Aran Mawddwy and Waen Rydd), but there are only six of the Irish ones in the bag. These are Slieve Donard, Slieve Commedagh, Nephin, Croagh Patrick, Tonelagee and Mangerton.

H. PROCTOR

GUESTS, BEWARE OF THE BULLS

About half way between statutory old age and the theologically allotted span, my wife and I were, to our great joy, admitted to membership of the Cairngorm Club. Two subscriptions later, we attended our first Club event, which took place at Taynuilt, the annual Munro-bagging jamboree known as the Easter Meet - to bag our Munros, however, only in the moral sense. We had travelled from Oxford to mind our twin grand-daughters, aged one year and one month, while their parents went off to bag their, or our, or the family Munros. A daily routine was established within a setting of feeding and cleaning times. After breakfast, *en famille*, the parents stealthily stole away to their summits; we

were alone with our charges, and our day had started: mornings, after due preliminaries, a walk for us, a perambulator ride for them; after lunch, play and rest. Parents returned for evening feeding-time, first for the twins followed by bed, then ours. After which we were free to socialise with our new found associates and fellow members.

Mornings were the testing time. Breakfast being negotiated with varying degrees of disturbance, there was the walk. Of the first, before the Meet began, a trial run with the parents, I have no recollection. On the second, to Taynult, we went out like lambs, sleeping; but came in like lions, roaring for overshot lunch. The third, we went off, through the woods along towards Inverawe, roaring at delay, but returning in lamb's clothing of sleep. The next day – thereby hangs our cautionary tale! We had taken a fancy to the road, or track, along which we had seen walkers from the back windows of the Netherlorn Hotel and decided to try this. Disregarding the large notice PRIVATE ROAD at the entrance, we ventured into the unknown. In the yard of the farm half a mile along we sought directions from a boy of about ten. His information about bridges and his topographical knowledge seemed confused and inexact, so we pressed on, unenlightened. After a further half mile of rough track, we were aware that, having followed us in play at the lower edge of the declivity used as a rubbish tip, he was hollering to us, evidently intent upon enlightening us about something, but he was unintelligible at the distance. So we pressed on for another half mile of rough pushing. There we met two mature and articulate adults, who had just turned back from the same walk because the continuation was impassable: they added some remarks about cattle in the field.

On the way back, we were waylaid by our young friend, who embroidered this theme of the cattle in the field. 'I was shouting to tell you that there's a bull in that field'. With the addition, expressive of his legitimate resentment at our trespass on his private road, 'It's a savage bull!' Then giving a further twist to his knife: 'Another bull jumped out last week.' How vicious the second twist was I realised only as I emerged from the farmyard, with my dutiful squaw taking a turn of pram-pushing a hundred yards ahead. There, lined up on either side of our track, separated from it by a flimsy looking fence, which, though surmounted by barbed-wire, still looked very low, were two rows of cattle. With my party of three just entering the tunnel, what could I do from a distance of a hundred yards? Only shout. I shouted: 'Keep going.' No response, but they did keep going. As the moment approached for me to run the gauntlet, I made some rapid observations. The left hand line seemed to be composed of innocuous looking youngsters, many of them female. But the line on the right was a different story, particularly the beast who seemed to be guarding the access. He had all the appearance of a bull; I sought primary evidence, but in his shaggy winter Highland coat, it was impossible to discern whether he really was still a bull, or not just that he had a very stern look. I looked for the secondary evidence: no horns, no ring, and I had no stick. As I found myself between my party and the herds, I reflected upon what I should do if I heard a pounding and snorting behind me. I recalled the story of the farm-worker I had known who had worked himself out of a farmyard by hanging on to the bull's ring with one hand, and beating it over the horns with the stout ashplant he always carried with the other, until he had worked his way

to the gate; only just in time, there was not much ashplant left. But I had no ashplant, the bull had neither ring nor horns (if indeed he really was a bull). Should I throw myself at the feet of the advancing juggernaut? Fortunately, these heroics were not called for. The moral of this story? I do some recalling.

Those formal investigations one conducted, or courts of inquiry on which one sat; there was always that item in the terms of reference: recommendations for obviating recurrence. On selecting a centre, the Club could always circularise local bull owners: but to tell them what? Is the potential ardour of bulls best quelled by cutting off the oats supply, or by increasing it? I have recently learned from early morning farming news that it is now usual for stockbreeders to grow, harvest and store wild oats; so, an ample supply of wild oats. They are so much cheaper than the genuine article. But if the Highland breeders would not co-operate?

There had been a whole column in the previous day's *Scotsman* devoted to the black-list maintained by the Department of Education. Possibly the Club could prepare its own black-list, headed by the item 'Bulls' and not only for alphabetical reasons. We could then reverse the title of this article to:

BULLS, BEWARE OF THE GUESTS... AND...

BILL (J. W.) FISHER

GOLDEN JUBILEE

Great things are done when men and mountains meet.

—BLAKE

Sunday, 1 August 1926, was a perfect summer day in the Cairngorm Mountains. On that day a small boy of 8 was taken by his father, and six other men, to climb Ben MacDhui, the highest peak. Memories of that boyhood adventure remain clear after half a century. The drive up Deeside in the early morning in the bull-nosed Morris Cowley; the sun dispersing the mists of night; the approach walk through the primeval pines of Glen Derry; the toil up Corrie Etchachan (some of the members in their Sunday suits, collars and ties, and tweed cloth caps which were never removed); the men refreshing themselves with cold burn water laced with malt whisky; incredibly, a large patch of snow at 4000 feet; the unforgettable thrill of planting one's feet on the summit with the magnificent panorama of half Scotland identifiable from the mountain indicator; and the long descent into Glen Luibeg, and the weary return through the ancient forest to the cars. That far-off day implanted in that small boy a love of the high tops and wild places of Scotland which has stood the test of time and has given him boundless pleasure.

Sunday, 1 August 1976, was a cool, overcast day in the Cairngorm Mountains. On that day a middle-aged doctor, his elder son and his sister [Sheila, the first Lady President of the Cairngorm Club—*Ed.*] climbed Ben MacDhui by the route trodden by the small boy in the year of the General Strike. Of the original climbers but two survive; the mountains remain to inspire another two generations. The little party of 1976 retraced the footsteps of 1926, and one member felt the same thrill of accomplishment on attaining the summit, despite the obscuring mist, in some ways enhanced by carrying on his back the

invisible burden of 50 years. The boy of 1926 has become the grandfather of 1976. He has achieved some success in his vocation, but he will never again quite recapture the magic of the first time he stood on the top of the mountain. These were the enchanted hills of childhood and youth. Ben MacDhui is allegedly haunted by a spectre, the Fear Liath Mór (Big Grey Man), but the doctor encountered nothing so fearsome, only from time to time the fleeting sense of the presence of the kindly and benevolent spirits of his father and his other companions of that far distant summer day when he and his world were young. The only ghost he found disturbing was that of the small 8-year-old boy—BOB MURRAY (area medical officer, Stockport).

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