MISCELLANEOUS NOTES

The W. H. Murray Literary Prize.

As a tribute to the late Bill Murray, whose mountain and environment writings have been an inspiration to many a budding mountaineer, the SMC have started a modest writing prize, to be run through the pages of the Journal. The basic rules are set out below, and will be re-printed each year. The first year open to contributions will be 1998, with a deadline, as is normal, of the end of January that same year. So assuming you are reading this in early July, you have, for each year of the competition, six months in which to set the pencil, pen or word processor on fire.

The Rules:

1. There shall be a competition for the best entry on Scottish Mountaineering published in the *Scottish Mountaineering Club Journal.* The competition shall be called the 'W. H. Murray Literary Prize', hereafter called the 'Prize.'

2. The judging panel shall consist of, in the first instance, the following: The current Editor of the *SMC Journal;* The current President of the SMC; and two or three lay members, who may be drawn from the membership of the SMC. The lay members of the panel will sit for three years after which they will be replaced.

3. If, in the view of the panel, there is in any year no entries suitable for the Prize, then there shall be no award that year.

4. Entries shall be writing on the general theme of 'Scottish Mountaineering', and may be prose articles of up to approximately 5000 words in length, or shorter verse. Entries may be fictional.

5. Panel members may not enter for the competition during the period of their membership.

6. Entries must be of original, previously unpublished material. Entries should be submitted to the Editor of the *SMC Journal* before the end of January for consideration that year. Lengthy contributions are preferably word-processed and submitted either on 3.5" PC disk or sent via e-mail. (See Office Bearers page at end of this Journal for address etc.) Any contributor to the SMC Journal is entitled to exclude their material from consideration of the Prize and should so notify the Editor of this wish in advance.

7. The prize will be a cheque for the amount £250.

8. Contributors may make different submissions in different years.

9. The decision of the panel is final.

10. Any winning entry will be announced in the *SMC Journal* and will be published in the *SMC Journal* and on the SMC Web site. Thereafter, authors retain copyright.

The W. H. Murray Literary Prize (1998).

The four jurors: Bob Richardson – Hon. President; Ken Crocket – Hon. Editor; Simon Richardson – SMC member, and Dave Hewitt – columnist and editor of the *Angry Corrie,* deliberated long and hard over the articles submitted for the 1998 SMC Journal. In the end, the clear winner was duly noted as *Failure,* written by Donald Orr, and of course, printed in full in this issue and on the Club web site. Mr Orr has been a contributor to this Journal several times, though only the Editor was aware of the identity of authors during judging. Some of the judges' comments on *Failure* are reproduced below.

'Top of my list is *Failure.* Well written and thoughtful, dealing with areas that are usually at the back of the climbing mind and rarely expressed.'

'Very good, certainly trying to convey something both in language and in form. Good on dislocation – again with the here-and -there structure supporting this, but with interesting (and perhaps unintended) connections between the far-flung and diverse places. Understated "incident" has enough weight to carry the story. Very human and non-judgemental.'

'I have experienced the sort of tragedy described in this story, and I am aware of how it can affect one. Most of us manage to get on with life, but others may be affected more deeply.'

Self-Written Obituaries

This repeats a request first made in the 1989 issue, that members send in self-written, short biographies. There was an encouraging response to this, and several have appeared in due course, as none of us, not even SMC members, avoid the grim reaper for ever.

But some SMC members do seem to have extraordinarily long and active lives – witness some of the *In Memoriam* notices in this issue – so that when the final ascent is contemplated, or even made, there are few witnesses left to re-tell the life round the tribal fires. 'The song is finished but the melody continues.' (I. Berlin). But only so long as someone is left to pass it on.

Such biographies will be filed in confidence with the Editor. There is no set format, though reference to notable mountaineering exploits would obviously be in order. (Only thus, for example, will we ever learn just which hooligan it was inserted a rock in President Wallace's rucksack, on the day of the Centenary Dinner.) Other trivia, such as education, employment, birthday honours etc., may be briefly alluded to. A photograph of the soloist, preferably in relative youth, would be of immense values to the archives. (Editor).

Mantelshelf. I am becoming increasingly testy over the mis-spelling of this word. One climbs on to a mantelshelf, a mantel being 'a structure of wood, marble etc., above and around fireplace', hence a mantelshelf climbing move. A mantle, on the other hand, may commonly be a 'loose, sleeveless cloak', or a 'fragile, lace-like tube fixed around a gas-jet to give incandescent light' etc. (Editor).

THE PAST PRESIDENTS SOCIETY

Charlie Orr theorises . . .

YOU'VE heard of the 'Dead Poet's Society' in which actor, Robin Williams, made famous the role of the eccentric Professor whose self-appointed role in life was to pass on archaic literary lore to up-and-coming generations? Yes, well, it is my contention that a similar society is to be found not too far under the surface within our own organisation.

Let us for convenience sake refer to this as 'The Past Presidents Society'. However, in doing so, I would stress at the outset that this loose grouping does not include all past holders of that esteemed position as will immediately become clear when I tell you that the avowed purpose of the group in question, rather than passing on literary traditions, is to ensure continued fascination in up-and-coming generations with a rather large and barren island situated completely within the Arctic Circle.

On joining the Club in 1992, I had some vague notion of unlimited access to the CIC and of climbing with people who would ensure that my grades would go shooting up. I also thought, naively as I look back on it, that I made all the running in my efforts to be accepted into membership. I have no idea to this day why or on whose information I was targeted by the PPS but be assured, targeted I was.

One winter's evening as the wind rattled the, at that time, not too well secured shutters of the Raeburn Hut and I was glad to be sitting close by that wonderful gas stove, the door opened and I had my first sight of a man, tall and lean of shank with a mane of silver white hair, who was to be instrumental in changing my life. A kindly man who, after partaking of a few Glenlivets which he, not I, carried with him, asked me if I had ever considered joining the SMC. To say that I was flattered would be to understate my feelings and I questioned whether or not my mountaineering qualifications would be sufficient unto the day. To my surprise he told me that a friend of his, in fact the incumbent President of the Club, was in the process of introducing a motion to reduce the qualifications for older members. How fortuitous I thought then. I now know different, this was the PPS at work. Little did I know then that my well-read companion of that evening who retired to bed three or four healthy drams to the good and quoting *Horace* was none other than arguably the most zealous of the PPS – the good Dr. Sm***.

Within six months I was a fully-fledged member of Scotland's premier climbing club and, almost by accident as it then seemed, fell into company with two other staunch members of the PPS; firstly the proselytizing Professor Sl***** and his less militant, but equally committed companion, William Wa*****. Now, you may well say that I should have smelled a rat or perhaps a lemming would be more appropriate in the circumstances. Here was I, a novice member, suddenly surrounded by professional men, doctors, academics you name it, all old enough to be my father and all current or past presidents of the club – and I thought that they just wanted to be friends. Come on! But believe me, at that time conspiracy was the farthest thing from my mind.

What of my apprenticeship or, some might say, indoctrination then. Well ski-touring became compulsory, of course, and conversations were often peppered with references to strange sounding people like Knud Rasmunsson and Eric The Red. It was amazing really the seguways that were employed by these erudite

gentlemen to introduce these topics. I was frequently, by accident, coming into contact with maps of Greenland carelessly left on the back seats of cars and the like. This came to a head when a certain Mr Ben***, a man I strongly suspect to be an elder statesman of the PPS, but who took no active part in my case, spoke to me about Greenland, actually addressing me by my first name! I was in short subjected to this slow drip, drip of suggestion bordering on coercion over a period of three years until finally I could hold out no longer, the PPS had won and in December, 1995 I signed on for *The Liverpool Coast.*

There remained one further test, winter camping in the Gorms to, as the Professor put it, familiarise me with the arcane mysteries of camping on snow prior to our departure. This went well apart from one shaky moment when, after the tent was pitched on snow in Coire-ant-Sneachda, the Professor turned to me, produced his John Thomas and bade me do the same. The years of indoctrination had taken their toll and I was powerless to resist, but boy, was I glad when he instructed me in the art of peeing round the base of the tent poles to freeze them in!

About a month before we left I was instructed to attend at the Professor's home in Edinburgh where I would meet other members of the expedition and assist with the packing of food which was to be flown out ahead of us. On arrival I was met by his delightful wife, Ja**, who I learned was to accompany us on the trip. The Professor was not present having been called away on urgent business and anyone who has tried to pack two weeks' food for eight into 10 small cardboard boxes will realise just how urgent that business was! I must stress at this juncture that I was sure on that first meeting, and nothing happened in Greenland to change my opinion, that Ja** is blissfully unaware of the existence of, and her husband's participation in, the PPS.

The other two members of the expedition that I met that night were Alan Petit and Gerry Rooney neither of whom were club members but who had nevertheless I feel, been carefully selected by the PPS ostensibly because they were both members of the Starav Mountaineering Club, the effect of that being that the joint trip could still be referred to as an SMC expedition. The darker side of the selection process became clearer during the expedition when I learned that Alan, a dentist, (always handy) had, in fact, been indoctrinated some 20 years previously having visited Greenland with the Professor when the leading lights of the group were still only free radicals so to speak, none of them having attained the status of President never mind Past President. Unlike me however, 20 years on Alan was still blissfully unaware of the powers of the PPS and was happily taking the cardboard centres out of toilet rolls so he could get the box lids closed, secure in the knowledge that he was doing so of his own free will.

Gerry, of whom more later, is a psychologist who specialises in dealing with the criminal mind and is somewhat of an expert in hypnosis, quite obviously selected (apart from the SMC solution) to keep me under control should rebellion surface. You see although they have to be pretty sure that they've got you hooked before the invitations are sent out so to speak, they can never be 100% sure until they get you up there.

Club member, John Hay, was to join us with plans for a solo sledge-hauling trip round the coast with the intention of living and hunting with the Inuit at the Scoresbysund settlement. John, to use an analogy from the drug world, is mainlining on the Arctic at the moment, having fallen under the spell of the PPS only four years

ago; this was to be his fifth trip, sometimes twice in a year. Even the Scientology guru, Ron Hubbard, would be impressed with his response to PPS techniques! I tried briefly to share my ideas with John while building an igloo at our base camp on the Heks Glacier but he reacted badly to my initial approach and as he is a big man and with the additional problem of his wielding the snow-saw at the time, I let it rest.

The eminent glaciologist Scots/Canadian, Stan Paterson, made up the team. I'm somewhat unsure of Stan's role in the conspiracy but as he has known the main players for more than 50 years it would be naive in the extreme to imagine that he is unaware of the existence of the PPS. One thing that did occur to me was that this expedition might be being used as some sort of training exercise for prospective members of the PPS as Stan was very keen on taking what I would term – covert photographs. When I say that he was keen, he sometimes took these photographs at much expense to his personal comfort, secreting himself in freezing temperatures until what he deemed the appropriate moment before capturing me, yes more often than not it was me, the new boy, or so it seemed, who was the object of his attentions and I couldn't help wondering if, given his apparent tenacity in this matter, he was acting under orders.

As we flew out of Glasgow bound for Reykjavik the white-haired one, whom I counted as instrumental in me being bound for the icy wastes, was regrettably not with us, I did, however, contact him by telephone prior to leaving at his lair in Glensh**. We had a very pleasant conversation during which I gave no hint of my suspicions regarding the existence of the PPS and neither did he give me any information intentionally or otherwise which would tend to harden these suspicions. Having said that, he did make a parting comment which was to exercise my mind for sometime. He said, and these chilling words will remain with me always: 'Given the nature and constitution of your part take very good care of your spoon'.*

I immediately tried to clarify what he was obviously trying to tell me other than the far too obvious 'Take care of your spoon' but the line went dead and further attempts to contact him were met with the engaged tone. This was still very much in my mind as we flew later that day from Reykjavik on another scheduled flight to Akeureyri in the far north of Iceland.

After overnighting in Akeureyri under the good care of Sigi, boss of the travel outfit Arcturus, we were loaded, squeezed might be a better word, with our gear into a Twin Otter aircraft which had been chartered for the flight to the airstrip at Constable Point in East Greenland. It was while loading that any doubts I might hitherto have entertained about my theories were well and truly banished.

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* I have, since the time of writing, learned that this fascinating remark has its genesis in an incident which occurred during an expedition to Greenland in 1958. It did not make headlines in the national or indeed even in the climbing Press at the time however, 40 years on it is still very much a subject shrouded in mystery and one which, like the grail quest, might never be solved. It is this new-found knowledge imparted to me by 'A well-wisher' that has led me to make every possible attempt to disguise the identities of those involved in this tale of intrigue and I would strongly advise anyone who thinks they might know of whom I speak against broaching this subject with them.

I had sight of a letter on Zigi's clipboard and there along the bottom of a letter headed:

SMC EAST GREENLAND EXPEDITION 1996

were the letters PPS.

with some smaller writing underneath which I couldn't make out, this and another small section came after the main body of the letter which was signed

Yours sincerely

(Professor) M. Sl*****.

There was no longer any doubt, this clinched it and I further clinched it by adroitly removing the letter from the clipboard and stuffing it inside my duvet. It did cross my mind that committing himself to paper like this was rather sloppy for a mind as sharp as the Professor's but I suppose he's not getting any younger and after all Zigi is a Dane and PPS would mean nothing to him would it.

It was thus confirmed in my own 'conspiracy theory' that I was deep in thought as we flew towards the airstrip at Constable Point in East Greenland. Unknown to me the Professor had spoken to the pilot at Akeureyri prior to our departure and this, as well as crossing Zigi's palm with a bottle of Highland Park (future expeditions would do well to remember this worthwhile and relatively inexpensive tip), resulted in him agreeing to fly us from the coast inland up the Pedersson Glacier and over the proposed site of our base camp on the Heks Glacier. Being oblivious to this, I was somewhat alarmed when I looked up from reading a book to see a rock face filling the whole window, same on the other side and, most alarmingly of all, the same through the pilot's screen, but before my brain could order this somewhat anomalous situation we breasted the top of a col and in the distance I could see the tiny airstrip that is Constable Point.

This austere grouping of huts and outbuildings which prides itself in the sobriquet The Arsehole of The Arctic was originally built by the Americans (perhaps it should be asshole!) to aid oil exploration in the area, now serves as the jumping-off point for expeditions to this part of East Greenland. There is not a lot going on here in what is reminiscent of a set from *Ice Station Zebra* and the highlight for me was the not unpleasant experience of using a toilet which relied for its efficacy on a rather strong vacuum effect! (please do not try this at home!). What they did with the resulting neatly sealed plastic bags is anybody's guess.

The next stage of the trip was a short hop by helicopter 15 miles or so inland where we set up base on the Grete Glacier at around 800m. During my months of indoctrination I had been told of the beautiful calm and sunny weather awaiting me in Greenland but, of course, I realised that this was simply a sales tool designed to get me there for whatever reason. Until that is, I woke up next day to just such weather which continued the next day and the next, in fact, for every day of the two-week trip barring two when snow and high winds kept us confined to our tents.

During that first idyllic week we made many ski ascents of the easily-accessible peaks all around the 5000ft mark, many of which can be skied to their summits. What with the peerless skiing and the grandeur of being surrounded by 1000ft walls of unclimbed rock, I pushed any thoughts of the machinations of the PPS to the back of my mind and simply enjoyed the moment. This naive and elemental joy was often accompanied by the thought that I could be the first human being to ski through a given hollow or climb a given slope, an experience which induces a feeling of connection with the past and with the future. I even went as far as to have

my first doubts, the first inklings of the possibility of paranoia on my part until, that is, I recalled something that I was once told by a friend who clearly did not grasp, on one level at least, the implication of that state: 'Just because you're paranoid doesn't meant that bastards aren't watching you,' was his maxim.

On our first day of storm the Professor, the most experienced Greenlander among us, decided that we should construct an igloo which seemed like a good idea at the time. What he didn't tell us and what we didn't find out until after two hours of hard manual labour by us, he was the non-labouring architect, was that said igloo was to be used, no was being/had been used, is more appropriate, as a toilet! It was in the aftermath of this discovery and the attendant grumblings that I had my conspiratorial chat with John Hay which I alluded to earlier. It did not go down well and the next day, which dawned fine, he left alone intending to journey round the coast to Scorsbeysund.

After a week at Grete base, we decided to move over a col about three miles distant and set up camp on the Age Nilssons Glacier. This was my first experience of sledge hauling and I would have to say that I was pleasantly surprised. Uphill or on the flat was a pleasure as it was easy to get lost in the rhythm of skinning along on fresh unmarked snow, however, the downhill runs took a bit more guile. Partly, in the cause of frugality and partly as a weight-saving exercise, we had eschewed the use of the rigid poled pulkas normally used on such expeditions in favour of common or garden kid's sledges purchased from such diverse sources as 'Toys R Us', 'Jenners' and the petrol station down the road (in Scotland, not Greenland!) These worked remarkably well being pulled by varying lengths of cord clipped into climbing harnesses, downhill running being controlled after much trial and error, by a steadying influence from the rear. The only alteration made to these sledges was the gouging out of some additional holes on either side (heated screwdriver recommended) to facilitate the use of criss-cross cord to secure the payload.

From this second camp we were within a mile or so of the pack ice and therefore very much in polar bear country. John Hay had been the firearms expert of the party but, as I said, he had taken off on his own leaving us in charge of a big and very heavy rifle. I think it would be fair to say that by a process of not speaking about the, 'you know what', or indeed the 'what's its name' themselves, we convinced ourselves that all would be well. My choices in all this were somewhat limited by the fact that my teenage daughters had told me that were I to shoot a 'what's its name', they would never talk to me again. Luckily, the choice of whether to die gloriously at the claws of such a noble beast or be denied the delight of my daughters' company was not forced upon me. I suppose that had things turned out differently, requests for money and the like would have been made through an intermediary!

It was on a long day-trip from this camp made with Gerry and Alan that I tested my theory on them and it was Alan, the one who had been in Greenland with the Professor 20 years earlier, who immediately went on the attack. His argument being along the lines of, if what I was suggesting was true then why hadn't similar attempts been made to indoctrinate him. On further questioning, however, he did accept that he had been repeatedly asked over the intervening years to join the premier club and when I pressed him for the names of his would-be sponsors . . . well need I say more! Gerry professed to have a more Marxist-based resistance to joining apparently perceiving divisions of status and class, not within the membership he was quick to add, but between the membership and the rest of the human

race. (Whatever can he mean?) However, in a moment of weakness while resting on what might well have been a virgin summit and viewing the rugged grandeur of Rathbone Island rising sheer out of the pack ice, he did confess that some years back he was caught by our current president, Bob Richardson, as an uninvited guest in Lagangarabh having entered via a window. And I feel sure that given the enormity of his crime and the identity of his tormentor this youthful aberration had more to do with his not coming into or indeed being brought into the fold than any Marxist-based notions he might hold.

Two days before striking camp for the long haul out to Constable Point, an ascent was made of Twillengerne which at 1475m is the highest peak in the area. This was made on a day of high winds on which, with the exception of Stan, all members of the party climbed fairly steep mixed ground to a shoulder from where it was obvious that the final rock tower of 200ft or so was going to require some technical climbing. I was somewhat surprised to witness the angst it caused the Professor to decline the summit given that he had made the first ascent in 1971 but, given my misgivings regarding the role of the PPS I became immediately suspicious when he took Alan to one side and on the pretext of sorting out some gear, indulged in some furtive conversation most of which was carried off on the wind which was buffeting our rather exposed position. The only word I managed to grab out of the maelstrom was 'Beans' and as I was trying to make sense out of this latest development Alan was off up the first pitch like a a scalded cat.

As I belayed him from a rather precarious stance my thoughts were divided between the wonderful views out over the pack ice broken now into long blue leads by the onshore wind, and the meaning of the word 'Beans'. Wind and Beans, quite a combination. BEANS could it be yet another acronym British Expedition . . . no, there was nothing British about the Professor, I knew that. B . . . E . . . Arctic N . . . Society. Half an hour passed and I was still on belay. I tried shouting but it was hopeless, the words were just ripped away on the wind. This was less than 200ft of V. Diff. climbing, what was he doing up there?

I had my back to the others but perhaps I had caught some movement out of the side of my eye, I'm not sure and, as I turned round, I saw the Professor looking towards the summit through a pair of binoculars and directing with his right arm. I made up my mind there and then that there was something up there that I was not meant to see. Now the other explanation is that Alan was having difficulty and the Professor, having climbed the route before, albeit 25 years before, was giving him directions but I was in no mind to look for the obvious.

Right away I gave the shout 'climbing', which I knew would be immediately snatched away on the wind, and was at the top of a wonderful pitch of superb rock inside 10 minutes. Finding Alan on the slightly higher of twin summits about 10 yards away grubbing about on his hands and knees, I soloed across to him carrying coils of rope and when I tapped him on the shoulder from behind he got such a fright that I thought the good people of Bridge of Allan might well be looking for a new dentist.

When he recovered his composure, we carried on a shouted conversation during which the only two words I could decipher were 'Professor' and 'Beans' and, given that Alan had failed to find whatever it was he was looking for in half-an-hour, it was unlikely that I was going to find it now. At least he knew what *it* was! We were soon joined by Gerry and after a brief photograph session, we rejoined the rest at

the shoulder. Given the circumstances surrounding this ascent, I was stupid enough to descend last, the result being that I did not see the post-summit meeting between Alan and the Professor which might have given some clue as to what was going on.

Later that night, after a supper of semolina pancakes and marmite, one of the Professor's specialities, (not recommended for those of a delicate constitution), I ensured that his customary two Glenlivets were somewhat larger than usual which, coupled with the warm post prandial fug of a leaky primus, I thought might make him more receptive to subtle interrogation. No so. Beans . . . a tin of beans which he left on the summit after the first ascent. He was interested to see if they were still there and, if so, what condition the tin was in given it's degree of exposure to the elements over the intervening 25 years. A simple experiment was how he put it, nothing more.

I left early next morning leaving a note saying that I was going to try and find one of my ski-crampons which had become detached on a trip earlier in the week and, by carefully retracing our route of the previous day, three hours of hard work put me once again on the summit of Twillingerene, this time with a somewhat rusty tin of Heinz beans in my hand. It had been concealed beneath a large loose boulder on the first of the twin summits which accounted for Alan's failure to find it. On first examining the tin it seemed as if the Professor's account was standing up but, on closer examination, I saw that the bottom of the tin sported a neat weld around its circumference. It had been opened and resealed! Could the answer be here? I laid it on a flat rock and gave it a hefty blow with my axe but, to my horror, the blade glanced off the weld and I watched helplessly as the tin bounced and rattled down the mountain disappearing into the early-morning fog.

Over the next two days as we sledge-hauled down the glacier, camping for the first time in two weeks on the sparse vegetation of areas of Tundra coming through the retreating spring snows, I committed most of what I write here to a diary and as I read and re-read the happenings many of which, it has to be said, belonged solely to my own internal landscape, I again began to question the whole PPS theory. Perhaps it *was* the product of a fevered imagination, perhaps the letter, remember the letter? *had* simply dropped out of my duvet pocket before I could read it, perhaps Heinz *did* weld their tins in these far-off days. It was while sitting once again on that wonderful vacuum contraption at Constable Point that I felt a calm acceptance come over me and, as I listened to the bag being sealed, I determined to seal away my theories . . . at least for the time being.

PS. As we waited for the plane at Constable Point one of the Inuit workers there handed me a spoon with the letter 'S' scratched thereon which he said his brother had found on a hunting trip many years ago during the summer thaw. I could not understand too much of what he said but I gathered that one of their people's Shaman had told him that this spoon had its origins in the land of the Scots and that the 'S' stood for – now was it Sm*** or was it Sl*****? I don't suppose it's very important really!

PPS. The bean tin fell down the NNE face from the top of a prominent flat-topped red-coloured boulder on to fairly steep but not impossible ground. A team of two working roped should have a good chance of success. One word of caution however. Should this tale be told in the pages of the Journal, those involved might see any further attempts to 'out' this powerful group as subversive and retribution could well be swift – and severe.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Sad Tales from the East

By John Steele

It occurred to me that as I travel round the mountains of the world, some areas are just at the beginning of the tourist boom involving such activities as trekking, eco-touring, river-rafting, bungy jumping and the rest, while others have been at it for decades. However, it appears to matter not at which stage this development is when man's appetite to pollute and destroy nature is considered.

Trekking is still at a fairly rudimentary stage in some of the more remote parts of equatorial Indonesia. It is sad to see that even here can be found the same signs of outdoor decay and destruction, familiar to us all in the old world. With more than one million hectares of primary and secondary jungle lost to burning in several months during 1997, Indonesia and its immediate neighbours will have to pay a heavy price. Witness the blanketing by smoke haze of an area from 10° north of the equator to 10° south and 50° along it. Millions of people did not even see the sun for several month last summer. The El Niño effect, of course, made matters worse.

Turning to a more established area, to mountains in particular and to even the balance a bit. It is a real pleasure to see the steps taken by the authorities in New Zealand to ensure the care and maintenance of huts, paths, plants and wildlife. It is just a pity that nature herself is so actively destructive in the South Island. Again, the right sort of moves can be seen elsewhere. For instance, local guides are paid a bonus for bringing litter off Mount Kinabalu in Borneo, an idea, we as mountaineers, could export around the globe perhaps. I still remain astonished at not having been poisoned when visiting Mount Kenya some years ago, given the huge rotting tips of garbage outside the huts and the polluted catchment pools.

It also occurred to me that we in the West should perhaps be measured in our criticism. Even in New Zealand, where there have recently been floods on the west coast and drought in the east. Again, made worse by the El Niño effect and, of course, the vast tracts of land stripped of vegetation during the last century. The drive from Nelson down to Christchurch was not a pretty sight. The sheep are even being taken off the land. Closer to home, take a glance westwards from the pulpit of little Carreg Alltrem, the watchtower of Pillar Rock or the fleeceback of our own Ben Wyvis and you will see the results for yourself of the latest round of generational destruction.

What follows is a short rueful tale of a recent journey into the wilderness.

The tale is of a short break in sultry Sumatra just an hour's flight across the equator from Singapore.

After arrival and much bargaining, transport is eventually organised to take us into the mountains. Next morning, we arrive at our drop off point, which proves to be the most extensive of tea plantations – Bodmin Moor under bushes. This is the country of *minang kerbau,* which loosely translates as stinking cow. A matriarchal society where women inherit and men are gypsies – never been conquered and I suspect never likely to be – except perhaps for the damned HAZE. 'Dari mana?' – no not an inquiring Aberdonian climber – 'We are from Britain.' – (room, bunk, meal have you?) - we all know how it goes. This *is* mana – though warm hostess, clean mattress, food and drink a plenty.

Buff bop barp – we join the rush hour of tea plantation workers as they cart fart to their particular part. Then out of the HAZE zooms a *gnomie* (boyish grin, leather

jacket and all). 'Antar ke Gunung?' Yes, here we go again. An hour saved on the back of a 125 – but at a price. Still no mountain in sight though. Is he having us on? After all, the peak we had come to climb is nearly 4000m high and rises some 2500m straight up from where we were standing. After much finger pointing and reassurance from the lad, we continue on our way and soon pass under the rotten wooden portals which act as the entrance to Sumatra's largest national park. Broken beams, broken glass, up your **** – bahasa style.

The memory of such a pleasant greeting had just about dimmed as we reach base camp – Bynack Lodge, Sixties fashion. All the floor boards have gone but the crap is dry. There are tigers and elephants roaming wild here, however, it is the dry season in an El Niño year – and there is the HAZE. We soon quit the hovel.

Stout roots, slimy shoots and filthy flats are our companions on the way to set up camp in a small square of volcanic ash which appears just as the vegetation disappears, having given up on its upward montane struggle. An ascent of the highest volcano in mainland Indonesia, Gunung Kerinci at 12,500ft, soon follows. We are met on the summit by sun and light to the south and the darkness of night to the north – and BELOW, billowing balls of deep red magma pulse, convulse and vapourise into clouds of poisonous gas some 100m high.

For the first time we are above the smog and can see our mountain, but not for long, as nightfall comes quickly on the equator.

A restless night under the stars,
then
Back to cows, haze and habitation.
'Outside please – with stars ***'***

Swim, beer, leer, warm bath,
massage fingers path,
then
Ships smash, Airbus crash.

Trip's end had come,
but
The haze remains
Mankind must burn!

Avalanches

Following the note in SMCJ, 1997, 188, p.370 by Bob Aitken, on what was possibly the first recorded account of an avalanche in Scotland, Peter Drummond adds: While staying in Tibbie Shiels Inn by St. Mary's Loch in Yarrow, and on engaging the hostess in historical discourse, she produced an 1886 volume entitled *Reminiscences of Yarrow,* by the Rev. J. Russell M.D. Not exactly a riveting read, but one bit caught my eye. It related the experience of one Alexander Laidlaw, shepherd of Bowerhope, a farm on the southern shore of the loch, tucked under steep north and west-facing slopes.

'Passing over some treacherous snow on the hillside, his weight had the effect of detaching the large mass: and down came the avalanche, bearing him in its fall, and burying him under it. His dog marked the spot where he lay. He was found alive with some measure of consciousness. He was carried home and having been put in

a warm bed, he was soon himself again. Humanly speaking, his preservation, after being 14 hours under the snow, was due to his own presence of mind, making a desperate effort with his hands to clear a breathing space round his head.'

Unfortunately, no date is given to allow the good man to make posthumous claim to fame, but we are told he died (implicitly of old age) in 1842, so it seems probable that the mishap took place early in the 19th century. He may not be the earliest victim (the Atholl dog and the Gaick bothiers probably share these honours), but he is perhaps the first recorded survivor.

SAILING WITH JOHN PEDEN

SMC Afloat

Iain Smart sends in this account of three sailing/mountaineering adventures with the Commodore of the 1997 Centennial Yacht Meet. We were all quite safe in his hands on this historic cruise; he is not only a master organiser but has the knack of getting a quart into a pint pot. The weather on the Yacht Meet was admirable. This was not due to high influence but to John Peden's other attribute, namely, 'luck'. As you will find out, if you read on, he is not always associated with good weather, but seems to have the luck the Gods bestow on those competent enough to receive it.

A failed ascent of Dun Da Gaoithe.

New Year is not a popular time for sailing. Nevertheless, responding to an invitation from John Peden (not something to be done lightly, as you will know) I found myself one New Year's Day scudding south down the Sound of Mull in wild Wagnerian weather under gloomy clouds with occasional shafts of sunshine illuminating our white sail against the wine-dark sea. My fellow crewman was a friend of John's who had never sailed before, a strangely introverted character who smoked curiously aromatic hand-rolled cigarettes and seemed bewildered by what was going on, as well he might. In real life there is no background music except on rare occasions. This was one of the exceptions; the ride of the Valkyries was being played by a full orchestra discretely hidden somewhere off stage. We zig-zagged south in the gathering storm, and at dusk escaped from the white-horsed sea into Salen Bay for the night. We had a nebulous plan for climbing Dun Da Gaoithe on the morrow. There was a lot of weather about. Sheet lightning backlit the mountains and phosphorescence glowed along the anchor chain. Down in the cabin the whisky glowed in the lamp-light and we fell asleep to the sough of the sea-dark wind in the rigging.

Next day the weather was again gurly, the cloud low with battering rain in the passing squalls; not a day for a summit. To fill in time we sailed south to Seill Island and in the gloaming entered the Poll Dobhrein, a bomb-proof anchorage, over-crowded in the summer but now lonely and forlorn with the winter sea growling outside its gates. In due course we made our way through the trackless bogs to the pub at Seill Bridge. We were offered a lift to a dance at Easdale by two nice, but inevitable, Englishmen. This was a West Highland Dance in the old style. There were still enough locals around for it to be authentic. It had started an hour late as is the custom. The band played fast and well, the bar flowed fast as well. Every now and then someone would get up and sing. The dances were danced with enthusiasm and with small regard to the perjinkitiness of the RSCDA rules. I danced with a girl

who said she remembered me well, that my name was Spike Maxwell and when was I coming to see her again. I remember doing a schottische with a wee smasher who wore a luminous blue bangle on her ankle. All in all, aged, unshaven and wellie-booted though we were we seemed to be doing well. We had, I suppose, a sense of mystery. We were off a yacht in a stormy January night. 'A likely story,' said the luminous blue bangle. Anyway the time passed, as it does. As the dance ended at god-knows-what hour I confided in her that we were indeed the Flying Dutchman and his crew and that this was the one night in seven years we were allowed ashore, hoping that some damsel would take pity on us and save us from our doom of sailing the seven seas for ever. I got the impression that blue bangle and her friends would willingly oblige.

We got a lift back to the bridge with the two obliging, but culturally disorientated, Englishmen, staggered across the bogs in the wind-tossed darkness, found the dinghy and got back on board. We were all very drunk. I collapsed in my bunk. I was drifting off to sleep when I heard the rattle of the anchor chain and then, the sound of the sails going up, followed by wind in the rigging, the surge of the sea and the feeling of being tipped from the bunk. I eventually understood from all this carry-on that we were out in a very rough sea. I staggered on deck to find the Flying Dutchman at the helm of his craft, obviously bent on starting another cycle of seven sea sailing, doomed to live his own legend. It was an appropriately theatrical night for it. The Firth of Lorne shimmered in the light of the full moon with silver horses galloping across undulating fields of heaving pewter. The dark tooth of Gylen Castle stood out on the skyline of Kerera. Although bats were not actually flying about it at this time of year the ambience was such that their absence zenly, as it were, echoed their presence. Clouds scudded across the sky and when they covered the moon the scene became dark and ominous and the tone of the hidden orchestra as it played the Dutchman motif became more menacing. Had the scene been recreated like this in a theatre I am sure it would have seemed grossly overdone and would have been slammed by the critics as an inappropriately Gothic intrusion into an essentially Gaelic ambience. However, here it was for real and underlined once again how essential it is to tone down real life if you want to make believable fiction.

There is a time and a place for everything, even a mutiny. The crew now mutinied. The Flying Peden tried to compromise by offering to run for the 'shelter' of Duart Bay. This was disallowed. We returned to the Poll Dobhrein and very firmly put down the anchor. The next day we rose late and decided to postpone the ascent of Dun Da Gaoithe till another time. It was in any case a piece of hubris to approach a hill with a name like that in a yacht.

Looking back on all this I now realise that everyone has got the Flying Dutchman story the wrong way round. The Dutchman epitomises the gallus, carefree bachelor sailing the seven seas of adventure. The symbolic night ashore is the perennial risk of meeting a heroine and his doom is landing up with a wife, a family, a pram, a mortgage, and a suburban bungalow with a lawn needing to be cut while his heroine turns into a matriarch. From time to time the erstwhile hero sees the ship of adventure sail for some far horizon without him and is duly perturbed. As the years go by his inner eye grows dim and eventually he sees such things no more. Such an ending although biologically satisfactory is without romantic interest. And so for the purposes of making decent drama it is necessary to introduce a role reversal by inferring (oh, irony of ironies) that freedom is the doom from which we must be rescued by some heroine with a luminous blue bangle round her ankle.

A successful ascent of a new route on Druim nan Ramh.

We left Arisaig on a fine Friday morning in September, close bosom friend of the equinoctial gales. Naturally, with John as skipper, we did not follow the normal exit from this complex harbour but went to the north through the lacework of submerged rocks which in good weather provides a more direct, though more dicey route to Loch Scavaig. This we reached before darkness fell. Loch Scavaig as we all know is a place where Rugged Grandeur is spelled out in Duttonian Capital Letters. It is an impressive place even in good weather but in a storm it is a bit like anchoring in a washing machine. We dined that night to the music of a rising breeze in the rigging. What cared we for wind and weather when every inch was nearer to our Mingulay – a supper of moules marinières. This is what it must have been like on Kismul's Galley when 'they'd brought her to 'gainst wind and tide 'neath Kismul's walls. Here was red wine and feast for heroes, aeolian harping too, o hee o hoo'. (It's easy to get carried away in these dramatic circumstances.) During the night the storm got going in earnest. The wind birled the rain-lashed boat round and round its anchor rope like the galley, galley ship in the song. A leak started over my bunk. I complained to the owner. 'I know,' he said: 'That's why you are in that bunk and not me. There's nothing we can do about it anyway.' He then lost interest.

In the morning, wind and water roared around us and the rain shafted down in grey javelins. Some tents that had been pitched on the shore the night before were now no longer there probably blown away with their inmates to Scandinavia. At that very moment they were probably walking into some Norwegian town in their jock-straps dragging their ruined tents behind them trying to explain to the sceptical local police how they got there. Sometime in the mid-morning we jaloused things were getting a bit better. Bryan and Pat set off to bag Sgurr Dubh na Da Bhein, a Munro lacking from their collection, while John and I went to Bidein Druim nan Ramh to see if we could do a route. Loch Coruisg was in what the cookery books would describe as a rolling boil. Large parts of it were being scooped up by the wind and blown all over the western hillsides. (We have photos to prove it). We did, in fact, do a V. Diff. climb on the flank of Druim nan Ramh – not a very good one. I don't suppose we could ever find it again. We returned along the Druim which in Gaelic is a masculine noun signifying 'back' or "spine" as in: 'Ach tha slat airson druim an ti a tha as eugmhais tuigse.' 'A rod is for the back of him that is void of understanding.' *(Proverbs Chapter 10, verse 13).*

It seemed to have some present relevance. A druim can also be viewed from underneath and be used to signify "roof" as in: 'Gu druim Sheallamha shin mi mo lamh, Tha'n fhardach gun druim ach adhar,' which translates literally as: 'To the roof of Sealma I stretched my hand; The abode is without a roof but sky,' which is from the 44th poem of the Sean Dana collection.

Druim is probably cognate with "drum" in Chaldean which signifies "high". "nan Ramh" expresses the genitive plural of "Ramh" which as you know, means "oar" as in: 'De dharagaibh Bhasain rinn iad do ramhan' – 'Of the oaks of Bashan have they made thine oars.' *(Eziekel, Chapter 27, verse, 6).*

Ramh is also a word of respectable antiquity being cognate with the Latin "remus" as in "Quinquireme of Nineveh from distant Ophir". In the Cuillinic use of the word the "oars" are the buttresses which descend in pairs from the druim.

Knowing all this we returned along the ridge pussyfooting gingerly like cats on a cold, stone roof as we followed it back from distant Ophir to Nineveh.

The gale meanwhile, being constrained by the equinox, was unable to abate and

continued to blow with vigour. Back on board I was impressed by the state of the anchor cable, a pleated rope affair, stretched to such a tightness that it twanged at middle C. John Peden affected to be unperturbed, said there was nothing we could do about it anyway and lost interest. During the night the wind got worse. One squall knocked the boat over on its side. My bunk lay to windward and I got pitched out onto the floor half asleep. I expressed alarm shouting: 'What the hell is happening?' The phrase I was searching for was: 'Sauve qui peut,' but it wouldn't come out, perhaps because it was too intellectual for the occasion. In spite of real concern I could not arouse much in the way of response from the others. John, on the lee side, was cradled in his bunk more deeply by the tilt and returned to his original position as the boat righted itself, thus solving his problem, but he did mutter that there was nothing we could do about our situation and again lost any small interest he may have had which, as you must be beginning to realise by now, is an ingrained defensive mechanism of his, a psychological quirk that, over time, has become hard-wired and which he has developed to the point of being, for those subjected to it, an irritating behavioural cliché, but which, if it has done nothing else, has generated, almost spontaneously, the labyrinthine complexity of the present sentence, one which Proust, were he alive and by chance reading this copy of the Journal, might well have approved of as indicating the homage of a pedestrian apprentice, acknowledging that imitation, however clumsy is, nevertheless, provided it eschews parody, a sincere form of flattery, perhaps the only one the mediocre can render to the original and the great. There was also some sharp, non-Proustian muttering from the pair in the fo'c'sle but I think they were telling me to shut up and stop keeping everyone awake.

I had a similar experience in Spitzbergen with other SMC members as recently as 1994. We had taken great care to surround our tents with trip wires which set off a noisy rocket to alert us to polar bears approaching our camp as we slept. The defensive ring was constructed with considerable care and seriously checked by all the group (Messrs. Bott, Hay, McKerrow and two Slessers, in case you are interested). We went to bed with rifles and pistols loaded and at the ready. The rocket did go off with a rather penetrating shriek during the night. I was the only one who leaped a foot in the air (quite difficult lying supine in a sleeping bag), grabbed a pistol and stuck my head out the tent door to defend the camp. It was, in fact, a false alarm but the only response from the afore-named individuals to all this cufuffle was to turn in their sleep and grumble at the noise. They would probably have done no more if one of the party had actually been crunched up outside the tent door by a noisily breakfasting bear. I would like to warn all these people here and now that you can cry *sang froid* once too often for your own good.

Anyway the boat survived the night. The day dawned no better. In rain and wind we explored the watery glooms and manifold dooms of the great hanging corries high on the unfrequented west side of Coruisg. This was stern and wild country, strong meat only to be relished by the brave and the sane. Kodachrome blues and balmy winds are for intellectual vegetarians and emotional cissies, for the 'pallid pimps of the deadline and the enervates of the pen', as Robert Service described them so well. On the Monday the equinox slackened its grip, the gale eased off, things got better and we returned to Arisaig on a calm sea. Actually, it was still very rough but seemed calm in comparison. As a final triumph we prevented John from circumnavigating the Isle of Soay on the way back which he wanted to do in order 'to fill in time'.

A failed ascent of Ben Hiant.

This attempt to climb Ben Hiant fell once again about the September equinox, the season of gales and mellow fruitfulness. As the story once again involves John Peden and his good ship, *Hecla,* what I am about to relate will be hair-raising and complex. This particular episode is recounted chiefly as an example of time dilatation not by relative speed but by number of contrasting events occurring per unit of elapsed time. The plan was to leave Arisaig on the Saturday, round Ardnamurchan, anchor off the ruined castle at Mingarry Bay near the foot of Ben Hiant, do a quick traverse of this small but well-proportioned mountain from an unusual approach and then seek shelter for the night in Lochan Droma Buidhe, a safe haven on the opposite Morvern shore. The next day we would sail down the Sound of Mull, having our gin and tonics on deck, to Oban where the co-owner of the yacht would be waiting to take over for a week's holiday. It was a neat plan for collecting a little gem of a mountain by a connoisseur's route.

We met on the Friday evening at Crianlarich, parked our cars and caught the evening train to Arisaig. During the 15-minute stop at the Fort, we were able to make a quick nail-biting sortie for fish suppers. I shared mine with a famished wee refugee lassie who had managed to escape from England who was sitting opposite me. She had a boyfriend at Loch Ailort. I gathered she had plans for his future. At Arisaig we rowed around in the inky darkness of the capacious harbour until we found the good ship *Hecla.*

The next morning we left in sunshine and a light breeze. I seem to remember we motored a long way in mellow sunshine amid the splendour of the inner Hebrides at their magic best. We stopped for lunch at Sanna Bay where time stood still and the jade-green sea creamed gently against the silver sands. We would get to Ben Hiant for an ascent on a fine evening; from its summit the peaks of Tir nan Og itself might be visible.

As we all know one of the most certain signs of imminent bad weather in Scotland is sunshine, blue skies and a light, balmy wind. By the time we had rounded Ardnamurchan, therefore, we were beating slowly along an inhospitable lee shore against a cold, grey wind. Ben Hiant had retired into a boudoir of gloomy cloud and was obviously not available for a frolic on this particular evening. We headed for Loch an Droma Buidhe finding the entrance well after nightfall and instead of lowering sails and motoring in through the 100m-wide, half-mile long channel we appeared to be bent on tacking in against wind and tide with searchlights ablaze and much shouting of 'ready about' and 'lee-oh' (terms sailors use to commence pulling in or letting go ropes attached to the sail at the front, an essential procedure as you change direction when going into the wind; it is noisy with ropes racing through shackles and the crew getting in each others way). After a few splendid tacks we started to hit the sides of the channel, particularly the port side where we grounded for a bit among the rocks until the wind blew us off. In the end we got in by cheating – that is by using the engine.

The next morning we lay in our sheltered harbour watching the clouds scud across the sky. A large ocean racer sharing the anchorage set off and returned 15 minutes later, put down the anchor again and securely retied its sails. We could see the crew disappearing rapidly down the hatchways, probably for intravenous hot

rum. We too set out and headed for the Sound of Mull in a wild sea. So fierce was the wind that it blew the skipper's cap off. We had to do some pretty complex sailing to recover it. The rest of the morning we zig-zagged against the wind making about a 100 yards of southing on each tack while Ben Hiant stifled an amused yawn. By lunchtime we were about level with Tobermory having avoided the Red Rocks and the Big and Little Stirks with their resident Loreleis, mermaids, seamews and other mythical seductresses whom I'm sure I remember waving and beckoning and blowing kisses as we passed. The equinox obviously had its teeth sunk deep into the throat of the weather and wasn't going to let go. Even John, eventually, accepted that Oban was unreachable that day, so we went in to Tobermory, phoned the relief crew who, fortunately, had not left Glasgow and asked them to meet us that night at the head of Loch Sunart.

This is a magnificent loch of narrows and expansions set about with considerable scenic grandeur verging on the need for Duttonian Capital Letters. We entered with the wind behind, gybing from time to time, a much more difficult manoeuvre than tacking as it involves bringing the mighty mainsail across the mid-line. Badly done it can tear certain important attachments out by the roots and knock the crew's heads off. Within the loch the wind lessened and the rain increased. It got very dark as well. No friendly star appeared to guide us with its light. The searchlight was fired up and from time to time and sometimes just in time indicated where the shore was. About midnight we ran out of the loch and saw a car flashing its headlights to stop us going any farther. We anchored and exchanged vehicles with the Ducharts. Five of us crammed into their car. Since Corran Ferry was closed at this small hour we drove round the head of Loch Eil, down to Oban to collect another car which for some reason had been left there, then to Crianlarich and finally home to the twin hubs of Scotland, namely, Bridge of Cally and Bearsden. Everyone apparently got to work on time the next morning.

Recollecting this trip it seems to occupy a greater portion of mindspace than my whole working life which is the point I think I'm trying to make. Life begins as an extended concertina on which you are allowed one squeeze; you can either play it in jig time, that is, with lots of notes per unit time or more slowly with grace and with fewer notes as in a Strathspey. What you must not do is to waste the wheezy concertina of a briefly squeezed life-span by not trying to pick out any tune at all. My excuse for ending so portentously and pompously is that I have taken so long to write this account that I'm now on my fourth (possibly fifth) dram and beginning to lose my grip.

By the way, even more importantly, you must also avoid mixing duff metaphors and losing literary style. Most importantly of all you must never lose the thread of what you're trying to say or should I say play. I had better stop now and refrain from telling you about how we sailed to St. Kilda and didn't climb Stac an Armin but how from the top of Hirta saw what some believed to have been the torch of the Statue of Liberty appearing just above the western horizon, while others thought it was the top of Beinn an t-Soluis, the highest peak of Tir nan Og itself and one crippled soul plumbed the bathos by suggesting it was a tanker hull-down on the horizon. Maybe I will tell you about that trip. It's an interesting story. I can't remember now which year it was but . . . [That's enough – Hon. Ed.]

How to land running

I HAVE been lucky enough to work in the outdoor hillwalking and climbing industry for about 15 years. I consider it particularly fortunate that I could climb to about El, went on three or four overseas climbing trips a year but was always able to pay off a massive mortgage and keep a couple of cars on the road and two daughters off the streets while better men could climb to E6 and lived in a bedsit.

Those balmy days came to an end when I fell from grace on a mere VS. The landing was nasty. The list of injuries appropriate to all the occupants of all the cars in a M25 pile up. Bad bounce, as they say, and I was encouraged no end when my youngest daughter fainted in the intensive care unit at Raigmore. The long spell in hospital allowed time to reflect while I considered religion. Five weeks looking at a ceiling in the Queen Elizabeth Spinal Injuries Unit clears the mind no end and puts your money-grabbing capitalist ideas into true perspective. I came to a decision – making money is fun. As captivating as climbing and the penalties for a mistake far worse. As D. H. Lawrence said: 'Life is ours to be spent, not saved.' Or as Jess Stock said: 'How many people on their death bed have wished they spent more time in the office?'

The problem was I was on my death bed and even if I did survive I was definitely going to be spending a lot of time at a desk with the proud scars of experience to tell me I still had a lot to learn. But learning is what it is all about. When you stop learning you stop living. So I decided I would start designing waterproof clothing. I would again run my own business and support my controversial belief that a man is not a man if he works for himself. 'Better to own your own brush and sweep the road than drive a rolls owned by the shareholders.' Which is a fine sentiment until you discover the shareholders also own the road and your contract is subject to competitive tendering.

I put the idea of letting me loose on the manufacturing side of the climbing industry to a few of my contacts and got an immediate yes, a second-hand state-of-the-art computer system and a contract. From now on I would only climb in one design of waterproof. My own! Problem, I can't yet climb or could I ever? So I'll settle for being seen with a rope and a few crabs and leave the rest to the imagination. In a short while for competitive interest, I skulked around the Alps, Highlands and the Arctic in just about every brand of waterproof in every fabric north of the South Pole. What a learning curve! The so-called best if you blindfolded yourself to the hype, the gloss and the advertising were frankly **** (Editor's deletion).

In reality, we seem to have gone backwards and substituted 'breathability' for 'waterproofness' and walk round in a perpetual sauna with a perpetually-leaking credit card hidden in a poorly-designed storm pocket. I soon perceived that the art of designing waterproofs has more to do with Public Relations than the quality of the fabric. Strangely enough, I also discovered that many of the top climbers going on the hardest and most difficult climbs in the remotest corners of the world take a similar view and their sponsors provide 'specialist' clothing for those rare occasions when they are actually climbing.

The quickest way to learn to swim is to jump in at the deep end. Out of the blue I got involved with a high-profile expedition and was given the job of designing 24 sets of waterproofs for 24 unknowns. I say high profile in that this expedition had CASH (how I love that word) sponsorship of £240,000 and not one of the

participants had even done Curved Ridge. Can you imagine that. To be honest, they were the most motivated set of housewives, secretaries and saleswomen you could expect to meet but had yet to do a single Munro and actually giggled when I explained that the connection was male not female. This was an opportunity not to be missed. So many innocents as yet untainted by professionalism so perfectly were safe with me.

The expedition became known as the McVitie's Penguin Polar Relay and it achieved national and international coverage on a lavish scale. A lot more than the sponsors could ever have hoped for and several times greater than they could have bought for the same money as advertising TV airtime or advertising space in magazines and newspapers. There is a lesson to be learned here. How come unknowns with a relatively safe objective are given more cash than hard-nosed nutters with a one-way ticket to the North Face of something or other in the back of beyond? But that is another story for which I have received professional fees of several thousand guineas so therefore outwith the scope of writing as a vocation.

I digress but hope it was worthwhile. Back to the story. These highly-motivated people went into an overtime training schedule led by SAS trainers that would have left most climbers dead in their tracks so it quickly became apparent they were unlikely to need much help from me. However, I resolved I would give them the most energy-efficient clothing possible and make absolutely sure if they failed – and many said they would – I would not be blamed. The first problem was blindness. Professional advisers from the US swore they would all die if they didn't wear what they wore which was the most famous of all fabrics. They said the fabric had to be the most 'breathable'. Which is absolutely right, but incredibly wrong, if it is also treated to be waterproof. Set up a sweat in -40° and you are soon walking around in an ice straight-jacket if there is even a hint of condensation. The reality of the situation is breathable waterproof fabrics are all as bad and actually shift very little condensation but are good at crunching numbers. So sharp exit professional advisors who by now have wasted lots of time and money.

Enter uncoated micro-fibre fabric with filament-hollow fibre bonded to it with pin prick drops of laminate. Exit micro-fibre fabric bonded to laminate because it didn't actually wick away moisture along the filaments to the outside air at the rate I predicted. So almost exit yours truly! I was saved by the sheer brilliance of the design. I have always been an advocate of only taking off your clothes at infrequent occasions and that even includes going to bed. The basic design that went into production featured layered micro-fibres. These were uncoated so had a very soft handle and were therefore extremely comfortable and could quite literally be worn to excess. As such there was no need for it to be a conventional two-piece. A suit was born with in-built snow gaiters to go over ski boots, with thermal legs to the knees to heat the blood before it got to the extremities, articulated knees and tight but not restrictive waist so that a harness would not create pressure zones, a full blouson chest for upper body freedom, two huge slanted cargo pockets across the chest to rest the arms and big enough for full-sized mitts, GPS, Penguin chocolate bars, compact mirror and make up and that most sought after of all technical features for image conscious climbers – a crap flap. A huge hood with two volume adjusters was incorporated into the one-piece suit and it was bulked up for halts between sledge hauling with a hoodless Eskimo smock. This smock used the combination of hollow-fibres, micro-fibres and pin-prick laminates that having failed to shift all condensation in the one-piece suit was working up to spec on the

smock. While the hood was on the suit and not the smock it offered greater versatility of protection for the head.

Four of the 24 reached the North Pole with none of the mental or physical scars that seem to go hand-in-hand with most polar expeditions and were soon back enjoying breakfast TV fulfilling their promise of being on it rather than watching it. I haven't yet seen a photo from the expedition that did not feature anyone not wearing their suits at any time of the day. There is no doubt the initial teething troubles while the team were testing the suits on Baffin Island during February caused some concern. But I can now hang up my laurels and look for some other way to earn an honest crust because one of the suits was featured full page in the most prestigious of climbing magazines – *Hello!* If anyone is looking for a suitable suit for an Arctic, Antarctic or high-altitude expedition send me a cheque for £1 500 plus £2 post and packing. The smock is PV.

Tim Pettifer.

The Scottish Mountaineering Trust – 1997/98

As WAS noted in last year's report, the Trust now deals directly only with applications for grants. Decisions regarding publications are taken by the Company whose Directors during the period were T. B. Fleming (Chairman), D. J. Bennet, K. V. Crocket, D. F. Lang and N. M. Suess.

Trustees met on February 20, May 21, October 2, 1997 and February 12, 1998. In the course of these meetings support was given to three expeditions: Scottish Torssuqatoq Spires 1997, EUMC Apolobamba 1997 and BSES Himalaya 1997.

Three current NTS footpath projects (Goatfell, Ben Lomond and Coire Dubh – Horns of Alligin) were supported. Support in principle was given to two large and long-range NTS footpath projects on Ben Lawers/Morenish; Glen Coe (subject to EC funding), and to a further project on Ben Lomond. Three footpath projects from the Ross and Cromarty Footpath Trust (Kernsary-Carnmor and Loch Gainemach) and one from the John Muir Trust (Bla Bheinn) were also supported.

Small grants were given to Jim Maison's Clachnaben path project and to a joint initiative in the Inverness area (Meall Fuar Monaidh). Support in principle was granted to the Arran Access Initiative for mountain-path projects. This is a complex initiative involving several organisations but the pathworks will be supervised by the NTS.

Footpath projects consume the bulk of the Trust's available income and this state of affairs has obliged Trustees to fund them selectively. To assist this process, advice is now taken regularly from Robert Aitken and Trustees have made the occasional site visit. Feedback from Club members regarding any SMT funded pathwork would be most welcome.

A small amount of grant is allocated annually to projects other than expeditions and footpaths. In the current year, such grants have been awarded to the MRCS (new computer), the Jonathan Colville Trust (winter training courses), the MCofS (hypothermia conference) and the Edinburgh JMCS (Smiddy repairs).

Standing grants are made over to the MCofS toward administration costs including the Access Officer, and of course, the SMC benefits through annual royalty payments for the use of the Club's name in publications and a substantial

portion of the production costs of small-print Journal pages is met by the Publications Co.

Trustees at the February meeting also agreed to support the Publications Co. in its proposal for a CD version of *The Munros.* This is a major project which will undoubtedly impinge on the ability of the Trust to make financial awards until probably the summer of 1999. Trustees took note that a considerable number of awards made recently have not been taken up and some of these have now been withdrawn.

The present Trustees are R. N. Campbell (chair), D. C. Anderson, G. Cohen, C. D. Grant, A. Kassyk, W. A. McNicol, S. Murdoch, D. C. Page, R. T. Richardson and A. Sommerville.

The bulk of the work of the Trust is however carried out by its long-suffering officers – Treasurer Bryan Fleming and Secretary John Fowler – to whom we should all record our thanks. John Fowler has since stepped down and the new Secretary to the Trust is James D. Hotchkis, 39 Harbour Street, Nairn, IV12 8DS to whom all correspondence including applications for grants should now be directed.

The following grants have been paid or committed by the Trustees.

General Grant Fund		
Grants paid	Scottish Torsuqatoq Spires Expedition	£800
	Jonathan Conville Memorial Trust	£840
	British Schools Exploring Society	£100
	Edinburgh University Apolobamba Expedition	£600
	Hypothermia Seminar	£400
	Library shelving	£478
	Scottish Mountain Safety Group	£900
Grants committed	MCofS Conference Expenses	£100
	Stirling University Photo Exhibition	£100
	Mountain Rescue Committee	£600
	Edinburgh JMCS	£1500
	Jonathan Conville Memorial Trust	£1015
Footpath Fund		
Grants paid	Ross & Cromarty Footpath Trust	£6765
	John Muir Trust	£2000
Grants committed	SNH - Glen Rosa	£10000
	National Trust for Scotland	£16675
	Inverness Area Community Project	£100
	Clachnaben	£500
	Ross & Cromarty Footpath Trust	£4025
	National Trust for Scotland	£25,000
	Arran Access Initiative	£10,000

R. N. Campbell, J. R. R. Fowler.

MUNRO MATTERS

By C. M. Huntley (Clerk of the List)

This year has been the busiest for the Clerk of the List with 208 new names to be added to the list, more than 40 amendments and 30 requests for certificates from those already on the list. These requests usually start with 'my wife/ husband/children have suggested I should ask for a certificate'.

The additions to the List and the amendments follow. The columns used are Munroist's number, name, year of Munros, Tops and Furths. * SMC member.

1706	John H. Scholtens	1997	1997	
1707	Keith Grant	1997		
1708	Albert C. McAdam	1995		
1709	Matthew Clarke	1997		
1710	Malcolm Clarke	1997		
1711	Stewart Newman	1997		
1712	Richard Davison	1997		
1713	Derek Thomas	1997		
1714	Richard Glover	1997		
1715	Sue Hunter	1997		
1716	J. Gordon Cameron	1997		
1717	Gordon J. Dykes	1997		
1718	Paul N. Craven	1997		
1719	Lesley Hickton	1997		
1720	Alec Hickton	1997		
1721	Jim Young	1997		
1722	John Newman	1997		
1723	Karin Marshall	1997		
1724	Raymond Marshall	1997		
1725	Craig Weldon	1997		
1726	Peter Gillman	1997		
1727	John Arkell	1997		
1728	John S. Spencer	1997	1997	
1729	Dennis R. Pickett	1997		
1730	Keith Anderson	1997	1997	
1731	Ian Munro	1997		
1732	Ian Barnett	1997		
1733	Jean Hunter	1997		
1734	Andrew Reston	1997		
1735	Joseph Small	1997		
1736	Lesley Leiper	1997		
1737	Malcolm Leiper	1997		
1738	John Pulford	1996	1990	
1739	John Maundrell	1997		
1740	John Kerry	1997		
1741	Lorna Macgregor	1997		
1742	Mark Swinden	1997	1997	
1743	William S. McKerrow*	1997		
1744	Alex. Cuthbertson	1997		
1745	Mark T. Wight	1997		
1746	James King	1997		
1747	Anthony Halhead	1997		
1748	Helmar P. Hurrell	1997		
1749	David A. Hurrell	1997		
1750	Mark N. Aiken	1997	1997	
1751	John Baddeley	1997		
1752	John Benthan	1997		
1753	Simon J. Wright	1997		
1754	Moira Burks	1997	1997	
1755	Alver Burks	1997	1997	
1756	Morag MacLean	1997		
1757	Tony Baker	1997		
1758	Steve Hinde	1997	1997	
1759	Doug Bain	1997		
1760	David May	1997		
1761	Dorothy Adam	1997		
1762	Keith Nightingale	1997		
1763	Alda Russell	1997		
1764	Robert W. Templeton	1997		
1765	Frank S. Cummings	1997		
1766	Peter J. Williamson	1997		
1767	H.E. Jennings	1997		
1768	Anne M. Jenkins	1997		
1769	Andrew Vickery	1997		
1770	Tom Sharpe	1997		
1771	Paul V. Kennedy	1997		
1772	Sylvia Morrow	1997		
1773	Matt Morrow	1997		
1774	Kris Howard	1997		
1775	Stuart France	1996		
1776	Maureen F. Johnson	1996	1996	
1777	Peter Johnson	1996	1996	
1778	C.R. Fishwick	1997		
1779	David Judd	1997		
1780	Marion O'Connor	1997		
1781	John Goodman	1997		
1782	R.J. Cross	1996		
1783	Bryce Reynard	1997		
1784	Jackie Jackson	1997	1997	
1785	David Scott	1997		
1786	Norman A. Todd*	1997		
1787	Mary Robinson	1997		
1788	Bill Robinson	1997		
1789	Paul V. A. Kilvert	1997		
1790	Robert Hopkin	1997		
1791	Jamie McLeod	1997		
1792	Dave A. Redding	1997	1997	
1793	Davie Hamill	1997		
1794	Henry Sutcliffe	1997		
1795	Lucy Nisbet	1997		
1796	John L. Robinson	1997		
1797	Elaine Stewart	1997		

1798 Colin P. Watts 1997
1799 Gillian Ferry 1995
1800 Gordon Brown 1997
1801 Lindsay Boyd 1997
1802 Carl J. Schaschke* 1997
1803 Adrian N. Wylie 1997
1804 Val Meredith 1997
1805 David Westall 1997
1806 Ross Jervis 1997
1807 Alan J. Black 1997
1808 David D. Taylor 1993 1993
1809 Roger Smithies 1995
1810 Bill Robertson 1993
1811 Ray Morgan 1997
1812 Robin Wilson 1997
1813 Peter E. Odell 1997
1814 Roy Marlow 1997
1815 Lesley Protheroe 1997
1816 Alastair Protheroe 1997
1817 Geoff Cumming 1997
1818 Olga West 1997
1819 David West 1997
1820 Pam C. Volwerk 1997
1821 Phil Eccles 1997
1822 Alex Horsburgh 1997
1823 Alan Blair 1997
1824 Margo Webster 1997
1825 Greta Fraser 1997
1826 Jonathan M. Chapman 1997
1827 Geoffrey N. Chapman 1997
1828 Corina Cramer 1996
1829 Andy Cairns 1997
1830 Forbes Craig 1997
1831 Melinda J. Walker 1997
1832 John R. Cobb 1997
1833 Fred Nind 1996
1834 Hugh Skivington 1997
1835 David Jones 1997
1836 Wendy Dodds 1997
1837 Carol McNeill 1996
1838 Bill M. Mason 1996
1839 Sue Dunbar 1997
1840 Shirley A. Mitchinson 1996
1841 Pamela Bridge 1997
1942 Iain Milne 1997
1843 Patricia Notman 1997
1844 Irving Notman 1993
1845 Allan Hughes 1997 1997
1846 J.E. Kelsall 1997
1847 P.Hollingsworth 1997
1848 Kerr Elliot 1997
1849 Jim Elliot 1997
1850 Colin Mathieson 1995
1851 Iain Paton 1995
1852 David Henry 1995
1853 Anne J. Fletcher 1997
1854 Graham R. Bunn 1997
1855 Iain Price 1997
1856 Alan Bertram 1997
1857 Andrew Henderson 1997
1858 Graham Laird 1996
1859 George R. R. Rusk 1997
1860 Rob Milne* 1997 1997
1861 John J. O'Keefe 1997 1997
1862 Charles W. Simmonds 1997
1863 Alan D. Grant 1992
1864 Neil E. G. Coltart 1997
1865 David Wolf 1997
1866 Malcolm Fleming 1997
1867 John Mackie 1997
1868 Hamish D. Clark 1997
1869 Ian Fraser 1997 1997
1870 Ed Montgomery 1997
1871 Edward A. Rigby 1997
1872 Ian McLeod 1997
1873 Spence McLeod 1997
1874 Bryan Rynne 1997 1997 1997
1875 Graham R. Pearson 1997 1997
1876 Colin D. Grant* 1994
1877 George F. Erskine 1997
1878 Bill Walker 1997
1879 Peter Stewart* 1997
1880 Ian Pascoe 1997
1881 Anne Wylie 1997
1882 Colin Wylie 1997
1883 Allan Downs 1997
1884 James Lamb 1997
1885 Brian Tuck 1997
1886 Alex Macmillan 1997
1887 Alan Shand* 1997
1888 Richard J. Plumb 1997
1889 Gordon S. Paterson 1997
1890 Stan da Prato 1997
1891 Dave Marshall 1993
1892 Charles Campbell 1997
1893 Roy Baird 1996 1996 1996
1894 Bob Fowler 1997
1895 Bob Robertson 1996
1896 C. J. Gough 1997
1897 Alan M. Ure 1996
1898 Karami A. Ure 1996
1899 Steve Honeyman 1995
1900 Hugh O'Kane 1997
1901 Susan D. Littlewood 1998
1902 Trevor J. Littlewood 1998
1903 Colin J. Green 1998
1904 John A. Dunn* 1997
1905 Gordon Greig 1997
1906 Douglas Trail 1997
1907 Ian MacPherson 1997
1908 Philip McAra* 1997
1909 Thomas G.F. Rankin 1994
1910 Iain Barr 1997
1911 M. J. Almond 1997
1912 S. A. Hodges 1998
1913 Ron F. Bowie 1997

AMENDMENTS AND CORRECTIONS

I have included all notifications of changes to the List and the errors that were identified from the publication of the Tables. Many may have noticed one duplication which has been resolved by John Owen (soon to compleat), with H. H. Mills* posthumously reclaiming 971 and Brian Gardiner now only occupying 990. Only number of rounds and the year of the latest round are given. The columns given are Munros, Tops and Furths.

73	Andrew Fraser	1996 x4	1980	1977
230	John Howorth	1996 x2	1996 x2	1996 x2
258	Iain R.W. Park	1997 x2		
299	Laurie Skuodas	1983		1997
317	Grahame Nicoll*	1997 x2	1993	
320	John A. Wild	1997 x2		
327	Stewart Logan	1997 x9		
354	George J. Borland	1993 x3	1984	1997
376	Simon Stewart	1984	1984	1995
384	J. M. Gear	1996 x2		
455	A. Laurence Rudkin	1996 x2		
534	Peter Warburton	1987	1997	1996
652	Leslie B. Aird	1989		1995
653	Irene D. Aird	1989		1995
675	Geoff Skeaping	1997 x2	1993	
743	Ian Turner	1990	1997	1997
783	Frances A Wilson	1990		1993
784	Peter Wilson	1990		1993
927	Dorothy Spencer	1991		1997
1023	Alan Fortune	1992	1994	
1045	Steve Fallon	1997 x5		
1052	David C. Seivewright	1997 x2		
1054	David Hoyle	1992	1992	
1143	Steve Evans	1993	1997	
1256	Keith Yates	1993	1997	
1271	Tony M. Deall	1994	1997	
1298	Graham T. Illing	1994	1997	
1299	Michael McLaggan	1994		1997
1313	Michael Smyth	1994		1997
1329	Gillian Green	1994	1994	1997
1330	John Green	1994	1994	1997
1331	John Mackay	1994		1997
1397	Douglas MacLeod	1995	1997	
1437	George Kincaid	1995		1997
1511	Fred Siddaway	1995		1997
1527	A. Blandy	1997 x2		
1557	Andrew Moignard	1996	1996	
1559	Graham Hemsley	1996		1997
1613	James M. Thomson	1996	1996	
1630	Gill Nisbet	1996		1997
1640	Geoff Scott	1994		1997
1654	Ken Coote	1996		1997
1675	Paul Caban	1996		1997
1694	Sam Johnston	1996	1997	1997

The notes which follow are a summary of the wealth of experiences and comments I have received in letters over the last year. As I was collating the List this year I certainly noticed that there was a considerable number of those who had compleated a few years ago, and have only now decided to get their names in print. Perhaps the news that the new edition of the Tables was about to List eight Tops that were now deemed worthy of Munro status, spurred many to write in promptly. J. E. Kelsall (1846) was the most delayed compleation, waiting 11 years, followed by David Taylor (1808), Bill Robertson (1810), Irving Notman (1844), and Alan Grant (1863), all from 1993. Irving appears to have waited until his wife Patricia compleated (1843), and Alan's wife says that his reason for getting his Munroists number is that he would like to have the chance of wearing the tie (see below).

The planned change to the Munro List had been rumoured for a while, mainly

because the Editor of the Tables had been canvassing opinion from around the Scottish hillwalking fraternity. Once the final decision had been made by the Editor and the SMC committee, the relevant information was sent to the climbing Press for expected publication a few weeks' later. However, the national Press took much more interest than expected, with the result that the changes were in such journalistic heavies as the *Scotsman,* the *Herald* and the *Telegraph.* This obviously took many by surprise, which was unintended.

C. J. Gough (1896) says that although he had just completed, he was feeling slightly flat. However, the new eight gave him his next goal which has now rolled into searching out the Corbetts. Bill Walker (1878), thought he had compleated on Beinn Sgritheall and duly held his celebration that night only to read the next morning that the goal posts had been moved. Craig Forbes (1830) comments that when he thought he had three to go, the List was changed, so that he now had seven to go. However, this meant he had a 'wonderful tramp over Braeriach to Angel's Peak and back along the Larig Ghru'. Similarly, Anne Fletcher (1853) and Graham Bunn (1853) thought they were nearly there and only needed a trip to Skye to clean up. Then their copy of the *Angry Corrie* arrived to inform them that Beinn Sgreamach was needed. I felt that no one should be expected to include the 'new eight' until the date of publication of the Tables. This left about four months between the Press news and the Tables reaching the shops, which seemed to be a reasonable time for most compleation plans to be amended as necessary, and for those who had, or were very close, to compleation, to get their letter in promptly. I can understand some of the frustration the changes may have caused (although hopefully, short lived when the new Munros were explored), but I did hear the opposite interpretation when a former university club colleague told me he was pleased to find, as he read his morning paper, that he had just done eight new Munros, and all before breakfast.

A great many compleations are husband-and-wife teams and readers can quickly identify the pairs of surnames in the List above. Other family permutations are the brothers, Matthew and Malcolm Clarke (1709, 1710), and Ian and Spence McLeod (1872, 1873), the father-and-son teams of Kerr and Jim Elliot (1848, 1849), and Jonathan and Geoffrey Chapman (1826, 1827). The Chapmans compleated in the same week but on different hills and were very nearly a family trio but for the fact that Geoffrey's wife had decided to stop at 283 and miss out the Inn Pinn. She asks if there is another List for the Inn Pinn-less. Another family connection this year is that of Alda Russell (1763) and her sister, Anne Jenkins (1768), who have kept each other company over much of their respective rounds. Peter Odell (1813) reported that he hoped his letter found the correct Clerk as his most recent SMCJ is a 1927 copy which belonged to his grandfather – Noel Odell. Peter correctly perceived that the Editor had also changed. Lesley and Alastair Protheroe (1815, 1816), tell me that as a couple they now join Lesley's father, Ian Spence (137), on the list. Couples who have walked every hill together include the Robinsons (1787, 1788), and the Wests (1818, 1819). Even more hills were ascended together by the Johnsons (1776, 1777), who have included the Tops, and the Burks (1754,

1755), who have the Munros, Tops and Corbetts ticked. Once the Hurrells (1748, 1749) started counting they found their tally had begun to diverge, such that a few solo trips were needed to ensure they could share a joint compleation.

The routes to the hills vary greatly. Some manage a few long periods in the Highlands each year, particularly for those living hundreds of miles away. In contrast, Charles Campbell (1892) recorded that almost every hill was done as a day trip from Glasgow, as one of his party rarely seemed to be able to be spared from the house for more than 24 hours. This meant some long drives for very little time on the hill and one car written off. Other Munroists who fared poorly with cars are David May (1760) who wrote off two cars (neither his fault), and John Baddeley (1751) who left his car at Loch Arkaig and spent a very wet day ascending Sgurr na Ciche before returning for a night in a bothy. The next day they found the road out blocked by massive extensions to the loch. Sportingly, he says they floated the car through some sections but were finally barred by a stretch which had almost covered the passing place sign. As a result the car had to stay put for some weeks until they could return to collect it. Roger Smithies (1809), who compleated one day after his 70th birthday, had used a full range of transport, which has included regularly hitch-hiking from Harrow, London. His favourite hitch was the night sleeper from Corrour which dropped him off at Fersit.

As usual the most popular Last Munros have remained Ben More (Mull) and Beinn na Lap. However, this year these two have been closely followed by Ben Sgreamach and An Stuc which seemed to be hills often omitted until they received their elevation and as such, have become the unintended scene of a number of champagne celebrations. James Lamb (1884) needed to be quite selective on which Munro to compleat on as he also wished to compleat his Corbetts on the same day. In the end he selected Beinn Sgritheall and Beinn na h-Eaglaise. John Pulford (1738) found himself rather pressurised into compleating when his Leeds club organised a meet around his planned dates. With only a week to go he was still 10 short and so had to set off early to ensure his club really did have a compleation to celebrate. In the end he reached Mull with a few hours to spare. On Norman Todd's (1786) last Munro, after a round of 52 years, one bottle of champagne that safely arrived the carry to the top, exploded as it was placed on a rock. Fortunately, Norman found it was one of a number and the celebrations were able to continue unhindered.

As usual there are a few comments on lucky escapes. Allan Hughes (1845) was unlucky enough to be avalanched at 2000ft on An Gearanach and only returned to the hill once all the others had been visited. Kris Howard (1774) has been in the SMCJ before as a result of a fall. The accident statistic mentions a fall of 20ft but Kris says that the 20ft was just his last bounce. Fortunately, no lasting damage. I always tend to note the address a letter comes from, and although Edinburgh and Glasgow predominate, there is a growing Munrosis cluster on East Kilbride and its environs. For example, Allan Hughes (1845), Marion O'Connor (1780), Bill Robertson (1895), the Wylies (1881, 1882), Richard Plumb (1888) and Gordon Paterson (1889) are all residents of the town. There is also an active core from near the town including Davie Hamill

(1793) who is this year's oldest starter and compleater, having been introduced to the Munros at the age of 71 and compleated at 76. Another quirk of the addresses is that the nearer you live to the hills the less likely you are to climb them (or at least admit to it), and the exceptions to this are almost all women! For example, Greta Fraser (1825), Pam Volwerk (1820) and Morag Mclean (1756) are some of a few Highland residents.

This year a number of groups have told me of their multi-compleations. John Robinson wrote to say that he, Elaine Stewart and Colin Watts (1796-1798) compleated together on Sgurr Eilde Mor, and asked that I 'allocate consecutive numbers as I see fit'. My convention in this case, is that the writer comes first followed by ladies, then men. Another trio were the Littlewoods and Colin Green (1901-1903) who found their complement was further increased by three uninvited farm dogs on Ben Lomond. Two dogs kept them company all the way to the top and back, but one was last seen at 700m on the descent; obviously the pace or supply of sandwiches was not to its liking.

I've enjoyed the enormous variety in the letters, but I also get to recognise the surprising overlap of tales. For example, the navigational errors that abounded in the Glens Pean and Dessary this year. Gordon Brown (1800) managed to walk for many hours in the wrong direction, and Alex Horsburgh (1822) made a similar error in the Cairngorms. Although lost or 'slightly mistaken' crop up in many descriptions of Munroists' rounds, Val Meredith (1804) managed to expand the experiences to include bivvied, camped, botanised, and geologised.

During the last two years the SMC has maintained a Web site (www.smc.org.uk). This has proved of interest and many have commented on getting my address from the site. This is clearly not the only site that Munroists may use and now Paul Kennedy (1771) informs me that he has set up his own site with articles on his hillwalking days which include pictures (www.gillcon.demon.co.uk).

Finally, I was passed a cutting from a running magazine entitled *Munro Shuffling*. It described that the effect of the new Munro in Kintail, and the loss of one in the Mamores, has meant that attempts on the record number of Munros in 24 hours may move from the Mamores-Loch Treig area to Kintail, and has meant that Jon Broxap, who previously thought he had done 28 Munros in 24 hours, finds himself now with 29.

For those who wish to be registered on the List of Compleat Munroists, they should write to the Clerk at the address below. I am always pleased to hear of your experiences, time taken on the round, age, etc., etc., and I prefer to hear direct from the Munroist. If an A4 sae is enclosed I will return a colour A4 certificate to mark their Compleation. Also if those already on the List would like to avail themselves of the certificate, they should write to me with a reference to their Munroist number (and enclose sae please). All Notification should be sent to Dr. C. M. Huntley, Old Medwyn, Spittal, Carnwath, Lanarkshire. ML11 8LY. Once registered, Munroists can claim, and purchase, a tie and/or Brooch.

Authorised Misinformation?

Readers of the latest *Munro's Tables* will have been interested in the comment contained in the introduction, that the SMC was aware of a publication predating the Tables in which, county by county, hills are listed in descending order. The initial correspondence which brought this to our attention is given below, followed by our reply.

Peter Warburton writes: Before Sir Hugh Munro brought out his *Tables of Heights over 3000ft,* in the first (1891) volume of the SMCJ, it was generally believed that only some 30 hills were of that altitude; the authoritative Baddeley's Guide, for instance, listed 31.

Munro's Tables, 1980, 1984 and 1990 editions.

A similar statement, rather more cautiously worded, appeared in the foreword to the 1974 edition of the Tables. It is surprising that such an unlikely assertion seems to have gone unchallenged, except for the qualification in the following sentence that perhaps a few early Club members thought they knew rather better. In the way of these things, the qualification has gone largely unnoticed and the 30/31 figure has been so widely quoted that the myth has come to be regarded as a fact, backed by the authority of the Tables.

Baddeley's 31 did not claim to be a complete listing and any reader glancing casually at the many half-inch to the mile maps included in the guides would have noticed dozens more mountains with spot heights above 3000ft. The rival firm of Black were more prudent; their list of 23 3000-footers was headed *Some of the Principal Mountains in Scotland according to the Ordnance Survey.* It is a pity that, in trumping Black's 23, Baddeley chose the single line title *Heights of Scotch Mountains.*

The source for all serious guide book writers was the OS who had completed their large scale (six-inches to the mile) field survey of Scotland by 1877. This survey, with some later revision, became the basis for the one-inch series, publication of which Baddeley noted, in June 1883, was 'all but complete' for the Highlands. Those who found that a smaller scale commercial map met their needs had a choice. One of the best was published by Johnsons of Edinburgh. Even at the scale of 10 miles to the inch their editions in the 1850s named and gave heights for 46 hills of more than 3000ft. or 42 if hindsight is used to exclude four mistakes (Ben Ledi, Ben Vrackie, Foinaven and Beinn a' Bha'ach Ard).

Before Sir Hugh's Tables appeared, the full listing of Scottish hills in order of height may well have been considered an eccentric and pointless pursuit, but it had been undertaken. Robert Hall's *The Highland Sportsman and Tourist* (Third Edition, 1884) lists 236 heights of 3000ft. or more plus 1867, yes 1867 lower hills, each with county and district. Mr Hall was in business in London and Inverness as a shooting and estate agent and the 313 page *Highland Sportsman,* priced at 2/6d, was probably circulated, gratis, to clients. The extent to which he cast his bread upon the waters is indicated by the inclusion, among the end papers, of three pages of Press Opinions of an earlier edition – 40 quotations in all and all favourable. My copy is stamped 'With the Author's Compliments' and it is probable that many Highland proprietors received copies on that basis – perhaps one even reached the library at Lindertis?'

Chris Huntley replies: Peter Warburton's text arrived at what could be considered an inopportune time. The Scottish Mountaineering Trust and the Editor of *Munro's Tables* were putting together a new edition and the possibility that the Tables were pre-dated needed to be investigated.

My first attempts to acquire a copy of the book came to nothing, although most antiquarian booksellers I spoke to seemed to be familiar with this publication and others of a similar vogue by Mr Hall. One bookseller told me he knew the book well, and had a copy which he would send. It duly arrived but was actually by a Herbert Hall, published in the 1850s, and was entitled *The Highland Tourist.* This was also a tourist's compendium, very much aimed at the sporting tourist. However ,no lists of hills. Fortunately, a call to the National Library of Scotland confirmed that they had a number of editions and so I finally managed to see a copy. Sure enough, there, chapter by chapter, were lists of hills although these were largely swamped by the salient information directed at the Victorian tourist who was far more interested in the shooting and fishing opportunities than the hills. I found that the hills warranted almost no comment, and when I did come across a mention of Ben Lomond in the text I found that it wasn't on the list! The publication seems to have been annual from 1882-1885, and looking at each one I could not actually see any changes. Perhaps some of the detail on prices and estate owners necessitated new editions.

Having seen the Hall publication, I then went back to check the first publication of the Tables and found that the claim of there only being 31 summits exceeding 3000ft did not originate from that time, and seems to have only appeared in the more recent editions. Therefore this observation did not come from Sir Hugh. Once this was clarified the element of doubt that Sir Hugh Munro had either not read up on the subject (i.e. searching out guides such as Hall's), or that he was not making good use of the existing maps, is removed. Instead what we have is Sir Hugh producing a publication which was using available information from the existing maps, enhancing it by setting a cut-off point of 3000ft, and then thoroughly exploring each area to search out the Mountains from the Tops.

In making a direct comparison of the lists there is much variation in the spelling of hills and even heights, making a straight copy very unlikely. In addition, Sir Hugh created his own areas (The Sections) grouping together logical clusters of hills rather than using county boundaries. One issue that Hall had to resolve, and Sir Hugh avoided, was in which county should a top be listed when it falls on the county border (as many do)? For this reason we find Stob an t-Sluichd on Ben Avon being the only hill above 3000ft listed in Banffshire, with all the other tops on Ben Avon found in the chapter for Aberdeenshire. Sir Hugh's reasons for selecting the 3000ft limit is interesting, and never given as far as I know, although he was defining a sufficiently demanding, but feasible List to occupy a lifetime of hillwalking, given the conditions at that time.

In conclusion we have two very different publications, both of which have their origins in the maps of the 1880s. The first from Mr Hall, a fascinating guide to the 'Sporting' opportunities of the Highlands, which, no doubt, was useful to the tourists of its day but with little or no comment on the quality of routes on the hills, and secondly *Munro's Tables,* which was directed to all those interested in the hills and which is still generating much discussion and pleasure! And readers of the new Tables will find no mention of the '31 hills' in the *Introduction.*

SCOTTISH MOUNTAIN ACCIDENTS 1996

REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION

(Geographical Divisions are those used in SMC District Guidebooks)

REGION	CASUALTIES (of which fatalities are bracketed)				INCIDENTS								
					Actual Rescues		Other Callouts						
	Injuries	Exhaustion/Exposure Hypothermia, Hyperthermia	Illness	Total Casualties	Incidents with Casualities	Cragfast or weatherbound	Separated	Lost	Overdue or Benighted	False Alarms	Total Incidents	Animal Rescues	Non-Mountaineering Incidents
All Regions 1995	**180** (37)	**35** (2)	**20** (12)	**235** (49)	**198**	**32**	**17**	**12**	**72**	**12**	**339**	**2**	**27**
Northern Highlands	**16** (2)	**2** –	**2** –	**20** (5)	**18**	**–**	**–**	**1**	**5**	**3**	**27**	**–**	**4** (2)
Western Highlands	**7** –	**–** –	**5** –	**8** –	**7**	**–**	**–**	**–**	**3**	**3**	**13**	**–**	**–**
Ben Nevis	**25** (2)	**1** –	**5** –	**31** (2)	**25**	**2**	**–**	**–**	**4**	**–**	**31**	**–**	**–**
Glen Coe (Inc Buachaille)	**18** (2)	**–** –	**2** (1)	**20** (3)	**19**	**5**	**–**	**–**	**9**	**2**	**35**	**–**	**–**
Other Central Highlands	**19** (3)	**1** –	**2** –	**22** (3)	**17**	**5**	**1**	**–**	**6**	**3**	**32**	**–**	**5** (1)
Cairngorms	**23** –	**4** –	**4** (1)	**31** (1)	**28**	**1**	**1**	**9**	**8**	**4**	**51**	**–**	**2**
Southern Highlands	**24** (5)	**2** –	**3** (3)	**29** (8)	**29**	**2**	**1**	**2**	**2**	**6**	**43**	**–**	**3** (1)
Skye	**15** (5)	**–**	1 –	**16** (5)	**15**	**4**	**–**	**–**	**2**	**1**	**22**	**–**	**–**
Islands (other than Skye	**6** (1)	**1** –	–	**7** (1)	**7**	**1**	**–**	**1**	**3**	**–**	**12**	**–**	**–**
Southern Uplands	**4** –	**3** –	**1** –	**8** –	**8**	**–**	**4**	**3**	**5**	**2**	**22**	**–**	**6** **(1)**
All Regions 1996	**157** (20)	**14** –	**21** (4)	**192** (25)	**173**	**20**	**7**	**16**	**47**	**24**	**288**	**–**	**20** **(5)**

SCOTTISH MOUNTAIN ACCIDENTS 1997

REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION

(Geographical Divisions are those used in SMC District Guidebooks)

REGION	CASUALTIES (of which fatalities are bracketed)				INCIDENTS								
					Actual Rescues		Other Callouts						
	Injuries	Exhaustion/Exposure Hypothermia, Hyperthermia	Illness	Total Casualties	Incidents with Casualities	Cragfast or weatherbound	Separated	Lost	Overdue or Benighted	False Alarms	Total Incidents	Animal Rescues	Non-Mountaineering Incidents
All Regions 1996	**157** (3)	**1** –	**1** –	**192** (25)	**173** –	**20** –	**8** –	**18**	**39**	**18**	**237** –	–	**20** (5)
Northern Highlands	**22** (3)	**1** –	**1** –	**24** (3)	**22** –	–	**3**	**2**	**8**	**4**	**39**	**1**	–
Western Highlands	**11** (1)	**1** –	**1** –	**13** (1)	**7**	**12**	–	**1**	**4**	–	**17**	–	–
Ben Nevis	**20** (3)	**8** –	**6** (3)	**34** (6)	**29**	**0**	–	**1**	**2**	**2**	**34**	–	–
Glen Coe (Inc Buachaille)	**17** (1)	–	**2** (1)	**19** (2)	**18**	**6**	**1**	–	**1**	**1**	**27**	–	–
Other Central Highlands	**35** (5)	–	**5** (2)	**40** (7)	**33**	**2**	**2**	**1**	**2**	–	**41**	**1**	–
Cairngorms	**36** (1)	**1** –	**2** (1)	**39** (2)	**35** –	**1**	**2**	**3**	**9**	**1**	**51**	**5**	–
Southern Highlands	**24** (1)	**4** –	**6** (3)	**34** (4)	**32**	–	**1**	**2**	**7**	**1**	**44**	**4**	**2**
Skye	**14** (2)	**3** –	–	**16** (5)	**17** (2)	**15**	**1**	–	**5**	**3**	**24**	**1**	–
Islands (other than Skye	**2** –	**3** (1)	**2** (1)	**7** (2)	**7** –	**1**	**1**	**1**	**1**	–	**11**	**1**	–
Southern Uplands	**3** –	**2** –	–	**5** –	**4**	–	**1**	**1**	**4**	–	**10**	**21**	**1**
All Regions 1997	**184** (17)	**23** (1)	**25** (4)	**192** (11)	**232** (29)	**207**	**11**	**12**	**43**	**12**	**298**	**34**	**3**

SCOTTISH MOUNTAIN ACCIDENTS

STATISTICS FOR ALL SCOTLAND FROM 1987

ALL REGIONS	CASUALTIES (of which fatalities are bracketed)				INCIDENTS								
					Actual Rescues		Other Callouts						
	Injuries	Exhaustion/Exposure Hypothermia, Hyperthermia	Illness	Total Casualties	Incidents with Casualities	Cragfast or weatherbound	Separated	Lost	Overdue or Benighted	False Alarms	Total Incidents	Animal Rescues	Non-Mountaineering Incidents
1987	**122** (21)	**11** –	**16** (7)	**149** (28)	**136** –	**18** –	**8** –	**18** –	**39** –	**18** –	**237** –	**–**	**16** –
1988	**121** (21)	**34** (2)	**10** (2)	**165** (25)	**131** –	**18** –	**7** –	**13** –	**34** –	**16** –	**21** –	**–**	**14** –
1989	**130** (20)	**15** (1)	**13** (4)	**158** (25)	**141** –	**8** –	**15** –	**12** –	**25** –	**14** –	**215** –	–	**11** –
1990	**132** (23)	**36** (1)	**13** (6)	**181** (30)	**161** –	**20** –	**15** –	**16** –	**56** –	**23** –	**291** –	–	**20** –
1991	**217** (34)	**23** (2)	**20** (9)	**260** (44)	**235** –	**22** –	**13** –	**28** –	**46** –	**10** –	**254** –	**1** –	**10** –
1992	**164** (31)	**26** (1)	**16** (11)	**206** (43)	**194** –	**20** –	**11** –	**13** –	**46** –	**14** –	**298** –	**4** –	**7** –
1993	**173** (34)	**16** (3)	**25** (10)	**214** (47)	**221** –	**20** –	**16** –	**13** –	**47** –	**7** –	**324** –	**5** –	**41** –
1994	**183** (35)	**29** (1)	**23** (8)	**235** (44)	**218** –	**25** –	**19** –	**12** –	**42** –	**10** –	**326** –	**3** –	**10** –
1995	**182** (35)	**35** (2)	**20** (12)	**237** (49)	**200** –	**32** –	**17** –	**9** –	**72** –	**12** –	**342** –	**2** –	**27** –
1996	**182** (27)	**30** –	**24** (7)	**236** (34)	**215** –	**17** –	**9** –	**12** –	**60** –	**11** –	**324** –	**–**	**25** –
1997	**184** (17)	**23** (1)	**25** (11)	**232** (29)	**207** –	**11** –	**11** –	**12** –	**43** –	**12** –	**298** –	**3** –	**34** –

SCOTTISH MOUNTAIN ACCIDENTS 1997

Compiled by John Hinde

Police have not been mentioned in every incident as they are involved in all.

NORTHERN HIGHLANDS

JANUARY 2 – Torridon MRT, airlifted by RAF Sea King, vainly ground searched Coire Dubh, Liathach after a report of a white flare. It could have been a meteorite. 22.

JANUARY 3 – A party of Scouts, some with crampons, some without, turned back on a path to Beinn Dearg because of icy conditions. One of the leaders (m31) slipped descending when wearing crampons, fracturing an ankle. Airlift by RAF Sea King, Dundonnell MRT. 12.

JANUARY 21 – Keeper (35) deer counting for 11km in extended line with five others from Gualin Lodge to Oldshoremore, near Kinlochbervie. He soon lost radio contact with his colleagues and was thereby overdue, but turned up at rendezvous in failing light. Coast search by HMCG helicopter. RAF Sea King scrambled, then cancelled. 10.

FEBRUARY 9-May 3 Body of a woman (32) found by walker on May 3, half in and half out of a burn, below extreme NW tip of Baosbheinn Ridge, 7km SE of head of Loch Gairloch. She had been reported missing from home on February 9, but no route plan had been left. Evacuated by CID officers in PLM helicopter on May 4. No suspicious circumstances. 115.

MARCH 4 – Walker (29) sufferd head cut and unconsciousness from 240m fall on Glas Mheall Liath of An Teallach.

MARCH 4 – HMCG Scrabster rescued injured girl (13) who had fallen from a cliff path at Thurso. 1.

MARCH 29 – Father and son (45,18) overdue on Seanna Bhraig. Turned up safe after Assynt and Dundonnell MRTs had been contacted. 26.

APRIL 13-14 – Man (23) had to get back to work so he left his companions at 8.30am on Sunday. They were fishing at Poca Buidhe Bothy, near Beinn an Eoin, Loch Maree, as they had all been overnight. He did not know the area and got lost walking out in mist, so his car was still there when his companions later walked 11km to the road. He was found safe by a dog on an overnight search by SARDA, Torridon MRT and RAF SEA King. 272.

MAY 4 – Woman (53) in a party of 31 walking from Coire Mhic Nobuill to Coire Dubh Mor, slipped on wet rock breaking an ankle. Torridon MRT and RAF Sea King. 18.

MAY 6 – Coast walker with broken leg near Lochinver. HMCG helicopter. 1

MAY 11 – Assynt MRT and RAF Sea King alerted for two boys (7, 5) missing at Backies, Golspie. Turned up safe. 6.

JUNE 3 – Assynt MRT alerted for one of three anglers missing returning to car at Inchkinloch from Loch Halium. For some reason he had gone over a shoulder of Ben Loyal and reached road at Lettermore, Loch Loyal.

JUNE 4 – South-east of Horns of Alligin a man (45) suffered heat exhaustion. Companion went for help and two passing climbers gave him water, so he recovered enough to get down. Torridon MRT. 6.

JUNE 4 – Climbers reported to Assynt MRT as overdue on Old Man of Stoer but they had just been enjoying good weather.

JUNE 24 – Man (71) slipped on grass on Ben Klibreck injuring his leg. Airlift by RAF Sea King. Assynt MRT standby. 8.

JUNE 28 – A woman (44) descending west from Ben Tongue (300m) down steep heather, slipped, fracturing a leg. Splinted by Police and carried to vehicle. 4.

JULY 9 – Casualty (54) was walking rocky ridge east of Sail Liath, An Teallach, below Loch Toll an Lochain, when he slipped on dry scree breaking an ankle. Winched by HMCG helicopter. Dundonnell MRT. 18.

JULY 28 – Assynt MRT and HMCG helicopter searched around Suileag Bothy in Upper Glen Canisp after a red flare had been set off inadvertently. 24.

JULY 29-AUGUST 13 – Last phoned parents on July 29, solo walker (35) was reported missing on August 11. His body was found by HMCG helicopter on August 13. He had fallen 60m from NE Face of Horns of Alligin. Torridon and Dundonnell MRTs and SARDA searched for two days. 179.

AUGUST 2-3 – Kinlochbervie and Lochinver Coastguards, Lochinver lifeboat and HMCG helicopter searched overnight for two male rock climbers (47, 45). They had been cut off by the tide when on Am Buachaille (sea stack, Sandwood Bay) and got back ashore before being found. 133.

AUGUST 8-9 - Walker (49) on Ben More Assynt got off route chasing his dog which had run off. When found by RAF Sea King and Assynt MRT he was heading for correct descent route having bivvied overnight in bad weather. 124.

AUGUST 11 – Descending dry scree of Allt Sugach, Mullach an Rathain, Liathach, a man (38) slipped, bruising his upper thigh. Winched by RAF Sea King, Torridon MRT. 27.

AUGUST 19 – Boy (11) fishing in remote hill loch somewhere about 5km NE of Ben More Assynt got separated from his group. Reported missing after five hours. After seven hours he was handed over safe in Glen Cassley by German tourists who found him. Assynt MRT, HMCG helicopter. 42.

AUGUST 24 – HMCG rescued two men (45, 22) with minor injuries after having fallen on rocks at Kyle of Durness.

AUGUST 24 – Lead climber (36) on West Buttress, Stac Pollaidh, dislodged a large rock slab which fell on top of him. He fell 9m sustaining a compound leg fracture and arm injury. Slab also caused a slight head injury to the second (m26). Both wore helmets. Second had been winched by HMCG helicopter, and a helicopter crew member was on ground preparing leader for lift, when rotor of helicopter scraped rock. It then crash-landed at base of mountain causing no further injuries. RAF R137 Sea King was then called and winched off the more seriously injured leader. Dundonnell and Kinloss MRTs. 110.

AUGUST 24 – Walking on SW Ridge Spidean a'Choire Leith, Liathach in good weather, accompanied man (34) injured a knee. Torridon and Leuchars MRTs went up to carry him down due to non-availability of a helicopter (above incident) but RAF Sea King did the task. 129.

AUGUST 24-25 – Male (59) overdue on Ben More Assynt walked off at 01.00 and was sent to hospital. Assynt MRT had been called out for 05.00 search.

AUGUST 29 – One of two climbers (23) soloing a crag at Loch Dubh (2.7km NE of Lochinver) fell among boulders injuring his back and cutting forehead. Police and ambulance. 2.

AUGUST 30 – Woman (56) stayed put after getting separated from her companion in mist on Sgurr Fiona summit, An Teallach. She was led off the mountain by eight passers-by uninjured, meeting up with Dundonnell MRT. HMCG helicopter. 41.

SEPTEMBER 15 – Loch Toll nam Biast, N of Sgurr Mhor of Beinn Alligin. Casualty (55) slipped into a runnel jarring his knee. RAF Sea King landed and took him aboard. Torridon MRT. 34.

SEPTEMBER 21-22 – Three walkers (m50, f34, m33) benighted near Central Buttress of Coire Mhic Fhearchair, Beinn Eighe. Walked out next morning as Torridon team assembled. 9.

SEPTEMBER 23 – Descending the Bad Step on SE Ridge Corrag Bhuidhe, An Teallach, walker (42) slipped and fell 9m stopping on a small ledge with chest injuries. Companions descending a different line helped him down a little way. Mobile phone brought HMCG helicopter and Dundonnell MRT. 54.

SEPTEMBER 26-27 – Subject (32) became separated from companion (who was carrying map and compass) west of South Top of Ben More Assynt, on steep and difficult ground in mist. He walked down as far as he could in gathering dark without a torch, then reported next morning as RAF Sea King landed and Assynt MRT mustered. 16.

SEPTEMBER 26-29 – Car found on September 29 up a forestry track below Strone Nea at the head of Loch Broom. Owner (49) had been missing since September 26. Dundonnell and Kinloss MRTs searched. His body was found below a climb, The Shaft, from which he appears to have slipped when soloing. Stretchered to road as area was not suitable for RAF Sea King involved. 137.

SEPTEMBER 27 – Party of eight ascending east end of Liathach by recognised path to Stuc a'Choire Dhuibh Bhig, casualty (19) slipped on terraced rock at about 800m. He fell 10m slightly injuring head, arms and legs. Torridon MRT airlifted and casualty winched by RAF Sea King. 72.

SEPTEMBER 28 – Bouldering on West Buttress, Stac Pollaidh, climber (35) stumbled and dislocated his shoulder. Stretcher lowered to foot of buttress, then down to road by Dundonnell MRT. 198.

OCTOBER 18 – Man (29) and woman (22) climbing on Old Man of Stoer reported overdue, needing more time for climb. Found by RAF Sea King and Lochinver lifeboat and coatguard. 48.

OCTOBER 26-27 – Man (56) in a party of four was descending very steep, broken ground on Ben More Assynt near Dubh Loch Mor, following a route (only 500m south of subject of benightment of September 26-27). He slipped in mist on wet rock and scree with concussion and chest injuries, cuts and bruises. Assynt MRT, RAF Sea King. 380.

NOVEMBER 27-28 – Starting at 04.00 from Corriehallie and crossing three Munros in the ridge due S of Shenavall Bothy, walker (m23) got benighted and bivouacked descending towards Shenavall. Dundonnell MRT searched two lines. Found near Achnegie and evacuated by 4WD vehicle. 102.

WESTERN HIGHLANDS

JANUARY 10 – Postponing Meall na Teanga, one of the two Munros he attempted near Loch Lochy, an experienced walker (59) tried to get down Gleann Cia-aig but ran out of daylight and torch batteries, taking refuge in forest and walking out at first light. Full search by Lochaber MRT, SARDA and RAF Sea King. 504.

FEBRUARY 22 – A woman (44) in a party of eight attempting Ben Tee from Invergarry became ill lapsing in and out of comas. She was walked off by companions before Lochaber MRT searched. 2.

APRIL 4 – One of six walkers doing Glenfinnan Horseshoe, a woman (59) slipped

on Sgurr nan Coireachan causing two fractures to her left ankle. Lochaber MRT tracked vehicle. 48.

APRIL 6 – Leading climber (30) an outdoor instructor in a party of three, slipped at Mussel Ropes Crags, situated at Bromisaig on Knoydart shore of Loch Nevis. He fell 10m suffering head injuries, despite wearing a helmet. Lowered to shore then taken by boat to Mallaig. Police. 1.

MAY 8 – Wife (52) stumbled on East Ridge, Beinn a'Chairein, Glen Cannich, breaking her ankle. Although above the forest, forestry workers rescued her using an Argo. Dundonnell MRT. 10.

MAY 9 – Allt a'Ghleannain (pass south of Sgurr Mhic Bharraich, Shiel Bridge). Pair doing circular walk as part of coast-to-coast challenge, but carrying no gear. Man (62) suffering heat exhaustion/diabetes collapsed and was unconscious for a short time. Other walkers gave him food and drink and escorted him to rescuers. Glenelg and Kintail MRTs. 30.

MAY 11 – Wife (32) slipped descending wet, rocky East Ridge Druim Comhnardaig (near bealach from Glen Moidart to Glen Alladale). She fell 8m wearing rucksack, fracturing a lumber vertebra and sustaining rib injuries. Well equipped, her husband left her in a tent with food, water and aspirins. Airlift by RN Sea King. 14.

MAY 26-27 – Two men (50, 30) and a woman (30) walked through Glen Arnisdale to Kinlochhourn but got benighted trying to return to Arnisdale by the coast of Loch Hourn. This route is treacherous in darkness and they had no lights. Recovered by Glenelg MRT boat. Team also did an outward route search. 12.

JUNE 23 – Quad bike on steep ground on E. slopes Beinn Raimh (2km. SSW of Stromeferry) went over when it hit a rock. Badly bruised passenger went for help. Driver with shock and smashed clavicle was walked to a vehicle and driven off by Kintail MRT. 21.

JULY 24 – Walker ran out of prescribed medication on coast path near Glenelg. HMCG helicopter. 1

JULY 29-31 – The body of a solo woman hillwalker (48) was recovered from River Elchaig, 7 km downstream from Falls of Glomach from which she had slipped on wet rock when wearing sandals. Searches carried out by Kintail and Kinloss MRTs, SARDA, RAF Sea King, HM Coastguard and Lifeboat. 600.

AUGUST 23 – Descending Sgurr Fhuaran by Allt a'Bhuilg, a man (42) stopped for a drink from the burn, slipped on mossy rock, slid 12m, then fell 6m from a rock ledge and was knocked unconscious for five minutes, also with bad scalp cuts, pelvis and arm injuries. Assisted down by Kintail MRT and SARDA. 19.

AUGUST 26 – Party of five stopped to rest by path on north bank Loch Beoraid. Schoolboy (14) sat on a drystane dyke and overbalanced. Part of wall fell on him, spraining an ankle. Winched by RAF Sea King and Lochaber MRT. 41.

SEPTEMBER 21 – Woman (63) in a guided party of seven descending The Saddle injured her ankle when a stone slipped under her foot going down the stalker's path from Meallan Odhar in good weather. Stretcher carried down by Kintail MRT. 36.

SEPTEMBER 21-22 – Four men (53, 50, 49, 44) benighted in good weather on Sgurr na Lapaich (Affric) waited for daylight and walked out. Kintail MRT and RAF Sea King. 17.

NOVEMBER 1-2 – Local walker (67) with dog lost path in forest east of Strathglass. He did not carry a map or compass but knew the forest well. He decided to stay put rather than risk injury in the dark. Found next morning by RAF Sea King 10km NE of Cannich, well off intended route. Kintail MRT and six SARDA dogs. 50.

DECEMBER 14 – Pair staying at Corryhully Bothy reported unequipped, solo, novice walker (38) overdue from Glenfinnan Horseshoe. He got hopelessly lost in good weather and descended at head of Loch Arkaig. By lift and train he travelled 93km to get back to Corryhully to collect his rucksack at 23.00 as Lochaber MRT started a search. 5.

BEN NEVIS

MARCH 1 – In a party of eight going up to Steall Hut by Nevis Gorge in rain, wind and darkness, a man (54) slipped, despite using a headtorch, and fell 20m stopping against a tree. He sustained broken cheekbone, multiple cuts, abrasions and bruises. Stretcher carry by Lochaber MRT. 30.

MARCH 6 – Two men started climbing Orion Direct unroped on good ice. After some time they roped up when ice deteriorated. Ice then improved so they unroped. At 300m witness was 3m above and to the right of his companion (27) traversing right when he heard an expletive. He saw the now deceased falling to the bottom, hitting the face on a number of occasions. In Observatory Gully he slid a farther 180m down a snow slope. Five other people witnessed the fall, three of whom were members of Oldham MRT. A doctor reached the casualty, still conscious 45 minutes after the fall, but he died during rescue. Lochaber MRT, RAF Sea King. 2.

MARCH 6-7 – Leader (46) was 12m above his second (33) climbing Point Five Gully when he had to stop due to poor visibility in heavy spindrift. He got tired and slipped, falling 15m on to his third man (32). Leader got chest injury and was left on the climb, tied off. Second man and third, who had got a back injury when leader fell on to him, climbed down and raised alarm. Lochaber MRT could not go on hill due to adverse weather. Rescue resumed at 0600 including Kinloss MRT and RAF Sea King. Rescue of leader, now with some cold trauma, was undertaken from top of gully. He was lowered to base, then stretchered down for helicopter winch. 250.

MARCH 8 – Solo climber (35) slipped when 6m from top of No. 4 Gully falling to its base sustaining serious facial and spine injuries. Helped by other climbers, and Lochaber MRT stretchered him to CIC Hut from where he could be winched by RAF Sea King. 60.

MARCH 8 – When 5m from top of Tower Gully, solo climber (31) stopped to assess condition and how he would negotiate small cornice. As he moved off, the windslab below him (0.6m in depth) gave way and he fell 100m. He blacked out as he fell and got a fractured rib and facial cut. Helped by other climbers to walk to CIC Hut, then winched by RAF Sea King. Lochaber MRT already called for No. 4 Gully incident 30 minutes previous. 38.

MARCH 23-24 – Woman (26) and man (23) started Point Five Gully at 14.30 hours, completing it at 01.00. They stayed night in summit refuge and walked off to Halfway Lochan and were airlifted by RAF Sea King. Kinloss and Lochaber MRTs involved. 109.

APRIL 2 – While descending, poor navigation in mist led pair off track on to steep screes of W. Face Carn Dearg NW. Woman (38) got cramp so they stayed where they were and alerted police by mobile phone. Sweep search by Lochaber MRT found them. Assisted down. Uninjured. 120.

APRIL 4 – Roped pair successfully abseiled back down its first pitch to the base of Point Five Gully. Unroped and retrieving the abseil rope, instructor (34) pulled

one end and found it had jammed. He tugged the other end which freed suddenly, causing him to stumble back and slide 210m down snow. During the slide he was seen to strike a number of rock outcrops and received fatal injuries. Client (m24) got cuts and bruises. Recovered by Lochaber MRT and RAF Sea King. 76.

APRIL 12 – Male (23) in a guided party of 11 climbing hill for charity got a locked knee when 120m from summit. Later both knees seized up and casualty was exhausted. RAF Sea king airlift from Halfway Lochan (see incident below). Lochaber MRT. 79.

APRIL 12 – Male (22) in a party of 17 trainee adventure sports instructors slipped descending dry scree at seconded zig-zag above Red Burn. He aggravated an injury to a knee for which he was already taking pain-killers. Mobile phone alerted rescuers engaged in above incident. Both casualties were airlifted and both received treatment for ligament strains.

APRIL 15 – Woman (55) descending solo from the summit, wearing tennis shoes, slipped on dry scree at third zig-zag above Red Burn, causing dislocated ankle and spiral fracture of lower leg. Passing group used mobile phone. Lochaber MRT and RAF Sea King. 19.

MAY 1 – Going up track and 15 minutes from summit, a man (54) suffered a heart attack. Evacuated to hopital for treatment by RAF Lossiemouth helicopter R 137. 10.

MAY 3 – Body of Bristol man (53) who went missing Christmas Day 1996 was found by a hillwalker in burn in Coire Giubhsachan, below SE aspect of Ben Nevis. He possibly died from drowning. Evacuation by Police, Lochaber MRT and RAF Sea King. 32.

MAY 4 – Near Halfway Lochan, a walker (56) bent down and injured his back. Airlift by RAF Sea King. Lochaber MRT. 52.

MAY 8 – Descending track from summit with her husband, a woman (54) had got down just below Halfway Lochan when her legs gave in due to exhaustion and dehydration. Carried down on a stretcher by Lochaber MRT for overnight hospital observation. 54.

MAY 31 – Lochaber MRT and RAF helicopter searched track for man (19) suffering exhaustion and sunstroke one hour's walk above the glen. He had got down unaided. 16.

MAY 31 – Man with his daughter (10) descending track from the summit had already treated her at 900m for dehydration with water given by passers-by. She was recovering, but his wife at the bottom got concerned, alerting police. Girl and father airlifted from path junction at 150m by helicopter from RAF Valley. 4.

JUNE 16 – Soldier (26) tried to get up track with colleagues but felt unwell and descended a short distance alone to 500m above youth hostel. Police were alerted and treated him for mild hyperthermia and dehydration (rest and lots of water) then he walked down with help. 3.

JUNE 17 – Woman (54) descending Nevis Gorge path with her husband from Steall to car park slipped/stumbled on dry rock and fell about 90m into gorge. Fatal. Lochaber MRT. 48.

JUNE 21 – Descending track, a man's (58) knees seized up at Halfway Lochan. Stretchered to hospital by Lochaber MRT where he was treated for muscular injuries. 27.

JUNE 22 – SOS lights reported on track at 01.35 hours turned out to be a false alarm with good intent. Mountain bikers were in the area. Lochaber MRT. 18.

JUNE 28 – Being guided by Lochaber MRT on a charity walk, a man (60) died of coronary artery disease despite immediate cardio-pulmonary rescusitation. Airlift by RAF Sea King. 22.

JULY 10 – Starting very early from the youth hostel to walk/run to the summit, a student (42) died and was found at 06.55 hours on the track 500m from the top. Lochaber MRT, RAF Sea King. 21.

JULY 19 – Two hours into an ascent of Tower Ridge, leader pulled up on a handhold which crumbled and gave way. He fell, suffering minor abrasions. His wife was also dislodged with leg injury, but both were held by the rope and belay. Winched by RAF Sea King, Lochaber MRT. 34.

JULY 19-20 – Lochaber MRT called out at 23.00 by woman, concerned that a poorly-equipped man (70) who had fallen near the summit and could not complete descent of path. Not found. 8.

AUGUST 10-11 – Collapsing with exhaustion at 20.30 hours at 700m altitude on track, walker (58) got down to glen by 00.35 hrs with the help of others. Lochaber MRT, RAF Sea King. 90.

AUGUST 14 – Descending on the path from the summit, poorly-equipped solo walker (63) wearing training shoes, was nudged by two younger walkers overtaking. He stumbled and sustained a small fracture to an ankle (medial malleolus of tibia). He walked from 800m to 610m then he was lifted by RAF Sea King and Lochaber MRT. 39.

SEPTEMBER 6 – Competitor (39) in Nevis Race fell at third zig-zag and got severe cramps and mild hypothermia. Stretchered to Halfway Lochan by Lochaber MRT then lifted by RAF Sea King. 29.

SEPTEMBER 6-7 – Man (55) descending with two male clients (46, 33) got disoriented in heavy rain and mist at 19.30 hours. He believed one client was getting hypothermic so decided to radio for help, but left both to transmit a clear signal. At 00.40 Lochaber MRT found older man at '4000ft. Cairn'. At 00.57 Kinloss MRT found two clients at head of Coire Eoghainn. All three airlifted from Halfway Lochan by RAF Sea King, all suffering mild hypothermia. 236.

SEPTEMBER 18-19 – Son (35) delayed by slower father (67) descending track. Slowed again by darkness as they had no torch. Escorted down by Lochaber MRT. 5.

SEPTEMBER 22 – Man (72) died from stroke or heart attack at summit. RAF Sea King airlift. 12.

SEPTEMBER 24 – Man (25) strained knee on ascent and got to summit with help. After 30 minutes' rest knee painful going down. Aid was summoned by mobile phone. RAF Sea King lifted him with two companions from 1300m on track in extremely clear, calm weather. At hospital no swelling was found – normally evident in such a case. 11.

OCTOBER 6 – Student (24) complained of nausea descending path. His companion went to call RAF Sea King, but he felt better and got down helped by four passers-by. 8.

OCTOBER 21 – Instructor (30) suffered permanent spinal damage from a fall of 10m when unroped. He was working near the big ledge on Pinnacle Ridge, Polldubh Crags, fixing belays for instuctional climbs. Stretchered down. Paramedics and Lochaber MRT. 24.

OCTOBER 29-30 – Poorly-equipped, intoxicated man (34) airlifted from summit shelter by RN Sea King at night in good weather. Lochaber MRT. 125.

GLEN COE

NOVEMBER 5 – Climbing Clachaig Gully took two men (21, 18) longer than they thought. After dark they flashed torches for help. Glencoe MRT hauled them up out of the gully by ropes. 77.

NOVEMBER 14-15 – Trying to get down off Sgor nam Fiannaidh after traverse of Aonach Eagach, man (25) and woman got lost and bivvied near the top of Clachaig Gully West in good weather. Soon, the bivvy bag slid 5m and the man's knee got slightly injured. They flashed torches and were winched by RAF Sea King and Glencoe MRT. 65.

NOVEMBER 15-16 – Doing an unspecified route on Bidean nam Bian three male students (24, 24, 23) were benighted in bad weather, bivvied and came down at 09.15. Night search by Glencoe MRT. 48.

DECEMBER 27-28 – After E-W traverse of Aonach Eagach movements of two men (30, 28) were monitored by police. Though moving they were making little headway. Loudhailer and headtorch communication established they needed help. They were escorted down from Clachaig Gully West by Glencoe MRT. 57.

DECEMBER 28 – Roped climber (27) injured back and leg by fall of 30m into soft snow, from a slip when descending Big Step of Am Bodach to Chancellor Ridge. Glencoe MRT, RAF Sea King. 50.

JANUARY 5 – Unroped ice climber (M36) attempting Curved Ridge, Buachaille Etive Mor, with six friends, slipped and fell 180m sustaining serious skull, spine, chest and abdominal injuries. Winched by RAF Sea King with Glencoe MRT. 69.

JANUARY 7-8 – Two men (56, 55) and two women (39,19) overdue from climbing Curved Ridge, Buachaille Etive Mor. Exhausted headtorch batteries caused them to be cragfast in Crowberry Basin. Guided down by Glencoe MRT. 35.

FEBRUARY 9 – Glencoe MRT member climbing on Stob Coire nan Lochan witnessed a hillwalker (21) fall 135m down Broad Gully. Not carrying ice-axe, crampons or helmet, he only suffered cuts and bruises. Rescued by team and airlifted by RN Sea King. 50.

FEBRUARY 14 – Man (45) descending Coire na Tulaich of Buachaille Etive Mor suffered illness, later diagnosed as angina. Escorted down by Glencoe MRT. 4.

FEBRUARY 14 – Two men descending north slopes Stob Coire nan Lochan were separated when one man's crampon struck a rock below surface snow. He tumbled, unhurt, out of his companion's sight, then made his own way off the hill, but the incident was reported. Glencoe MRT. RN Sea King flight cancelled. 8.

MARCH 1 – Three climbers walked up Aonach Eagach East Path in gales gusting to storm force. About 100m above road man (32) in front slipped on wet rock and scree, fell into a gully and sustained two broken vertebra, facial fractures and hip laceration. Stretchered by Glencoe MRT. 36.

MARCH 29 – Using crampons and ice-axe, walking the ridge from Stob Coire nan Lochan to Bidean nam Bian, man (23) slipped somewhere near Diamond Buttress and fell into Coire nam Beith, sustaining pelvic injuries. Glencoe MRT stretchered him to below cloud whence he was winched by RAF Sea King. 47.

MAY 28 – Policeman (46) with two colleagues had climbed to the top of Curved Ridge, Buachaille Mor. When descending unroped he jumped down to a ledge, but slipped and fell 90m to the base of Easy Gully. Fatal. Recovery by Glencoe MRT, RAF Sea King. 32.

MARCH 31 – Practising rope and climbing techniques on a 25m climb/scramble on Lagangarbh Buttress, Buachaille Etive Mor, a student (18) unroped to descend

the side of the buttress to start again. He slipped on wet rock, fell 20m with spine injuries and broken arm. Winched by RAF Sea King Glencoe MRT. 30.

MAY 27 – Poorly equipped and shod, a solo walker crossed Stob Coire nan Lochan and Stob Coire nam Beith in good weather. Descending Arch Gully, Stob Coire nam Beith she got cragfast. Her cries for help were heard by other walkers and she was airlifted by RN Sea King from HMS Gannet. Glencoe MRT. 40.

MAY 28 – Descending from Buachaille Etive Mor by steep scree in Coire na Tulaich a walker (18) slipped on loose scree. Then he began to run down to preserve balance, but fell head over heels for 18m. He sustained wrist and femur fractures, with cuts and bruises to face, head, arms and legs. RAF Sea King, Glencoe MRT. 24.

JUNE 2 – Man (46) slipped, with deep thigh laceration when descending path from Pap of Glencoe. Conveyed to ambulance by Glencoe MRT. 6.

JUNE 12 – One of a group of seven on an organised walking holiday, a man (58) collapsed and died of a heart attack at the bealach SE of Sron Garbh. Stretchered to below cloud by Glencoe MRT, then airlifted by RN Sea King from HMS Gannet. 51.

JUNE 21 – Attempting to traverse Aonach Eagach E to W, two men (35, 33) decided to descend south before completing the ridge because they were tired and it was getting dark. They got cragfast at "The Ramp" of Stob Coire Leith. They alerted motorists by flashing torches. Rescued by Glencoe MRT and RAF Sea King. 75.

JULY 25 – Walker (36) dislocated his shoulder when he slipped on scree descending path from Stob Coire nan Lochan. Unable to descend, his companion called out Glencoe MRT who reduced the dislocation so that he was able to complete the descent. 19.

AUGUST 3-4 – Two women (45, 40) descending, went into An t-Sron Chasm. Both slipped on scree, with minor cuts and bruises, ending up cragfast. They signalled with torches and were winched by RAF Sea King, but declined medical help. Glencoe MRT. 57.

AUGUST 9 – One of seven climbing Sgorr Dhonuill (Beinn a'Bheithir) a man (61) collapsed near the summit and died of a heart attack. Glencoe MRT stretchered him to the roadside. 34.

AUGUST 16 – With eight others descending Stob Coire Raineach, of Buachaille Etive Beag, into Lairig Gartain, walker (26) got his foot into a hole causing ankle injury. Stretcher carry by Glencoe MRT. 20.

AUGUST 19 – When descending Sgor nam Fiannaidh with a companion, a woman (34) got her leg struck by a large boulder which dislodged itself, causing a fall/stumble of 6m. Evacuated with a severely gashed leg by Glencoe MRT and HMS Gannet Sea King. 29.

AUGUST 24 – Abseiling from a pitch 30m below Ossian's Cave, casualty's abseil anchorage (1.9cm chock) broke free, causing a fall of 20m. He (36) sustained skull, spine, chest and arm injuries. He was winched by RN Sea King which returned for Glencoe MR Team. 53.

SEPTEMBER 12-13 – Two of a party of three men intending to climb Curved Ridge, Buachaille Etive Mor, stopped at foot to wait for better weather. The other (33) continued. Those who had waited eventually climbed Curved Ridge. They saw their companion to their right on Crowberry Ridge. He signalled that he would complete the route and they would meet on the summit. They waited for an hour on top then went down Coire na Tulaich. Glencoe MRT ascertained by loudhailer that he was cragfast on Crowberry Ridge but uninjured. They him down by 02.30 on 13th. 85.

SEPTEMBER 27-28 – Motorist on A82 reported lights flashing but stationary near top of Buachaille Etive Mor. Glencoe MRT established by loudhailer that two men (benighted on January Jigsaw, but descending slowly with one head torch) did not need help.

NOVEMBER 1 – Walker (68) descending Buachaille Etive Beag with two companions by the usual path, slipped on mud near the bealach fractured his leg. Stretchered below cloud by Glencoe MRT then winched aboard R137 RAF Sea King. 29.

OTHER CENTRAL HIGHLANDS

JANUARY 1 – Sledging at Meall a'Chuit, above Melgarve, Corrieyairack Pass, a schoolgirl (15) slipped on heather dislocating a kneecap. There was a history of two similar injuries. Airlifted by RAF Sea King for hospital treatment. Cairngorm MRT. 19.

JANUARY 2 – Army officer (29) leading an ice climb on a waterfall on NE Crags of Sgurr Finnisg-aig, Aonach Mor, and fell 10m on to a small ledge. His crampons stuck in, but he continued falling back, breaking both ankles. Airlift by RAF Sea King, Lochaber MRT. 17.

JANUARY 3 – When an unroped man (37) was climbing out of the soft snow fan at the top of Upper Couloir, Stob Ghabhar, the snow would not hold his weight. He fell back down the gully sustaining head and arm injuries. Glencoe MRT stretcher lower to RN Sea King airlift. 55.

JANUARY 11 – Descending NE Ridge, Am Bodach, Mamores in a party of three, a hillwalker (43) tripped when her crampon snagged in a gaiter. She fell/slid 70m with head, leg and arm injuries. Glencoe MRT stretchered her to the roadside. 73.

JANUARY 27 – Climbing a snow gully between Creise and Sron na Creise with two companions, a man (36) was killed in a 150m fall from the top of the gully. Glencoe MRT, RN Sea King. 47.

FEBRUARY 2 – Two men (55, 32) were roped climbing Cinderella on Creag Meagaidh when they were swept out of the gully by a cornice collapsing. Older climber had facial cuts with possible hip and femur fractures, while other had ankle injury. Stretchered to airlift by RN Sea King. Lochaber MRT. 56.

FEBRUARY 9 – Six from a party of eight decided to climb Cinderella, Creag Meagaidh because it had already avalanched. Roping in three pairs they had almost reached the top when the cornice gave way and avalanched them all. Five were seriously injured (f29, m27, m26, m25, f24) and one slightly (m31). They were tended by the pair waiting at the bottom. All six winched into RAF and RN Sea Kings. Kinloss, Leuchars and Lochaber MRTs. 196.

MARCH 2 – Rescuer (28) on exercise on Puist Coire Ardair, Creag Meagaidh, walked through a cornice in a white-out. He fell a considerable distance towards the loch at the head of Coire Choille-rais, causing bruising and abrasions. It was snowing, with gale and low cloud. Separated from companions he walked down to A86 unaided. Kinloss MRT and RAF Sea King diverted to following incident on nearby Beinn a'Chaorainn. 13.

MARCH 2 – Attempting to lead a party of eight down from the Centre Top, Beinn a'Chaorainn, in a white-out, two men (64, 54) walked through a cornice to the north of the Centre Top. The safest direction down would have been SW. They were both killed by a fall of 300m. Found half buried in snow by RAF Sea King and winched aboard. Kinloss and Lochaber MRTs, SARDA. 103.

MARCH 6 – Skiing Nid Run on Aonach Mor, man (33) caught by spindrift in a gale fell and slid 20m into rocks, suffering hip dislocation and pelvis fracture. Airlift RAF Sea King, Lochaber MRT. 44.

MARCH 30 – Woman (67) wearing shoes, descending forest track on lower slopes of Carn Dearg (516m), Farr, Strathnairn, slipped on wet grass, causing an ankle fracture dislocation. Her husband went for help. Ambulance paramedic and RAF Sea King evacuation. 20.

MARCH 30 – Descending steep slopes to SE of Stob Coire a'Chairn, Mamores with three companions, woman (43) slipped on wet mud, breaking a lower leg. Glencoe MRT, RN Sea King. 42.

MARCH 30-31 – Inexperienced walker (47) parted from her experienced partner when she got tired between two summits of Beinn Bhreac 840m (Carn an Fhreiceadain) Kingussie. Lost, she survived reasonable weather overnight in heather, not calling out and moving only 3.5 km N into remote Monadhliath rather than S towards Kingussie. She had seen lights and flares of rescuers, but thought flares were comets or shooting stars. She had flashed her camera through a whole spool, but only one flash had been spotted and not fixed. She was found by RAF Sea King at 08.10 hours. Cairngorm, Kinloss, Leeming MRTs, SARDA, estate workers, five 4WD vehicles, Police, estate quad bike with searchlight. 412.

MARCH 30 – Descending west in mist from Sgurr a' Mhaim, Mamores, with companions, woman (40) slipped on snow, sliding about 130m over snow and rocks, stopping at a rock and gashing her leg. Lochaber MRT moved casualty to accessible point for RAF Sea King winch. 83.

APRIL 4-5 –1 Descending N from bealach Stob Coire Easain/Stob a'Choire Mheadhoin, Loch Treig Hills, man (32) carrying but not wearing crampons, slipped on ice, fell 75m, causing pelvic injuries, cuts and bruises. Compound incident (see below). 46.

APRIL 4-5 – Descending to assist his companion in the above incident, rescuer (48) wearing crampons, tripped over them and fell a similar distance injuring a leg. Both men were found next day by RAF Sea King and winched aboard. Lochaber MRT. 46.

APRIL 26 – Traversing the two Corrour Forest Munros with nine others from Loch Ossian Youth Hostel, walker (60) stumbled on boggy ground when descending W from Bealach nan Sgor. She pulled ligaments on both sides of an ankle. Manual transfer to RAF Sea King. Lochaber MRT. 31.

MAY 5 – Searching woods for a sheep-worrying dog on shore of Loch Treig, shepherd (60) slipped. After 20 minutes he went unconscious. Acquaintance went for help. Lochaber MRT found him walking back to his vehicle uninjured. 44.

MAY 9 – West Highland Way walker (29) slipped on forest track above Glen Nevis Youth Hostel fracturing his ankle. Rescued by Lochaber MRT in vehicle. 2.

MAY 25 – Walker (48) slipped on rock beside Uisge Labhair 2.5km NE of Corrour Lodge, Loch Ossian, breaking his ankle. Rescue by RAF Sea King. 13.

JUNE 8 – Having solo walked Carn Mor Dearg, Aonach Mor and Aonach Beag, a man (50) was descending into Coire Giubhsachan (about 15.45 hours) when he slipped down wet rock slabs for an unknown distance and was knocked unconscious. He came to at 17.25. Despite serious injuries (including dislocations of C4 and C5 vertebrae, right skull fracture with subdural and extradural haematomae) he walked 3km to Steall Ruin, where campers raised the alarm. Lochaber MRT stretcher carry down Nevis Gorge. Air Ambulance transfer from Belford to Glasgow. 42.

JUNE 17-22 – Searches had been made and media details issued for a missing Japanese woman (30) last seen in Fort William on June 17. On June 22 her remains were discovered on the east side of Steall Waterfall at a height of 115m

above the base. Although steep it is climbable without gear to about 150m where vegetation stops. To go higher would mean moving west into rock and water. It is most likely she climbed to there, wearing light fashion shoes; finding herself only 16m from top she may have tried to climb the rocks and fell 35m. Stretcher recovery by Police and Lochaber MRT. 27.

JUNE 25 – About 300m from top of Devil's Staircase, descending West Highland Way towards Kinlochleven, deceased (m57) slipped, sat down and slumped over. Witness called other hikers for help and CPR was given, but victim died from a heart attack. Airlift by RAF Sea King. Glencoe MRT. 29.

JULY 8 – Supervised students on an outdoor education course were jumping from the triple wire-rope bridge into River Nevis at Steall Cottage. On his seventh jump a 16-year-old struck a submerged rock with a knee tearing ligaments. Stretchered down gorge by Lochaber MRT. 40.

JULY 10 – In good weather at 13.45 hours three hillwalkers found the body of a walker (55) in Coire Giubhsachan (between Carn Mor Dearg and Aonach Beag). It appeared he may have slipped on rock slabs falling some 100m. Lochaber MRT, RAF Sea King. 31.

JULY 14 – Man (28) leading 23 French Scouts with four other instructors from Corrour to Kinlochleven via Steall over two days, slipped on rocky path in Upper Glen Nevis, spraining his ankle. Airlift by RN Sea King for treatment. 14.

JULY 15-16 – Twelve French teenagers attempted to walk from Steall Car Park to Kinlochleven. They had three maps and three compasses, but made a navigational error. On Stob Coire a'Chairn a girl (17) became ill, apparently hypothermic. Five went down with two (of three) walkers they met. Three went on to Kinlochleven having been shown the way. Three plus the other walker were escorted down by Lochaber MRT with the ill girl on a stretcher. She was later hospital treated for shock. RAF Sea King had ferried rescuers, who had reached the group about midnight. 221.

JULY 15-16 –Three French Scouts (all female aged 18) took a wrong track from Stob Coire a'Chairn. Heading for Kinlochleven they got to Loch Eilde Mor. Found by Glencoe MRT. 9.

JULY 29 – Man (42) reported missing after separation at Tigh-na-Sleubhaich, Lochaber, on West Highland Way. He had not met a friend at Nevis Bridge as arranged and returned to Glasgow without telling police. Lochaber MRT did a route search. 8.

AUGUST 7 – Walking Land-Rover track to Blackwater Dam, Kinlochleven, student (18) camped at Loch a'Coire Mhorair. On waking he could not continue due to an old back injury. Companion went for help and Glencoe MRT evacuated him by 4WD vehicle. 9.

AUGUST 7-8 – Attempting six Munros in Ben Alder and Geal Charn ranges, walker (63) got lost in mist between Bealach Dubh and Geal Charn (1132m). Tried to walk out after dark but there was no moon. He bivvied in Glen Cam, 10 minutes up from Lubvan Ruin. Walked out next day to notify police because he had left a note on his car. Search by Cairngorm MRT and RAF Sea King called off. 9.

AUGUST 8 – Hillwalker (57) winched by RN Sea King from moors 1km N of River Tummel between Loch Tummel and Dunalastair Water. He had a leg injury from a slip. Taypol SRU.

AUGUST 9 – One of seven climbing Sgorr Dhonuill (Beinn a'Bheithir) a man (61) collapsed near the summit and died of a heart attack. Glencoe MRT stretchered him to the roadside. 34.

SEPTEMBER 28-29 – Leuchars MRT recalled en route to join Lochaber MRT and RN Sea King search for three hillwalkers (m47, m46, f38) overdue on Ring of Steall.

One had slipped on wet ground, and they bivouacked when it got dark. Found uninjured walking out next day by helicopter, they walked out unaided. 114.

OCTOBER 20 – Leading Inbred at Creag Dhubh, Newtonmore, climber (19) fell when a loose rock hold gave way. Runners came out and he fell 12m to the foot of the route, breaking an ankle and suspected shoulder fracture. Stretchered by Cairngorm MRT. 18.

OCTOBER 28 – Attempting Ring of Steall, walker (49) missed out An Garbhanach and tried to descend Coire a'Mhail. He got cragfast near Steall Waterfall on steep, wet ground above Steall Cottage and flashed an emergency signal. Winched by R137 RAF Sea King. Lochaber MRT. 43.

NOVEMBER 29 – Benighted and lost in good weather descending Mamores to Glen Nevis, two walkers (m27, f24) got cragfast on North Ridge of An Gearanach. Occupant of Steall Cottage saw their flashing torch signal. Winched by Rescue 137. Lochaber MRT. 40.

DECEMBER 6 – Hillwalker (49) slipped on wet scree on lower slopes of Creag Beag (486m) immediately above Kingussie, breaking a lower leg. Cairngorm MRT got a Land-Rover right up to her. 6.

DECEMBER 6 – Extensive searches, now reduced to sporadic searches, have been carried out for Samuel Sinclair (37) overdue from walking Aonach Mor and Aonach Beag to Glen Nevis, by Glencoe, Kinloss, Leuchars and Lochaber MRTs and Sea King helicopters from HMS Gannet and RAF Lossiemouth. Not yet found. 2081.

CAIRNGORMS

JUNE 29-30, 1996 – Correction to last year's report. Bird watcher (50) moving on crag east of Loch Loch to get a better view of nest, slipped on dry scree, causing chest injuries from which he died a few days' later. Local stalker knew all nest sites and was able to direct rescuers. Tayside MRTs stretcher carry.

JANUARY 1-2, 1997 – Two men reported themselves lost in mist on Dreish by mobile phone. Through the night they made occasional calls to Police reporting movements. Tayside teams decided to guide them down but they walked in at first light. 14.

JANUARY 11 – After their companion retreated because of wet weather, two men (45, 41) carried on. They climbed up Twin Burns (NH978028) west of the lochan of Cairn Lochan: the exact location of the spectacular fatal avalanche of March 4, 1995. At 11.30 hours as they almost topped out at the "meadow area" the snow 2m above them cracked. They were carried 130m down to the lochan, trapped by large blocks which provided some air spaces. They were stuck together in a head to tail situation – same as the two 22-year-olds from Cumbria who had not been so lucky. One was buried. The other had head and a hand above the surface. By moving his chin he managed to free some space round his head and then got his hand free. Somehow, he extracted a compass from a pocket and used it as a mini shovel to dig himself out. It was serious as he did not manage to free his companion till 18.00. One had a frostbitten hand, the other a nasty cut chin. They then walked out. Some of Cairngorm MRT opined that, since the avalanche force cracked the surface of the loch, the bending of the ice reduced the impact of the snout debris, also creating air spaces which saved the climbers' lives.

JANUARY 17 – Hillwalker (36) slipped on vegetation on Kinpurnie Hill (345m) near Newtyle, Sidlaw Hills. She injured a leg and was rescued by Taypol SRU using 4WD vehicle. 10.

JANUARY 19 – Man (62) missing in woodland and lower Spey river bank found safe. Coastguard mustered.

JANUARY 22 – Man (30s) killed by fall over sea cliffs at Clashach Cove 1.5km east of Hopeman. HM Coastguard, RAF Sea King.

JANUARY 23 Practising ice-axe braking with five others at about 1000m in Coire Bogha-cloiche of Braeriach, a man (46) lost grip and fell 60m into a boulder-field, with severe facial injuries. Cairngorm MRT and RAF Sea King. 50.

FEBRUARY 8 – Rope of three men (30, 25, 25) climbing Crotched Gully (135m II) in Coire an t-Sneachda, Cairngorm. Lead climber started up route. Climber at belay slipped off down hard névé slope pulling second off belay, who in turn pulled off the leader. They suffered cuts and bruises. Winched by RAF Sea King training in area, Dundonnell MRT (training) and Cairngorm MRT (working in area). 34.

FEBRUARY 9 – At noon two parents with four children set out to climb Mither Tap of Bennachie from Rowantree Car Park. Halfway up an exhausted son (9) was left on the path to await the others' return. However, they did not find him so alerted rescuers. Step-father found him at 16.20 hours lying in deep heather 150m south of path. He had walked less than 1km since separation. Braemar and Grampian Police MRTs, RAF Sea King. 26.

FEBRUARY 14 – Accompanied walker (26), carrying but not using helmet or crampons, reached Meikle Pap col on Lochnagar path. Crossing an icy patch he was blown over by a wind gust, striking his eyebrow on the ice, receiving a laceration which needed six stitches.

FEBRUARY 22 – Two men (30, 27) from a party of 10 under instruction in winter skills near Fiacaill a'Choire Chais, Cairngorm, were blown up in the air and transported 60m, falling about 3m. One had fractured tibia and fibula, the other a badly injured ankle. Carried by Cairngorm and Leuchars MRTs to airlift by RAF Sea King. 41.

FEBRUARY 23 – Male (54) walking with 28 companions had a suspected angina attack when 5km WSW of the head of Loch Lee, Angus. Mobile phone used to get RAF Sea King airlift. 8.

FEBRUARY 25 – Ski-touring in a party of four near the foot of the North Ridge of Fiacaill Coire an t-Sneachda, a woman (24) fell and injured a knee. Winched by RAF Sea King. 11.

FEBRUARY 26 – Three men (31, 30, 27) set out at 10.00 to climb Parallel Gully A, Lochnagar, despite the avalanche warning being Cat. 4. Snow up to waist deep on the climb slowed them. They had to abseil after completing 75% of the route, reaching the foot at 22.30. Police had been told they were overdue and found them walking back to Loch Muick Car Park. 3.

MARCH 9-10 – Two men (60, 55) hoping to traverse Right-of-Way from Dunkeld to Kirkmichael via Meall Reamhar (53/033568) got lost and returned to Dunkeld six hours' late. Taypol and Tayside teams, SARDA. 60.

MARCH 21 – Unroped with 11 others, cramponing down snow in Coire na Ciste, Cairngorm, a man (37) slipped and slid 30m into boulders. His patella was fractured. Airlift by RAF Sea King. 10.

MARCH 23 – Roped climber (31) slipped on The Milky Way, Cairn Lochan in winter condition, falling 30m with injuries to his spine, pelvis and thigh. Cairngorm MRT were training nearby. Hospitalisation by RAF Sea King. 12.

APRIL 20 – Schoolgirl (15) on award hike practice in Glen Dee injured her lower leg by stepping in a small hole. Braemar MRT. 6.

APRIL 22-25 – Car parked at Cairn o' Mount, summit of Banchory to Fettercairn road, with suicide notes left on April 22. Searches were carried out by Grampian Police dog handlers, Braemar and Kinloss MRTs, RAF Sea Kings. Man (35) was known to have sheltered in a remote bothy 2.6km east of the car, but hid in Drumtochty Forest when building was searched. He was found by SARDA on 3rd day of search, fit and well, on moorland halfway between bothy and car. 613.

MAY 3-4 – Route searches by Taypol and Tayside teams found two men (both 36) lost in mist in Glen Doll area. RAF Sea King. 50.

MAY 19 – Man (33) tried to rescue a dog which had fallen into water in the gorges above Bruar Falls and also slipped into the water. Suffering cold trauma he was rescued by Taypol SRU and taken to hospital in Pitlochry. 7.

MAY 25-26 – Four people got disoriented near Macdui summit in mist. Two men (47, 30) went on to try and find trig. point leaving the others to await their return. Those waiting got cold and returned to Derry Lodge by their ascent route, reporting the seekers missing at 22.50. The seekers said they had returned to the rendezvous to find those who waited were missing and then descended via Lairig Ghru, boulder-field and Pools of Dee. Police found them on Luibeg Path at 01.30 hours. Braemar MRT. 9.

JUNE 4 – Soldier (30) slipped walking on rock and grass in Coire an Lochain, Cairngorm, spraining his ankle. Companions tried to evacuate him on a make-shift stretcher, but he was winched by RAF Sea King. 9.

JUNE 4 – HM Coastguard recovered a fallen rock-climber (m21) with minor injuries from the foot of sea cliffs at Burnbanks Haven, Aberdeen.

JUNE 10 – Abseiler on double rope at Pass of Ballater got stuck when 8m down from the crag top, hanging free under an overhang. His doubled rope had "larks-footed" around the descendeur, locking it. It was his first abseil. There was no safety rope, as only one rope had been used, doubled and looped over a boulder above the cliff. No safety (Prusik loop) was used and there were no precautions to prevent larks-footing. Two Braemar MRT members, climbing nearby, used their single rope to set up an assisted hoist and recovered the man to the crag top with little difficulty. 2.

JUNE 10 – RAF Sea King airlifted sea cliff climber (27) who injured his back and pelvis at Cummingstown, near Hopeman. HM Coastguard.

JUNE 17 – Accompanied walker (66) wearing trainers slipped crossing Capel Burn on Capel Mounth Track in Glen Clova. He sustained arm and leg injuries. Taypol SRU. 14.

JUNE 21 – HM Coastguard, RAF helicopter, and two lifeboats were involved rescuing a woman (65) with minor injuries cragfast on a ledge of a sea cliff at Victoria Park, Arbroath.

JUNE 24 – Retired man (69) in a party of seven at Pools of Dee, Lairig Ghru, slipped and suffered skull and collar bone injuries. Evacuated by RAF Sea King exercising in area. Cairngorm MRT. 9.

JUNE 24 – Schoolgirl (18), one of six on an award scheme near Fords of Avon, slipped with slight leg ligament injuries. Three girls lifted to Lossiemouth by RAF Sea King. Cairngorm MRT. 9.

JUNE 28 – On a sponsored walk through the Lairig Ghru starting at Linn of Dee a man (78) died of a heart attack near old Sinclair Hut site. He had recently completed all the Munros. Stretchered to Rothiemurchus path, then out by Argo. Cairngorm and Kinloss MRTs. 19.

JUNE 29 – Male runner (40) in the Lairig Ghru Hill Race slipped and tore knee ligaments at Pools of Dee. Lifted by RAF Sea King. Cairngorm MRT. 13.

JULY 4 – Schoolboy (13) slipped from a path on the west slopes of Coire an Lochain, Cairngorm, sliding 10m down snow and fracturing a wrist. No ice axe. Winched by RAF Sea King. 18.

JULY 9 – Cairngorm MRT and RAF Sea King searched vainly after cries for help had been reported from Pinnacle Gully, Shelter Stone Crag. Other witnesses had reported two people cragfast. 31.

JULY 16 – Man (65) slipped on Jock's Road 1km SE of Crow Craigies. He injured a leg. Taypol SRU. RAF Sea King. 8.

JULY 28 – HM Coastguard and RAF Sea King rescued man (43) with back injuries fallen down cliff at Fraserborough.

AUGUST 8 – RAF Sea King rescued woman (36) sustaining leg injury from a slip on Ben Vrackie when she was above the dam on the SW slopes.

AUGUST 10 – Loch Brandy Path at 400m, Glen Clova. Hillwalker (39) with leg injury. Air Ambulance took him to Glasgow, due to fog at Dundee. Taupol SRU. 12.

AUGUST 10-11 – Male walker (61) bivvied in mist when attempting five Munros in Ben Alder area during calm weather. Cairngorm MRT did an early search but he turned up OK. 59.

AUGUST 12-13 – Paddling barefoot at Pools of Dee, a schoolgirl (13) cut a foot, but walked on down to Corrour Bothy with party after bandaging. Next morning, unable to walk, she was rescued by Braemar MRT Argo-Cat. 23.

AUGUST 23 – Turning to talk to another member of his group, a walker (56) tripped when 200m NE of Derry Lodge. Due to rucksack weight and entanglement of hands in straps, he was unable to stop the fall and sustained facial cuts and gravel rash. Grampian Police. 1.

AUGUST 24 – Fund-raising walker (26) got bad blisters crossing Devil's Point, Cairn Toul and Braeriach. Other members of her party helped her to Rothiemurchus Lodge. Cairngorm MRT. 6.

SEPTEMBER 6 – Walker (38) slipped on wet tree roots at Luibeg Bridge breaking his ankle. Braemar MRT. 5.

SEPTEMBER 15-16 – Cairngorm MRT and SARDA searched forests around Loch Morlich for missing woman (67). She was found asleep in a locked shower block at the campsite. 132.

SEPTEMBER 28 – Descending Beinn Bhrotain, walker (43) slipped, spraining a foot, delaying his party. Braemar MRT. 12.

OCTOBER 19-NOVEMBER 8 – Aberdeen, Braemar, and Kinloss MRTs, SARDA and RAF Sea King searched Glen Muick on November 26 for an unemployed woman (30). Her car had been left without petrol, but with some clothing at Spital of Glenmuick about November 19. There was no proper hill clothing, but some clothing had been found on the hill. There had been a reported sighting in Glen Clova on November 20. Aberdeen MRT again searched extensively on November 2. Subject not found. 269. On November 8 she was found quite well, asleep in a cave near a waterfall in Coire Fee, above Glen Doll by two firemen on one of their regular off-duty hillwalks.

OCTOBER 21 – Upper Tier, Cave Crag, Craig a' Barns, Dunkeld. Climber (m32) in a roped pair, got a leg injury from a rock dislodged by other person. Taypol and Tayside teams. 27.

OCTOBER 25-26 – When found 1.7km NE of Jock's Road (N of Craig of Cowal), person (24) who had separated from companion and got lost, had a slight cut to the hand. Tayside teams, RAF Sea King. 60.

DECEMBER 9 – Creag an Righ (481m) 2km east of Carrbridge to Forres road. Man (18) in a party of four crossing wet heather at night, stumbled and slid 15m on to rocks, suffering concussion, strained ligaments and bruising. Winched by RAF Sea King. Leeming and Leuchars MRTs. 47.

DECEMBER 27 – Youth (17) reported he had left his parents near Strath Nethy Saddle. Mum was exhausted but mobile. Subjects found safe by Cairngorm MRT between Glenmore and Ryvoan. 5.

SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS

JANUARY 3 – Ochils MRT callout cancelled when overdue walker (48) turned up. He had been engaged on W to E traverse of the Ochils.

JANUARY 4 – Walker in party of two slipped on ice under snow when near summit of Beinn Tharsuinn, Glen Luss, injuring her leg. Police helicopter in attendance, but lifted by Air Ambulance. Arrochar MRT. 10.

JANUARY 5 – On Stob Garbh, north slopes of Ben Lui, man (52) died of a heart attack when accompanied by his daughter. Oban Police MRT. RN Sea King airlift. 13.

JANUARY 5 – Glissading South Ridge of Ben More, casualty (32) fractured a tibia and fibula when one of his crampons caught in snow/ice. Called out Killin MRT with mobile phone. RN Sea King. 37.

JANUARY 11 – Climbing West Gully, Beinn an Dothaidh roped to a companion, man (27) slipped on ice and suffered leg injury. Strathclyde Police and RAF Sea King. 24.

JANUARY 21 – Student (18) fractured his pelvis, with head and arm injuries, on the east slopes of Meall Monachyle (647m) Balquhidder. Walking with six others, he saw dog chasing a sheep which appeared to run over a vertical cliff. Running to investigate he slipped and fell 15m vertically, then rolled another 15m. Winched by RN Sea King. Killin MRT. 46.

JANUARY 25 – Descending Creag Mhor with his partner, to Glen Lochay, man (45) with no ice-axe slipped on névé falling 45m on snow then grass. He lost a lot of blood from a big gash in rear thigh, also back injury, multiple cuts and hypothermia. RN Sea King winch. Crew had difficulty spotting him in a dark sleeping bag among heather. Killin MRT. 60.

FEBRUARY 1 – Descending east from summit Beinn an Lochain walker (45) slipped on grass and fell 150m. When his friend got to him, he was unconscious with cuts, bruises, chest and head injuries, but no bone damage. Winched by RN Sea King. Arrochar, Strathclyde Pol. MRTs. 26.

FEBRUARY 11 – Descending snow with two others on NE Ridge, Beinn Dubhcraig, man (53) tripped over his crampons and fractured a fibula. Just below cloud, he managed to slide down to better site for spotting and evacuation. Stretchered to manual transfer by RN Sea King. Killin MRT. 22

FEBRUARY 17-22 – Searches of Glen Luss area by lifeboat, police helicopter, Arrochar MRT and SARDA carried out for German airline pilot who had left three suicide notes in his car. Traced to Germany. 50.

MARCH 8 – Two women (both 25) in slight mist, with no map, compass or torch got lost trying to follow fence posts on Ben Ledi as described in their guide book.

Mobile phone call home alerted police. Found on Ben Vane about midnight. Killin and Lomond MRTs. RN Sea King. 68.

MARCH 10-11 – Solo walker (45) reported overdue at Ardvorlich. Killin MRT found his body at the foot of the 150m crag on Stuc a'Chroin on *The Munros* route to Ben Vorlich. He had slipped on snow and rock in freezing conditions. Airlift RAF Sea King. 131.

MARCH 16 – Japanese girl (27) with two friends visiting waterfall a few hundred metres NE of Rowardennan Youth Hostel, slipped about 45m into burn, with spine injuries and abrasions. Spanish friend went to phone for help. Language problems caused police and rescue boat to think casualty was in the loch. Lomond MRT and SARDA called out. Winched by RN Sea King after paramedics carried out first aid. 66.

MARCH 18 – Retired male (62) descending wet grass of path to Loch Katrine sluices slipped and broke a tibia and fibula. Stretchered by Killin MRT to loch for boat to ambulance. 28.

MARCH 23 – With a companion on steepish slopes 500m to NW of Beinn Ghlas (Lawers Range) walker (34) slipped, injuring his head, arm and leg. Good weather. Taypol SRU and RN Sea King. 10

APRIL 6 – One of two poorly equipped novices descending Ben Ledi in rain and mist (m23) got faint and passed out. Companion (f24) got mild hypothermia waiting for him. Stretchered by Killin MRT. 30.

APRIL 13 – Walking Kinlochearnhead to Killin via Glen Beich, man (46) drifted off route in good weather, got directions from a passer-by and arrived overdue. Killin MRT standby. 2.

APRIL 20 – Climbing up steep grassed path on Wester Kirk Craig at Tillicoultry, man (39) had a heart attack and was airlifted by RN Sea King to hospital. 12.

MAY 5 – Ochils MRT requested to help police carry a drunk youth out of Tillicoultry Glen at night. They did so on a stretcher. Two friends of his were in a slightly better condition. 6.

MAY 6 – Descending steeper section of Ben A'n path woman (61) slipped on dry scree, causing leg injury. Stetcher carry by Killin MRT summoned by mobile phone. 20.

JUNE 1 – Two men (both 65) scrambled up parallel gullies of Craig Leith, Alva, intending to meet at top, but one stopped to eat halfway up! Ochils MRT called out and soon recalled. 1.

JUNE 1 – Male (76) on Beinn Dubhcraig had been separated from party. A bit over ambitious on a hot day, he was behind schedule. Traced by Police walking from hill. 6.

JUNE 7 – Walking with friends in good weather in Alva Glen, man (71) tripped, fracturing a lower leg. Ochils MRT treated and stretcher carried him. 30.

JUNE 21-22 – Two girls (both 14) injured in a compound accident in Campsie Glen at 21.40 hours. One slipped into the gorge, was held by the other who fractured her wrist and let go her friend who then fell 18m with head, spine, chest, arm injuries and hypothermia. Evacuation by RN Sea King winch very difficult because of gorge terrain and heavy foliage. Ambulance, Police, Lomond MRT. 48.

JUNE 24 – Walker (36) broke her ankle on remote beach SW of Machriahanish, Mull of Kintyre. Rescued by RNLI inshore boat, HMCG. 19.

JUNE 29 – Male (21) hillwalker injured a leg on the Saddle, 5km SSE of Lochgoilhead. Picked up by RN Sea King. Arrochar and Strathclyde MRTs. 15.

JULY 12 – Walker (m66) suffered a heart attack near the summit of Ben Lomond. No helicopter used because doctor confirmed death on the hill. Stretchered by Killin and Lomond MRTs. 95.

AUGUST 8 – Schoolgirl (13) tripped from viewing platform at base of Wallace Monument, Abbey Craig, fell 9m to a ledge sustaining fractured humerus and bruising. Ochils MRT helped firemen by setting up belay for a stretcher lower down 60m steep slope. 44.

AUGUST 11 – Woman (40) slipped on a dry grassy path on the Cobbler sustaining a leg injury. Stretchered by Arrochar and Strathclyde Police MRTs. 50.

AUGUST 14 – Male overdue on Beinn Narnain found by Arrochar MRT on Glen Loin slopes. 15.

AUGUST 18 – At 11.15 stalker found the body of a hillwalker (69) lying in bracken on Meall Ghaordie footpath 1.6km from Glen Lochay road. The stalker had spoken to him an hour before. Police in Land-Rover attempted resuscitation unsuccessfully using a defibrillator. 4

AUGUST 18 – Woodcutter (m36) timber harvesting got severe arm, leg and spine injuries when struck by a steel rope after hi-line winch failure. Ambulance service could not evacuate due to steep ground and trees. Killin MRT used vacumat and McInnes stretcher after workmates cut 50m evacuation route through thick trees. 12.

SEPTEMBER 6 – Cow giving birth to stillborn calf slid down banking. After vet did prolapse repair, Killin MRT helped fix ropes and pulley to tow cow out by tractor. 10.

SEPTEMBER 21 – Retired woman (61) slipped just south of bealach Beinn Ghlas/ Meall Corranaich, suffering head and abdominal injuries. Taypol SRU. Helicopter from RAF Boulmer, Northumberland.

SEPTEMBER 23 – North Ridge Ben Vorlich (Loch Earn) about 1.5km N of summit. Woman (57) descending, tripped on scree and broke an ankle. Winch by RN Sea King. Killin MRT, Taypol SRU. 36.

SEPTEMBER 27 – Male (42) in a party of three suffered a medical illness near Narnain Boulder on Cobbler Path. Winched by RN Sea King. Strathclyde Police. 8.

OCTOBER 4 – Red flare fired by adult in party of five camping near climbing cliffs of Ben A'an to 'show the children'. Killin MRT. 31.

OCTOBER 4-5 – Three boys (16, 15, 14) and two girls (14, 13) on an award scheme starting at Dollar carried an unauthorised heavy canvas tent which slowed them down. Reported overdue they were found next day on Elistoun Hill, Tillicoultry, but they thought they were above Alva, 4km farther west. Ochils MRT and RN Sea King (training with MRT). 72.

OCTOBER 12 – Party of four overdue in Glen Lednock. Check by Killin Police. 2.

OCTOBER 14 – Casualty (47) and his wife got lost on steep ground 200m above Loch Dochart. He slipped on wet, loose rock fracturing a tibia and fibula. Stretchered down by Killin MRT. 30.

OCTOBER 21 – Man (60) in rain and mist on Creag an Fhithich (between Lawers and An Stuc) slipped descending a snowy path, causing a head injury. Airlift by RN Sea King. Taypol and Tayside teams stood down en route. 18.

DECEMBER 9-10 – Solo walker (50) caught out by mist and darkness on Ben Vorlich (Loch Earn) by path from Ardvorlich in snow. He sat out the night then descended unharmed. No ice-axe, crampons, compass, bivvy bag. No route plan left. Tayside MRT. 19.

SKYE

MARCH 31-April 1 – Two men (33, 25) descending Sgurr Sgumain in mist and rain were benighted and overdue due to poor navigation, but walked in at 11.20. Skye MRT, RAF Sea King. 77.

MAY 7-8 – Six Germans left two cars to walk from Luib to Sconser in downpour with flash flooding. Reported missing next day. Found in Portree Hotel. Skye MRT. 12.

MAY 8 – Off route due to a deep covering of late snow, roped, about 3m below summit Sgurr a'Mhadaidh, casualty (25) who was leading, pulled up on a large rock which dislodged on to his own leg, breaking tibia and fibula. Rock would have been obviously loose in summer. Fellow club member in a nearby group gave him painkillers. In good weather he was airlifted by RAF Sea King. Skye MRT. 44.

MAY 18 – Climbing a HVS gully on dry rock on the lower tier at Neist Point, west of the car park, leader (33) climbed 3m and placed a nut. A metre above he slipped and fell back and the running belay pulled out. He fell head first down a large hole on the shore surrounded by boulders, unconscious and also with shoulder injuries. His second, with mobile phone, alerted two coastguard sectors, ambulance, police and doctor. Winched by HMCG helicopter. 61.

MAY 22 – Casualty (77) and his son were walking path from Elgol to Loch Coruisk. When 1.3km N of Elgol he tried to make a step up on the dry path, but lost balance and fell backwards over a cliff. Fatal injuries. Winched by RAF Sea King. Skye MRT. 38.

MAY 31 – Party of five climbed Pinnacle Ridge, Sgurr nan Gillean. Descending Tourist Route in training shoes, last of party (29) slipped when 30m down, fracturing her ankle. Winched by RAF Sea King, Leuchars and Skye MRTs. 38.

JUNE 6 – With tour guide and two friends, casualty (29) was crossing a waterfall in Lealt Gorge, 17km N of Portree when he slipped on wet rock and broke a femur. Eight coastguards attended with doctor and police. Airlift by HMCG helicopter. 45.

JUNE 8 – Reports of mirror flashes from Cioch, Sron na Ciche. Skye MRT found nothing, suspecting persons with racks of new climbing gear. 8.

JUNE 15-16 – Man (76) separated from a group walking off a charter vessel berthed in Loch na Cuilce. Searchers located him, mildly hypothermic, at the head of Loch Coruisk HMCG helicopter, Mallaig lifeboat, two passing N. Ireland Rescue Team, Police, Coastguard. 37.

JULY 14 – Walker cragfast on east-facing cliffs of Ben Dearg, 3km SW of Old Man of Storr. HMCG helicopter lowered winchman with strop, recovering him and subject to aircraft because person appeared very frightened and was inadequately clad. Skye MRT. 20.

JULY 22 – Belgian walker got stuck on a ledge near the Prison, Quiraing. He got himself off as police and Skye MRT investigated. 6.

JULY 31 - August 1 – Male made a hoax mobile phone call to a local hotel requesting hotel callout emergency services to Staffin Ridge. HMCG helicopter, Kinloss and Skye MRTs. 337.

AUGUST 18-19 – Two adults with three children set off late on Ben Staic (481m),

Glen Brittle. Skye MRT searched forest tracks at midnight. Lights would not penetrate mist. Turned up at 03.00. 10.

AUGUST 20-21 – Party of 14. Two males (20, 16) got soaked spending night in a leaky tent on the west side of Trotternish Ridge getting mild hypothermia. Winched by HMCG helicopter. 33.

AUGUST 25 – Leader (m42) fell 15m climbing out of long side of Thearlaich Dubh Gap, using insufficient runners. Leg injury. Stretcher lower and carry by Skye MRT. RAF Sea King winch. 72.

AUGUST 28 – Hillwalker (34) descending into Coir' a' Ghrunnda near Caistell a' Gharbh-choire was hit by a rock dislodged by his father, receiving skull, spine and abdomen injuries. Winched by RAF Sea King (night vision goggles). Skye MRT. 47.

AUGUST ? – Party trying to get from Coire an Lochain to Glen Brittle shouted to people on Sgurr Mhic Choinnich because they did not know the way. Someone dialled 999.

AUGUST ? – Five exhausted teenagers unable to get over Cuillin Ridge to Glen Brittle alerted rescue by mobile phone. Mallaig lifeboat from Coruisk to Elgol. HMCG. 5.

SEPTEMBER 4 – Pony trekking in strong wind and heavy showers near the head of Loch Snizort Beag, a woman (23) was thrown from a Shetland pony and sustained spinal injuries. As riders turned their mounts the pony bolted when startled by wind in its face. Stretchered by Skye MRT. 10.

SEPTEMBER 14-15 – Five students (f23, 20, 19, m22, 20) were stopped by a spate burn in Strath Mor between Torrin and Luib. They camped overnight and were traced by Skye MRT. 67.

SEPTEMBER 19 – Man (45) slipped at Nead na h-Iolaire, 2km south of Sligachan, causing leg injury. Skye MRT, HMCG helicopter. 20.

SEPTEMBER 22 – Walker (51) wearing trainers in Fionn Choire, under Sgurr a'Bhasteir, got an injured leg from a rock dislodged by her companion. Skye MRT. Winch by RAF Sea King. 31.

OCTOBER 22 – Accompanied walker (38) slipped on rock descending Upper Coire Banachdich, suffering head, arm and leg injuries. He also suffered hypothermia. He had no torch to use as marker till found by Skye MRT. RAF Sea King crew, praised by MRT for brilliant flying, used night vision goggles for long cable winch evacuations of casualty and team members. 52.

NOVEMBER 5 – Small hill S of Fairy Glen, 2km E of Uig. Australian student (m21) climbed to top then tried to return to companion (f21) who was only halfway up. He reached up to grab a large rock which came away in his hand. He fell on to the woman, then both fell to the bottom. He got a serious leg injury. she had head, back, chest and leg injuries, cuts and bruises. Coastguard and ambulance. Airlift by HMCG helicopter. 29.

NOVEMBER 27-DECEMBER 4 – Hillwalker (34) suffering from diabetes camped alone near Loch Scavaig. A note attached to his car left in Elgol revealed he was due to return on November 27. He was reported overdue on December 3. Search by Skye MRT and HMCG helicopter on December 4 found him dead near Coruisk Hut. His diary revealed he had fallen on November 27 and felt unwell. 45.

ISLANDS OTHER THAN SKYE

JANUARY 18 – HMCG search for missing person at Marwick Head, Orkney. Turned up OK.

JANUARY 24 – CG helicopter en route to search for missing hillwalker, Leverburgh, Harris, informed person found well. 2.

FEBRUARY 21-22 – Taking a short-cut across a 100m hill, Billia Field, Shetland, after a party, a man (32) died of hypothermia in sleet squalls. HM Coastguard teams and helicopter.

APRIL 22-24 – Retired woman (72) solo hillwalking spent two nights out on the hill in poor weather. Rescuers thought she would not have survived another. She was found, hypothermic, on East Ridge Meall Breac, Goat Fell. Searches by Arran MRT, SARDA, RN and Police helicopters. 158.

APRIL 24-25 – Man (50) was found, chilled at 03.09 on 25th by CG helicopter. Wearing jumper, jeans and shoes, with no food and no equipment, he was lost on the shore of Loch Eynort. Temperature was +4°C. with 10-knot wind. He had planned to climb Ben Corodale, South Uist, probably via Beinn Mhor, took a short-cut and got lost, missing his car by 1km. He walked in same area in 1996 with same total deficiency of equipment. Police, Lochboisdale CG. 32.

MAY 17 – Photographer (49) who had filmed Dundonnell Team near Clisham, North Harris, taking no part except low-level walking, winched by CG helicopter to Western Isles Hospital suffering a mild heart attack. Dundonnell MRT, Stornoway and Tarbert CG Units. 32.

MAY 30 – Man broke arm while walking on Rum. HMCG helicopter lift from Kinloch. 1.

MAY 31 – Woman (40s) broke her leg on Lunga, west of Mull. RN and RAF helicopters.

JUNE 4 – Walking with her husband at an isolated place on NE Arran coast near 'Fallen Rocks', wife (20+) fell, fracturing kneecap. Airlift by RN Sea King. Arran HMCG stood down *en route*. 11.

JUNE 5 – Walker (36) slipped while trying to rescue a dog at Glenashdale Falls, near Whiting Bay. Uninjured, he was rescued from a crumbling ledge by RN helicopter. Arran MRT. 12.

JUNE 8 – In cloud, just east below the Hallival/Askival Bealach, Rum, a Scottish Natural Heritage worker (32) slipped, dislocated his shoulder and got head lacerations. Stretchered, due to severe turbulence, by Kinloss MRT to suitable position for airlift by CG helicopter. 144.

JULY 3 – CG helicopter search of Beinn Mhor, South Uist after a woman with a heart condition became separated from her husband on the hill and was three hours' overdue. She walked off by a different route. 8.

JULY 15-16 – Father (38) and son (15) loch fishing on Lewis were lost overnight on the moors in fog. Found near Cuisashader by CG helicopter using FLIR detector.

JULY ? – RAF helicopter airlifted fallen walker from Dervaig Hill, Mull. 1.

OCTOBER 11 – Man (56) with five neighbours gathering sheep 4km NNE of Tarbert, Harris on Sgaoth Aird (559m) died from a heart attack. CG helicopter and Coastguard Auxiliary. 51.

Willie Speirs. Photo: Douglas Scott.

SOUTHERN UPLANDS

JANUARY 1-2 – Couple (in 40s) overdue snow walking in Glentress Forest from Peebles Hydro. Found, very cold, after midnight, by SARDA dog with Tweed Valley MRT. Helicopter standby. 30.

JANUARY 19-20 – Overdue boy (14) cycling in Glentress Forest (3km NE of Peebles) had run away from home. He spotted rescuers, avoided them, and abandoned bike, tent and survival gear. In freezing weather he made his own way home in darkness. Borders SARU, Tweed Valley MRT, SARDA. 284.

MARCH 22-23 – SARDA called out to assist Galloway MRT at Forrest Lodge, St. John's Town of Dalry search for man separated from friends when trying to ford a river. Stood down when he was found by main road 10km distant.

APRIL 16 – Crag at Upper Clifton, NX 84/909572. Leader (29) slipped on dry rock, ripping out two runners, falling 8m on to grass with chest and coccyx injuries. Three Galloway MRT climbers were at top of crag and helped him down scree to ambulance. HMCG unit arrived. 4.

APRIL 20 – Man cragfast 15m up a sea stack near Culzean Castle. Rescued by Fire Brigade ladder as Coastguards arrived. 14.

JULY 17-18 – Experienced diabetic cyclist (41) got lost on remote forest roads and spent night out near Castle Douglas. He turned up at Minigaff YH at 17.00 on 18th. Galloway MRT and SARDA. 6.

AUGUST 27 – Moffat MRT called out for four teenage girls overdue on award hike (Polskeoch on Southern Upland Way). They turned up but one had Achilles tendon injury. 12.

AUGUST 30 – Moffat MRT searched a wooded lochside near Lochmaben for an elderly lady overdue. She turned up OK as team deployed. 10.

SEPTEMBER 9 – Moffat MRT helped fell runner in Breweries Race to get off the hill with an ankle injury. 3.

SEPTEMBER 23 – RN Sea King rescued a Clydesdale horse from a ravine at Kirkmichael, South Ayrshire.

OCTOBER 18-19 – Moffat and Tweed Valley MRTs found five Scouts (m15-13) lost in forest in darkness and rain on Southern Upland Way near Selkirk. RAF Sea King en route. 154.

NOVEMBER 28 – Male teenager killed by falling from a cliff at Dunskey Castle, Portpatrick. HMCG and RN helicopter. Recovery by RNLI lifeboat as stretcher recovery up slopes would have been too hazardous. 18.

NON MOUNTAINEERING 1997

FEBRUARY 8-9 – HMCG searched Wick Harbour area for male (24). Body recovered by divers. 1.

FEBRUARY 10 – SARDA, Police underwater unit and RN Sea King called out for woman (31) missing near River Forth and fields near Stirling. She turned up OK.

FEBRUARY 17 – Borders SARU called out for flood alert at Newcastleton. Tweed Valley called out at Hawick for severe flooding. Did vehicle recoveries, sandbagging, evacuations. 175.

FEBRUARY 19 – Borders SARU flood callout at Hawick. Tweed Valley MRT call out at Selkirk. 16.

FEBRUARY 19 – Cairngorm MRT called out because of danger of people in cars

Iain Ogilvie on Mount Kenya. Photo: Dick Allen.

being trapped in snow on A9. On this occasion weather improved and road was cleared. 40.

FEBRUARY 21 – SARDA dogs searched east shore Loch Lomond for man (32) missing from car containing a suicide note. Search in strong SW winds from Balmaha to Ross Point. Not found. 12.

FEBRUARY 27 – Tweed Valley MRT mobilised in Galashiels for missing person who turned up safe.

MARCH 10 – SARDA dog found man (77) missing from nursing home at Ayton, Berwickshire. He was found in dense undergrowth, weak, cold and barely coherent. Borders SARU.

MARCH 10-23 – Searches by Strathclyde Police MRT, HMCG ground teams and RN Sea King for sea canoeist (34) missing off Iona. Her body was found off Elgol, Skye on 23 March. 86.

MARCH 15 – Young man committed suicide in forest remote from road near Portree. HMCG helicopter. 1.

MARCH 15 – Skye MRT helped police search for missing youth (19), armed with a rifle, believed to be a possible suicide victim. His body was found by HMCG helicopter in a forest on the road from Portree to Bracadale.

APRIL 13 – SARDA South searched Sheriffmuir Forest after a suicide note was found in a car. Subject returned to carpark brandishing a knife. 20.

JUNE 3-4 – RAF and RN Sea Kings used after RAF Harrier crashed at Gelston, Castle Douglas. Possible bird strike. Pilot had suspected post-ejection back injuries. Leuchars MRT crash guard. 552.

JUNE 23-24 – Search of flat coast near Alness Point in Cromarty Firth carried out by HMCG, Lifeboat, Police, RAF Sea King and SARDA for a woman (46) thought to be suicidal. Her body was found in the firth by Fishery Board employees. 468.

JUNE 23-24 – Aberdeen MRT helped police search River Dee banks at Aboyne for a retired man (73). His body was found on 24th by police divers. He appeared to have fallen in. 43.

JUNE 29 – Lowland search by Galloway MRT and SARDA for a man (36) with a history of collapsing, missing near River Dee. He turned up in London. 30.

JUNE 30 - JULY 1 – Vain search of woods and coast by SARDA South on first day for a woman (24) who left suicide notes. Her body was found in dense undergrowth near her home in Bo'ness by SARDA dog next day. 26.

JUNE 30-July 1 – Woman (unconnected with above incident) found dead in a pond near Bo'ness, outside SARDA search area.

JULY 17-21 – Aberdeen MRT helped police search in an inquiry into the murder of a boy (9). 193.

JULY 20 – Montrose Coastguard called out to search for man (26) missing near St. Cyrus. OK.

AUGUST 6 – Coastguard team and helicopter called out when two men were killed, trapped under a concrete slab while building a sea wall at North Ronaldsay. 2.

AUGUST 31 – Moffat MRT searched quarry, river and woods for a missing teenage male who was found in Dumfries. 100.

SEPTEMBER 2 – HMCG rescued a woman (37) suffering from an overdose on a rocky hilltop, Easter Heog (81m), East Burra, Shetland. 1.

SEPTEMBER 4 – Coastguard helped ambulance crew recover woman trapped in car which had left road and gone into the sea at Kyle of Durness.

SEPTEMBER 15-18 – Aberdeen MRT and SARDA searched at Keith, Banffshire for a missing man (40). His body was found by a search dog. 10.

SEPTEMBER 29 – Last vehicle in Leuchars MRT convoy, returning to base after recall from an incident in Glen Nevis, was flagged down by a hysterical mother whose child (5) was choking. The girl had swallowed an ice lolly, complete with stick! Team member successfully did a Heimlich abdominal thrust restoring normal breathing and also recovering a 2p coin from her throat in the process. She went to hospital by ambulance.

OCTOBER 9 – SARDA searched for a man missing from work on a farm at Bridge of Allan. OK.

OCTOBER 12 – Tweed Valley MRT and SARDA searched for person missing from psychiatric hospital. 56.

OCTOBER 24 – Successful search by Tweed Valley MRT and SARDA for woman (26) missing from hospital. 9.

OCTOBER 28 – Tweed Valley MRT and SARDA searched hospital grounds for confused lady (80). OK. 18.

NOVEMBER 21-24 – SARDA and Tweed Valley MRT searched Galashiels parkland and river banks for missing male (47) suffering depression. Found dead close to his home in a disused mill three days later. 33.

DECEMBER 12 – HMCG Montrose searched for man missing near harbour. He was OK.

DECEMBER 18 – Aberfoyle residents, Roderick Aitken (39) and Anne Marie Aitken (39) missing since December 18. Strathclyde MRT and Police helicopter searched fruitlessly on January 7-8, 1998 including abseil into Finnich Glen, Garabhan and Loch Ard Forests. On March 26, 1998 two bodies were found in a shallow grave in Ayrshire and positively identified as the missing couple. 208.

DECEMBER 21 – Cesna 152 missing *en route* Carlisle-Prestwick. Dead pilot (m44) found next day in wreckage on south top of Barrholm Hill between Creetown and Gatehouse of Fleet by rescue team. Galloway, Leeming and Leuchars MRTA, SARDA, RAF and RN helicopters, four lifeboats. 300+.

DECEMBER 23 – Tweed Valley MRT located missing lorry driver, in another lorry several miles farther into a forest (engaged in timber haulage) after his lorry had been found empty. 14.

DECEMBER 23-24. – Search by SARDA (South and Highland), Ochils MRT and Central Scotland Police of area around Coalsnaughton for a man (25) missing for more than a week. Search widened to include electricity sub-station near Fishcross where police found him dead by hanging. 212.

DECEMBER 25 – Borders SARU, Tweed Valley MRT, SARDA searched banks of swollen Tweed for man seen in difficulties by people on opposite bank. Body found at Kelso several days later by police divers.

DECEMBER 26 – Tweed Valley MRT aided police in search for runaway boy (8) missing at night on Tweed banks at Galashiels. He turned up OK. 2.

DECEMBER 26 – Moffat and Tweed Valley MRTs and SARDA sweep-searched a forest near an abandoned car at Newcastleton and found the body of a woman (60) suicide victim. 132.

DECEMBER 28-29 SARDA standby for missing man in Stenhousemuir who turned up safe.

IN MEMORIAM

WILLIAM B. SPEIRS j. 1927

Willie Speirs started climbing in Scotland in 1922 at the age of 15, and in the course of family holidays at Spean Bridge that year and again in 1923 he climbed all the peaks from Ben Nevis to the Grey Corries. So began a lifelong passion for mountaineering which took him far beyond Scotland in the following 50 years. By 1923 he was going north from Helensburgh regularly, at first by train and bicycle, then a year later on his Excelsior two-stroke motor cycle. Those were years when climbing in Scotland was at a low ebb after the First World War, and Willie and his brother, George, must have been among the most active and enthusiastic of young climbers going to the hills regularly, not only to climb but also on fishing expeditions to remote mountain lochs where their presence would not be noticed by local keepers.

The summer holiday of 1925 saw Willie and friends in Skye for two weeks, climbing on Sron na Ciche and fishing the lochs. His financial records of that holiday show his early talent for keeping the accounts in good order. The total cost for the four of them for 14 days, including transport , was £21.17s.$^{1}/_{2}$d. A month after returning from Skye, Willie and several friends had a meeting under the Narnain Boulder (described in his diary as a pow-wow) which resulted in the formation of the Junior Mountaineering Club of Scotland. Two years later a little route-finding problem on Crowberry Ridge with brother George and Bob Elton resulted in the first ascent of Speirs' Variation, described by subsequent guidebook authors as being as direct as Abraham's Route and equally sensational. At the end of that year he joined the Club.

Willie also had a passion for skiing and was one of the pioneers of cross-country touring in Scotland. At a time when everyone in Scotland was still using plain wooden skis, he imported a set of metal edges from Switzerland and laboriously fitted them to his skis, thereby improving his performance considerably on the icy slopes of Meall a'Bhuiridh.

In 1932, three years after the CIC Hut was built, Willie in his capacity as secretary of the Scottish Ski Club was responsible for the building of another hut even higher than the CIC. Hearing that the stalkers' bothy at Luib Shooting Lodge was for sale, he bought it for £15 and arranged for the Killin joiner to dismantle it and have it transported and re-erected high up in Coire Odhar on Ben Lawers, where it still stands.

In the Alps, Willie's spiritual home must have been Zermatt, for he returned time and time again, and climbed many of the major peaks there in the course of two decades, starting with the Matterhorn in 1936 and climaxing in his 1957 season. At that time he was President of the Club and had gone to Zermatt to represent the SMC at the Alpine Club's Centenary Meet. Arriving off the night flight from London to Geneva, he was promptly marched by his three companions, Graham Macphee, Ian Ogilvy and Charles Warren, up to the Schoenbiel Hut with a view to climbing the Dent d'Herens. At the hut several AC members, including their President Sir John Hunt, were heard to make some disparaging remarks when they were told of the SMC party's intentions. 'One thing is certain, those four old men will never climb

the Dent d'Herens', were the words reported by George Roger. However, next day the peak was climbed and that evening in the Monte Rosa Hotel the AC President had to eat his words. Meanwhile, Willie and his three companions had enough puff left to climb Nordend and Lyskamm in the following three days. In 1966 he went to Mount Kenya with Douglas Scott and Charles Warren and the three had a fine expedition, only just failing to reach Batian in falling darkness and deteriorating weather. They went on the following week to climb Kilimanjaro, Willie's high point.

Five years later he made his last sorties on rock. With Charles Warren and Ivan Waller he climbed Observatory Buttress, and next day the Crowberry Ridge. Forty-four years after the first ascent of his eponymous variation, he traversed left at Abraham's Ledge and led his companions up the Direct Route. It turned out to be his last route of that standard as doctor's orders restricted his activities thereafter, but it was a fitting swansong to a long and varied climbing career.

By profession Willie was a chartered accountant and company secretary. These skills he used also in the service of the Club, as Committee Member, Treasurer, Editor, Vice-President and President. His membership of the committee was apparently not even interrupted by a wartime posting to the Faroes. However, above all Willie was a great gentleman whose modest manners and sense of humour concealed the quiet determination of which mountaineers are made.

D. Bennet.

IAIN HAMISH OGILVIE j. 1934

HAVING just returned to the hut from his guided ascent of the Aiguille d'Argentière, Iain decided to have a rest before descending to the valley where he had to catch a train. He overheard the anxious guardian talking to his guide,

'Votre client ne marche pas aussi vite que vous.' 'Marche? Dieu, comme il marche, c'est formidable!' the guide replied.

For those who climbed with Iain this is a fitting epitaph.

Iain's father, who retired to Perthshire in 1911, after prospering as a tin miner and rubber planter in Malaya, died in 1924, when Iain was 11 years old. His godmother was Mrs Grant of the whisky family. Iain, the oldest of seven children, took on his father's role and developed the strong and determined personality that was to characterise his life.

He climbed his first Munro (Ben More – Mull) with the butler, at the age of 14, and collected alpine plants for the garden. This is the third entry in Iain's complete climbing diaries in which he recorded in his all routes, summits, companions and walks more than 20 miles long, and the birds he had seen on his Alpine holidays.

After school at Ampleforth he went to Edinburgh University and started climbing with two fellow students who were to become friends and climbing companions for the rest of his life – Jimmy Marjoribanks and Charlie Gorrie. At the age of 20 he walked alone for five days from Glenfinnan to Ardnamurchan Point carrying his food and tent. He often chose to walk unaccompanied. The weather was mixed and the midges were fierce, but nevertheless, he recorded in his diary that it was a 'most enjoyable little tour'.

Graduating from university with a degree in Civil Engineering, he joined Scottish Consulting Engineers, Blythe and Blythe and continued to climb at every

opportunity. He volunteered for the Army and was evacuated from Dunkirk. Iain married Bernardine Greenshields in 1942. He later instructed at the mountain warfare school in the Lebanon with Wilfred Noyce, going on to Italy and returning home in 1945 to see his daughter, Sonia, aged 15 months, for the first time. His son, Alasdair, was born after the war. On several occasions during the war Iain met up with Charlie Gorrie and they would share a dram or two and let their hair down. On one of these occasions they climbed to the top of a tall tree in the middle of the night, sang bawdy songs and refused to come down until ordered to do so by a senior officer.

After the war he returned to civil engineering, working in England, Iraq, Turkey and India as well as on an early Channel Tunnel proposal. He was an excellent engineer, enjoying solving problems and taking great pleasure in training young people. He thrived on the independence of overseas work. At the time of the Kassim revolution in Iraq when he was general manager of Holloway Brothers, his family was on leave and Iain was able to avoid the troubles by leaving his home and going on what he described as a '10-day cocktail party'.

However, his single-minded focus was directed to his climbing. He climbed The Chasm with Jimmy in 1933 and made an early summer ascent of Observatory Ridge with Charlie in 1934. Later, his frequent companions were Charles Warren, Ivan Waller, Graham MacPhee and many others; enjoying an Alpine holiday every second year and trips to the Himalayas, Kenya, Crete, Corsica, Greece, and Ireland as well as climbing in all the countries where he worked, Turkey, Iraq, and India.

Iain was awarded an OBE for his remarkable efforts in trying to save the lives of two friends who had fallen while traversing An Teallach in winter conditions. After lowering one friend, Iain fell 500ft while trying to lower the other, was badly injured and then struggled five miles to get help. The epic is recorded in *The Black Cloud* by I. D. S. Thomson and in Hamish MacInnes's book, *High Drama.*

Iain suffered a stroke in 1977 which left him with a lame leg. With more than 60 Munros still to climb, this was a huge setback but Iain's ambition was not diminished. Having been informed by his doctor that he would not be able to take long walks again, Iain was determined to prove him wrong and as a result, his health and stamina improved for several years.

Bernardine was a great support encouraging Iain to climb whenever he could. He completed 50 walks more than 20 miles long and 60 walks more than 15 miles long in the following years! Iain attended Easter meets and continued to climb alone and with old friends and younger friends including Oliver Turnbull and myself. In 1989 we sailed up Loch Quoich to climb Sgurr Mor. Iain was blown over several times but went on to complete his final Munro. Sixty two years had elapsed since the ascent of his first Munro, for which he probably holds the record. The only disappointment was that his life-long friend Charlie didn't make it to the top to celebrate.

Iain died in September 1997. He will be remembered for his sense of humour, and wonderful stories. Many of those who climbed with him still tell his jokes. His other interests were watercolour painting, sailing and model-boat building, at which he was very accomplished. Iain was a tall, well-built and distinguished man of immense determination with a great sense of fun, who set the pace and whose excellent company will be missed by all.

Dick Allen.

JAMES NORMAN LEDINGHAM j. 1945

As a neighbour in Kilmalcolm of both the late Harry MacRobert and the late Allan Arthur, I was well informed of the SMC and its activities and frequently joined Harry in his then revolutionary Ski Sundays on Ben Lawers in the Thirties.

As a student at Glasgow University reaching rather than climbing hills was my principal concern. Using an old push bike and the facilities offered by the Erskine Ferry and Loch Lomond steamer service, I climbed all the Arrochar and Falloch peaks. Later by motor-cycle I extended my activities as far as Glen Coe, the Lawers range, the Strathyre peaks and the Cruachan area.

I attended all the JMCS Glasgow section meets from 1934 to 1939 including autumn holidays in Arran, and summer meets in the Cuillin and Torridon hills. During the war I was commissioned in the 2nd Glasgow Highlanders having joined the Territorial Army in 1938. After serving as a Company Commander I was posted to 12 Commando in North Wales as an instructor to the commandos and latterly to the Lovat Scouts who were being converted to Alpine training. With Bill MacKenzie and Theo Nicholson and the late Sandy Wedderburn I joined the Lovat Scouts and in 1943 did six months Alpine training at Jasper in the Canadian Rockies.

Several mountains of 11,000ft.-12,000ft. were climbed in severe winter conditions with snowhole and bush bivouacs. Having been appointed Signals Officer of the Scouts I then proceeded to Italy where I served until I was wounded and mentioned in despatch near the end of the war. Thereafter I served as a Staff Officer to 9 Brigade HQ in Carinthia and Vienna. Having formed a Brigade Mountaineering Club our activities ranged from Monte Cristallo in the Dolomites to the Gross Glockner.

After demobilisation in January 1946 I joined the SMC and served on the committee in 1951-53 before leaving Glasgow to farm in Sutherland in 1953. I attended all but one meet until 1985 and again served on the committee in 1978 thereafter being appointed vice-president in 1979-81. Climbing was largely restricted to Club meets and summer holidays due to my remote location and the demands of hill farming, but an annual attendance at Sligachan with SMC friends was always faithfully kept in June for many years.

Having rejoined the Territorials I was awarded the Territorial Decoration in 1955 and as chairman of Sutherland Territorial Association was made a Deputy Lieutenant of the county in 1964.

With Myles Morrison and the late Fred Wylie we made use of the Ramblers Association during the Sixties and Seventies to annually visit less known but rewarding mountain ranges in the Tyrol, Dolomites and North Italian Alps.

I completed the Welsh 3000ft. mountains during my war appointment to the Commandos, and the English and Scottish Munros in 1963.

With Fred Wylie I hired a Ford Fiesta and spent a week completing the Irish 3000ft. peaks. And in our mid-70s, and latterly, we climbed about 50% of the Corbetts. Arthritis and worn knee joints finally finished all hillwalking activities in 1987 after nearly 50 active and memorable years and invaluable friendships.

Norman Ledingham.

R. R. S. Higgins continues: Norrie Ledingham joined the Club in 1947, immediately on his return from what had been a distinguished war career; first, in the Glasgow Highlanders, then, after as a spell as a climbing instructor to 12 Com-

mando, with the Lovat Scouts for action with whom, on the approach to Florence, he was mentioned in despatches.

After the war, he returned to his first occupation as a geography teacher, when he was one of the first to take his students out on the ground, until, on the death of his father-in-law in 1953, he moved to Brora to take over the running of the family sheep farm

Typical of the man, he soon became an expert and was the Sutherland representative for the Scottish National Farmers' Union. He also renewed his connection with the Territorial Army, becoming the local chairman. He was also appointed a Deputy Lieutenant to the County. Such are the facts, but they only dimly describe the man. The love of the hills was, second only to that for his wife and daughter, paramount to him. As a companion he was a constant delight and his ability to illuminate a map rather than just read it, was unequalled, through his knowledge of our landscape in all its aspects and seasons.

Both pre-war, in the JMCS, and thereafter, he was an avid supporter of the Club Meets and those he could not attend were the poorer for his absence. He, and a bunch of cronies, continued to attend even when the natural infirmities of age began to take their toll. He served on the Committee from 1951 to 1953 and was Vice-President from 1979 to 1981. By the extent of my own sorrow at his passing one can, to a small degree, know what Helen and Joan must feel.

JAMES R. HEWIT j. 1947

Jimmy Hewit loved rock-climbing and followed the sport all his life. He joined the JMCS in 1931 at the age of 22, and would have joined the SMC in 1934 but for a misunderstanding over the deadline for applications. In the event he did not join the senior club until 1947, and had completed 50 years' membership at the time of his death in February, aged 88.

His wife, Elsie, was also a good climber, and Jimmy took her to the CIC Hut for part of their honeymoon in 1940. (How many members can equal that?) While there, Jimmy climbed the Comb with R. F. Rolland and Ian Ogilvie – with Elsie's permission of course!

In the 1930s money was short, cars were few, and holidays limited, yet Jimmy managed to reach and climb in Glen Coe, Ben Nevis and the Cuillin, and other places besides, not to mention Blackford Hill and the Salisbury Crags nearer home. He wrote a guide to climbs on the Crags, which might have been published but for the War. He was also a cyclist and hillwalker, and was familiar with every part of the Pentlands – hills he loved to the end of his life.

Jimmy was a great story-teller, walks with him were never dull. He had a clear memory going back over 60 years of climbing, and of the 'characters' in the Club. He knew A. E. Robertson, Bob Grieve, Tom Weir, Graham Brown, J. K. Annand, Freddie Mantz, L. St. C. Bartholomew, Benny Horsburgh, Dick Brown, Jimmy Marshall and John Donaldson. On Jimmy's first night in the CIC Hut J. H. B. Bell arrived late and cooked bacon and eggs when everyone else was in their bunks. Older readers may also recall David Sandeman, Gordon Lindsey, George Henry, George Elliot, Graham McPhee, George Chisholm, Charlie Bruce, Adam Stewart, Tom Drysdale, Alan Horne and Dave Gordon, all of whom had shared climbing days with Jimmy. He claimed to have invented the first headtorch, putting it together from an old felt hat by making a dent in the middle with lace holes alongside to hold the torch. He said it worked. The Army claimed Jimmy for more than five years, and he ended the War in the Burma campaign as a combat

cameraman, being present at the re-taking of Mandalay and other actions in that theatre. In 1945 he had accumulated a month's leave, and what better than to make the acquaintance of the Himalayas? It took not a little ingenuity in Calcutta, but he was able to borrow a tent, boots, rucksacks, ice-axes, sleeping bags, snow goggles and 100ft of rope for himself and a friend. They made a trek to Nanda Kot, a neighbour to Nanda Devi, and climbed to more than 17,000ft – a remarkable achievement for the two servicemen, which was written up in the newspaper of the SE Asia Command.

Jimmy spent all his life in Edinburgh, and after the War worked for DCL as a photographer. He had a fine mind and was very well read. He could sketch and write comic and serious verse, and though a good companion he remained essentially his own man. He was a rugby enthusiast over many years and deplored the influence of money in sport. He despaired for the future of rock-climbing, feeling it was becoming more and more artificial. Jimmy felt the SMC had too little of the club atmosphere of his early days; that it had become too elitist, and it always mystified him that despite the explosion of mountain activity over the last quarter of a century Club membership had increased very little.

But, however decided Jimmy might have been in his views, he was generous in all he did and said, and there was nothing he liked better than a crack with a fellow wayfarer met on the hill. Whether it be a shepherd, a dyker, or a cottager out walking his dogs, Jimmy was always ready to stop for a word about life and work and changing times. He put one in mind of Leigh Hunt's *Abou Ben Adhem,* and the line: 'Write him as one that loves his fellow men' could fittingly serve as Jimmy's epitaph.

Jimmy and Elsie became increasingly frail in the last 12 months, and their son, Jim, a professor in Dundee, and his wife, Lena, moved his parents to a nursing home near to their home in north Fife, where the old couple were happy and well looked after. Elsie died last August, and Jimmy has survived her by only a few months. Knowing them has enriched my life, and it has been an honour to be their friend.

Bill Shipway.

LITTLE has been written about Jim Hewit, but he achieved a mention in the *NZAC Journal* of 1936 as a red-haired youth. With Jim Donaldson, he made a variation on the right of Raeburn's Arête on North-east Buttress, Ben Nevis. While on honeymoon he made a new route on the Tower with Charles Holland. Life was hard before the Second World War.

Working at Grey's of George Street in Edinburgh Jim only had his Sunday's free. Salisbury Crags provided an outlet for his energies and he became the local expert. Local mythology has it that an eponymous route, 'Hewit's Groove', required the insertion of an old halfpenny in a crack in order to provide the crucial foothold.

His guide with names and grades was an instant success. Anyone who climbed in Edinburgh knew of Hewit's Guide and it was a prized possession. Military service brought a visit to India and the Himalayas. Return to civilian life brought a job in photography and much more leisure. He was a regular attender on bus meets; he once kept the bus waiting as he returned late from a winter's night on Carn Dearg. As he grew older he made long, solitary walks in the Border Hills. Eventually, his conversation was grudging but he was still happy to talk about his beloved Crags. Somewhere there is a film made by Viking Ropes. It shows Jim in Skye and the Crags. I would like to see it again.

A. H. Hendry.

IAN BLAIR MOWAT j. 1927

I AM indebted to Miss Helen Mowat for providing notes on the life of her father who died on June 3, 1997 having been a member of the Club since 1927. In that respect he shared the same length of membership as Willie Speirs who sadly also left us this year.

Ian was born at Bridge of Weir in 1902 and moved to Canada with his family in 1912, returning to study organic chemistry at Glasgow University. He was clearly fit and strong having boxed and played rugby in the University teams before briefly working as a fireman on a shunter at Carlisle during the General Strike! Following a short period as an academic, he eventually specialised in armaments research, initially with ICI in Ayrshire and finally in Government establishments at Girvan, Woolwich, New Longton and the Royal Aircraft Establishment, Farnborough where he remained until retiring in 1967.

His climbing experiences started as a young man in 1921. He climbed regularly during holidays and at weekends until back problems forced a premature retiral while in his early Forties. He joined the Club in 1925 and climbed with Kenneth Steven, Macphee, Baxter, Corbett and T. R. Paterson on the popular routes of the day in Arrochar and Glen Coe. In Skye he traversed the Cuillin Ridge. He was an excellent photographer and kept a photographic record of his trips including the Easter Meet at Tomdoun in 1931 where the Journal records his party being forced off Sgurr na Ciche by a lightning storm. The following day there was greater success on Aonach Air Chrith, Druim Shionnach and Creag a'Mhaim at the eastern end of the Cluanie Ridge.

He was proud of his membership of the Club which helped sustain his old age as visits to Scotland became less frequent and he passed on his great fondness for the hills to his family, to whom we extend our sympathies.

John R. R. Fowler.

EDWARD S. CHAPMAN j. 1954

IN E. S. Benson's autobiography he describes an old Don who walked on the grass in the college quadrangle every morning, prodded the worms with his stick and muttered: 'You've not got me yet.' In similar vein my generation reads the obituaries in the *Scotsman.* In this column I read of Chapman's death. It brought back happy memories of meets at Crianlarich when winters had snow and ice.

Chappy had an open Bentley. One operated the door with a spanner and wore a balaclava. He also had a small motor-cycle. Tall, bulky, bearded Eddie Chapman could talk on any subject at length and with humour. The said humour led to him putting a rock in my sack. He enjoyed my surprise when he discovered it on the top of the Buachaille. Latterly, he often visited the ski hut on Beinn Ghlas. He was a safe skier who sought adventure by himself. An engineer with Babcock and Wilcox he left there in his 50s. Working at a crammers in Edinburgh was his last job.

A. H. Hendry.

Notice has also reached us of the deaths of David Easson and Sandy Cousins.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE CLUB

New members

The following nine new members were admitted and welcomed to the Club in 1997-1998.

Jonathan A. Baird, (29), Retailer, Fort William.

David John Cuthbertson, (50), Mountain Guide, Dores, Inverness-shire.

David Alexander Kirk, (29), Chartered Mechanical Engineer, Glasgow.

Scott Fraser Moir, (21), Physical Education Teacher, Prestwick.

Michael John Reed, (35), Air Traffic Assistant, Ellon, Aberdeenshire.

James Scott Thin, (29), Bookseller, Edinburgh.

Nicholas Francis Turner, (26), Window Cleaner, Oban.

E. Anthony M. Walker, (48), Farmer, Alness, Ross-shire.

David Wilkinson, (52), University Lecturer, Birmingham.

EASTER MEET – LOCH MAREE HOTEL

The Easter meet attracted a large gathering and we were not disappointed. Despite forecasts of severe winter weather sweeping Scotland during the holiday, and consequent warnings to keep off the hills, clear skies and a mild frost welcomed those arriving on Thursday. There were, however, reports of rain in the Midlands. Generally, the weather was very good, with spells of sunshine between sleet and snow squalls giving spectacular views of this wonderful area. The highlight of the meet was the opportunity to cross Loch Maree to Letterewe – kindly arranged by Bill Wallace. Nineteen made the crossing and it was reported 20 came back; this confusion arising perhaps from the need for an almost Alpine start and the scramble to get aboard.

The return was carefully planned: two crossings, at 4pm and 6pm. Unfortunately one member, underestimating the length and hard going, or so he claimed, of his route rather than his age, as the boatman averred, delayed the last boat by 45 minutes. The Meet Secretary (for it was he) tendered his resignation. This was refused and he was sentenced to a further unspecified term of office. More praiseworthy was the presidential ascent of a gully on Beinn Lair, and a probable first ascent of a neighbouring gully by Macdonald and Slesser still pointing the into the record books. This had been a significant day in the history of recent Easter Meets and will be a hard act to follow. Any ideas?

Hills ascended included: Beinn an Eoin, Baosbhein, Beinn a' Chearcaill, Meall a' Ghiubhas, Beinn Dearg, Beinn Lair, Meal Mheinnidh, Beinn Airigh Charr, Beinn a' Chaisgein Mor, A' Mhaighdean, Ruadh Stac Mor, Meall nan Meallan.

Those present included the President Bob Richardson, Robin Campbell, Malcolm Slesser, Iain Smart, Bill Wallace, Tom Weir, Dick Allen, Rick Allen, Bryan Fleming, Mike Fleming, John Fowler, John Hay, Scott Johnstone, Peter Macdonald, Bill Myles, Douglas Niven, Douglas Scott, Alan Smith, Nigel Suess, Oliver Turnbull. Guests: Alison Allen, Iain Cumming, Mike Dean, Mike Esten, Audrey Scott, Ronald Turnbull. John Mackenzie and Bob Brown came for dinner.

Oliver Turnbull.

The One-Hundreth-and-Eighth AGM, Reception and Dinner

You get a feel for these things after a few years in the job and the signs were not good. The word was out that something ominous was afoot at the CIC; the first choice after dinner speaker had cancelled, and the night before the 'do' we had no presenter for the Club song. But, the members and their guests were oblivious to the majority of these problems as we pursued the well-worn path to the Alexandra once again. We commenced in that dreich barn to the rear of the hotel where John Peden reminded us of the superb sailing event in May, and Graham Little continued the parochial theme showing the range of technical climbing which the Scottish islands have to offer.

The President then called his first AGM to order. Picture boards describing intentions on the Ben and in the North West had attracted much earlier interest. Are there any comments on the Minutes he asked? Silence. Has anyone any comments on the Secretary's report he inquired? Nothing. Has anyone any questions for the Treasurer? No response. We proceeded in this way carving up the agenda lickety-spit until we came to the real business – hut matters. There was no lack of enthusiasm here. The North West hut, or rather the Naismith Hut, provided the *hors d'ouvres* as the huts team got some close questioning on the tenders, or the apparent lack of them, before the members cautiously gave approval for the conversion to go ahead. Some deserved praise was accorded by the President to the members who had found the property and secured the purchase. And then on to the main course – what was happening at the CIC.

The President explained the Hut Committee's concerns about increasing faecal contamination of the hut environs in winter and their feeling of obligation to do something about it. That part went well. The proposed solution was a complicated twin-level extension with a waste disposal system wholly dependant on an electricity supply to be provided by a wind generator mounted on a 6m steel mast close to the hut. The costs were massive.

The ensuing debate was remarkably well ordered as objectors voiced a wide range of concerns. The Huts team defended their corner, but perhaps were a little unprepared for the size of the mutiny and an eventual vote turned down the proposals by a ratio of 2-1. The members had spoken and the team were philosophic. The Club was, however, undoubtedly spared the pressures of such a controversial course of action and it is back to the CAD systems for the huts men to come up with a more acceptable idea.

The tensions over, we were all now in a mood to dine and we repaired to the Hotel for manly helpings of haggis, broth, guinea fowl and trifle. The Club song was rescued by Bill Wallace who gave a fine performance and the musical theme continued as Bob Richardson produced a recording of the master entertainer, Tom Patey, delivering *The Last of the Grand Old Masters* and other numbers.

The President welcomed the new members as well as listing the successes of the year and Bob Reid gave an eloquent and flamboyant welcome to our guests from the Grampian Club, Lochaber JMCS, the LSCC, the Ochils MC, and for the first time the Wayfarers' Club and the Eagle Ski Club. Alan Blackshaw had been discovered living in Newtonmore and was asked to reply for the guests. A long and complicated ramble was duly provided on the subject of access rights – a worthwhile topic, of course, but of limited value as after-dinner entertainment. One item remained – the President's Sunday walk. In true Fort William tradition, the rain was bouncing off the pavements as they set off up Glen Nevis. However, the Steall bridge was confirmed as still being there and they were rapidly back at the cars. That then was it for 1997. Members generally seemed to think that it was one of the best Dinners for a while which, given the problems of the preceding few days, just goes to show that you never can tell.

J. R. R. Fowler.

Ski-mountaineering Meet 1998.

The customary SMC ski-mountaineering meet took place on February 6-7, 1998 at the An Teallach mountaineering hut called Strawberry Cottage in Glen Affric. In theory, it is far enough north to be a splendid centre providing access to some big hills and with wide snow cover in north-facing corries and reasonable weather it would be a ski touring paradise.

Fifteen seasoned SMC members and guests eventually assembled at the Cannich Hotel later than planned on Friday night. The hut is 5km from the Glen Affric car park up a private forestry track and hut users are permitted to use only two cars for access. Despite written invitations no-one – especially the three ex-presidents – went in early either by ski, bike, snowshoe, horse, parapent or on foot. Despite the late arrival, the hut was soon nice and warm and we retired in anticipation of a fine day skiing. The hut is fully equipped with wood-burning stove and wood, gas cookers, gas lights (but no mantles) and electric lights plus generator.

Saturday was cold and sunny with snow visible on all the high summits. The skiing contingent gamely went skiing and had a fine day on the north corrie of Mullach Fraoch-choire, later reporting that they skied to within 150m of the hut. The walkers, eschewing the delights of humping skis up to the receding snowline, stalked off up An Socach and Sgurr na Ceathreamhnan, where in contrast to the skiers, the first snow was not found until at least 400m above the hut. A second cohort climbed Mam Sodhail.

Saturday night saw culinary and victual extremes outdone only by the increasingly exaggerated claims of what daring exploits had been done that day. It was also noted that, excepting one guest, all those present had visited the Staunings Alps in North East Greenland.

Sunday was warm, wet and windy consistent with recent Scottish winters and the majority enjoyed a chat and a walk along the North shore of Loch Affric to the public road with a following wind. On the drive home the Glasgow contingent was in fine voice and respectfully rewrote two verses of the club song:

With a bent shaft axe in a holster on your harness
and hard copy of a forecast off the Internet to warn us
the bolts we're carefully clipping, vibram soles on wet rock slipping
as we go up to the mountains with no snow.

There's no ice or snow or névé, and wet ropes make rucksacks heavy
after torquing now we're walking on a path paid for by levy
rocks and nuts and friends are camming and with arms and legs we're jamming
then we come down from the mountains with no snow

Oh my old hobnailers, oh my old etc

A most enjoyable weekend for all despite the marginal conditions. Apologies to those members who attempted to book but could not be accommodated.

Members present: Colwyn Jones, Ann MacDonald (guest), John Bickerdike, Tim Pettifer, Brian Shackleton, Charlie Orr, Ian Angell, Bob Barton, Bill Wallace, Gordon MacKenzie, Susan MacKenzie (guest), Iain Smart, Malcolm Slesser, John Peden, Mandy Peden (guest).

C. M. Jones.

THE CENTENNIAL YACHT MEET (1997)

Report by Charlie Orr – with support from John Peden.

History involves not only a perception of the pastness of the past, but of its presence. T. S. Eliot.

On the afternoon of Thursday, April 15, the steam yacht *Erne,* under the dual but harmonious control of Captain Turner (the owner) and Captain Smith, steamed into Oban Bay, having on board the president of the SMC and two or three other hardy passengers who had braved the squally showers round the Mull of Kintyre. Late in the evening the remaining members and their guests – making 29 in all – who had been delayed by holiday traffic, arrived by rail and after the usual turmoil of hunting for berths and sorting luggage we all sat down to supper and to discuss the gloomy subject of the waves and the weather. (SMC Journal Vol. 4, 1897)

So wrote Professor R. Lodge, one of the less-than-happy band, at that time at least, at the start of The SMC Yacht Meet in April, 1897. Little more is known of the Professor, who recorded the events of the Meet in the Journal of that year. The same fate has, however, not befallen one of the other participants, and the name of Sir Hugh T. Munro is now known throughout the land by those who have even the most casual acquaintance with the Scottish Mountains.

Yachts and mountains may have appeared to be rather strange bedfellows in 1897 but, given the relative inaccessibility of many of the mountainous regions on the western seaboard, and the unparalleled rock climbing to be had on Skye and many of the other inner islands, one can see the attraction. Mountaineering and sailing are also remarkably compatible activities. Both place similar demands on participants (including a perverse ability to enjoy discomfort), and both offer similar intense, if

intangible, rewards. All coastlines possess an innate tension by virtue of being the interface between two worlds, but the intricacies of our coastline make these two worlds inseparable.

The seed of an idea to celebrate the centenary of the voyage of the *Erne* was sown on the customary after-dinner President's Meet in December,

1995, when the newly-elected President, Robin Campbell, was conducting his newly-acquired charges around the Western Mamores. The man who was to become ultimately responsible for the organisation of The Centennial Meet, 'Commodore' John Peden, recalls its genesis.

'Robin took the opportunity of soliciting for interesting events to mark his Presidency. I carelessly let slip the idea of commemorating the yachting

meet of 1897. Others I know had harboured similar thoughts but wisely kept their own counsel. As I have now discovered, any display of enthusiasm in this Club is mercilessly exploited and notwithstanding the minor detail that Campbell would no longer be in office by the time it took place, I was promptly press-ganged into organising something.'

Serious planning started about a year before the event, which the Commodore moved from Easter to the end of May, in the hope of securing better weather than the original meet experienced. The first thoughts were to charter one moderately large yacht, to serve as a 'mother ship' for several satellite boats. Events had other plans however, and as the numbers swelled so did the size of the flotilla.

In August 1996 the Commodore came across the steam yacht, *Carola.* Perhaps the most interesting boat on the trip and certainly the one closest in use and design to the *Erne,* the *Carola* was built by the apprentices at Scott's of Bowling in 1898, the year after the original Meet.

It was designed as the Scott family's personal pleasure yacht, being used mainly on the Clyde and around the inner islands, although it was later

pressed into service as a general purpose boat about the yard, picking up debris after new launches and the like. In the 1960s, after passing through the hands of several owners, it lay rotting at its moorings on the River Leven at Dumbarton, when it was 'rescued' and taken to the Scottish Maritime Museum at Irvine and lovingly restored to its present condition. With the exception of the skipper, Ian Smith, the boat is crewed entirely by volunteers of the Royal Naval Auxiliary Service – a registered charity, and is used for charter trips. Some 70ft long and with a 13ft beam, her elegant lines emoted a resonance with the past.

The next classic boat to be signed up was the *Eda Frandsen.* Based at Doune in Knoydart, the *Eda Frandsen* is a gaff cutter, built in Denmark in 1938 for lobster fishing in the Baltic. The Robinson family, who have built up the community in Doune from scratch, bought her in 1990 and brought her back to Doune, where she was converted for charters. Shortly before launch in 1993 the boatshed caught fire and she was reduced to a charred hulk. With commendable good will and astounding energy, she was lovingly built up again, and at 73ft LOA became the largest boat in our fleet.

Skipper Michael Humphries confirmed that *Alpha* would join the fleet. She was built in 1904 as a Bristol Channel Pilot Cutter, and there is an interesting link to mountaineering history in that this type of boat was used (and sunk!) by Bill Tilman. Designed for sea-keeping qualities in all weathers, and for speed in order to win their pilotage work, the *Alpha* was immediately reserved as the Flagship.

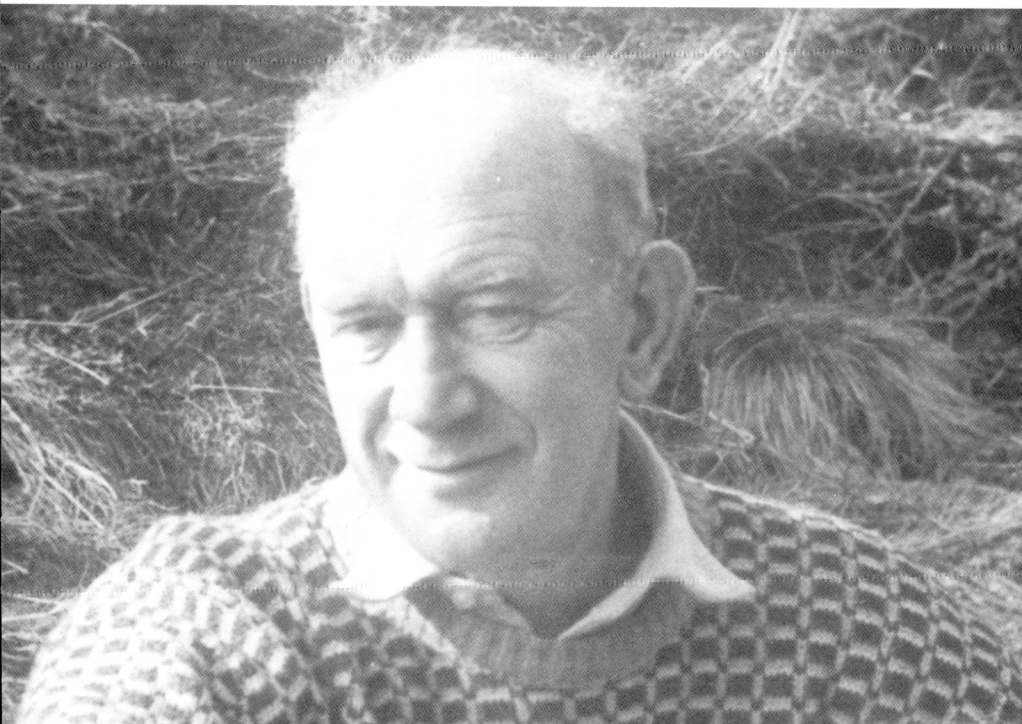
Members and guests were now booking for the Meet in increasing numbers, and the *Rosa and Ada* was taken on. She was an East Coast oyster smack, built at Whitstable in 1908.

Anna Stratton brought her boat, *Mary Bryant,* all the way from Falmouth. Though only 16 years old, she was built on the lines of a traditional New England gaff schooner, and she became the smallest of our classic yachts at 48ft LOA.

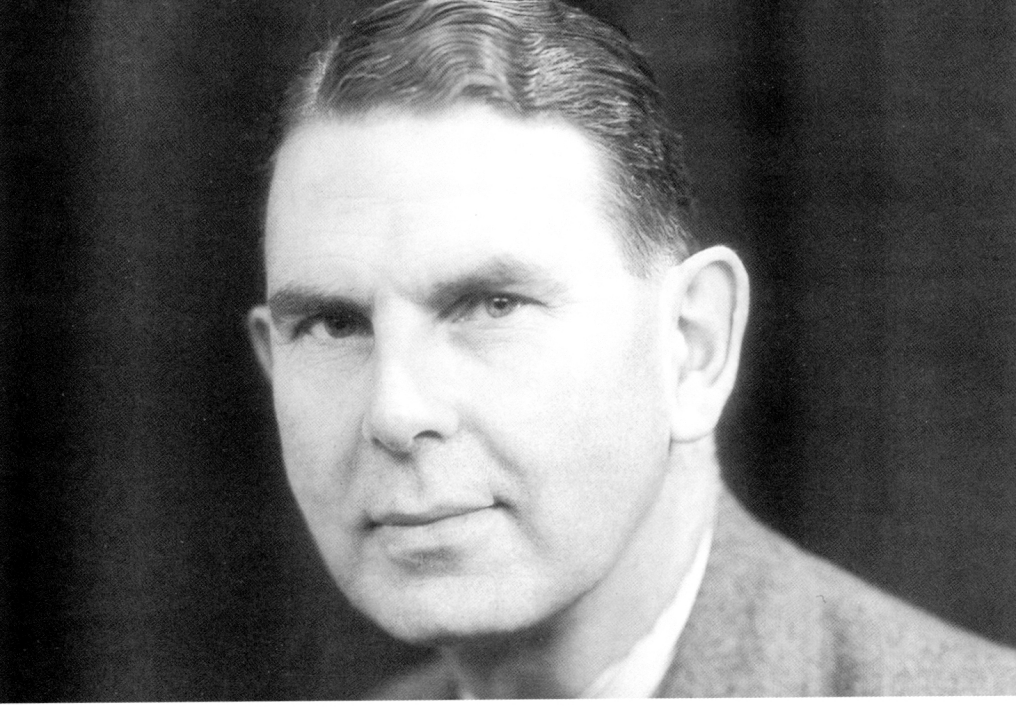
So it became that on the evening of Friday, May 23, 1997, as the advance group of members and guests, about 40, foregathered at the clubrooms of the Oban Sailing Club, there was no talk of 'the gloomy subject of waves and weather'. On the contrary the five charter yachts and 11 privateers which made up the flotilla were anchored in Oban Bay on a millpond sea bathed in the red of the setting sun and all looked set fair for the morrow.

At two o'clock the following day, on a fresh sunny afternoon, the *Carola* led the flotilla out into Oban Bay, to a skirl of pipes from the pier, bound for Tobermory. Saltires were flying from the mastheads and the music was continued out into the Sound of Mull from the pipes of one of the club members; Iain Macleod, standing stoically, if somewhat precariously, on the foredeck of his own yacht *Seol-na - Mara:* 'Ach it could have been

NORMAN LEDINGHAM

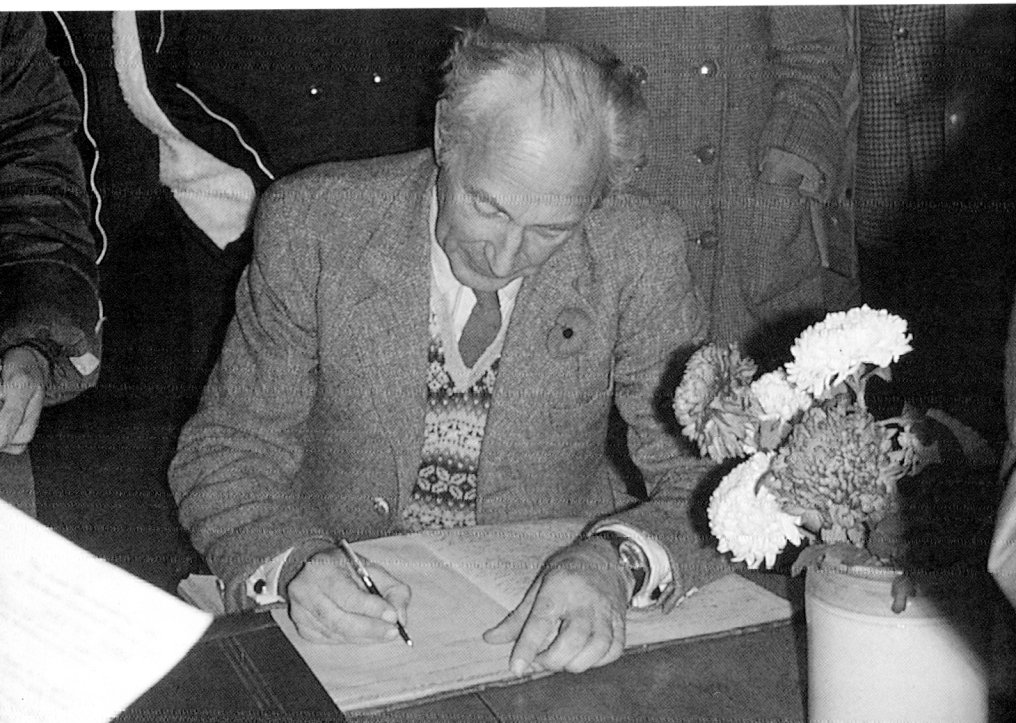


JIMMY HEWIT



IAIN MOWAT

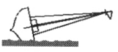
IAIN OGILVIE



worse,' said Ian. 'Judging by the weather last week, I was thinking maybe I would have to lash myself to the masthead.'

After a fine sail out of Oban into the Sound of Mull, the breeze fell light, and engines were started, to maintain progress. In view of the favourable conditions and general enthusiasm to reach the hills, a decision was made to press on round Ardnamurchan. Most of the classic yachts anchored in Gallanach Bay on Muck, and watched the sun setting on the hills of Rum. However, gremlins in the communication system resulted in most of the private yachts being spread out between Tobermory and Loch Scresort on Rum, those at the latter not arriving until the early hours of Sunday morning.

The crew from the *Eda Frandsen,* and others who had overnighted on Muck, spent Sunday morning on a leisurely ascent of Beinn Airein followed by the short sail to Rum with most parties being taken ashore at Dibidil at the east end of the island. The more adventurous then traversed to Scresort via the summits of Askival and Hallival with others choosing the more leisurely coastal path.



Most of the crews opted to climb Askival and Hallival on the Sunday with the notable exception of 'Commodore' Peden and his guest and aspirant member Chris Ravey from the flagship *Alpha.* This intrepid pair put up a new rock route on the Harris buttress of Travall (175m E1 5b) which now rejoices in the name Ancient Mariner. The name was chosen by the Commodore, who by this stage was presumably feeling the responsibilities of his office and the weight of planning over the previous year.

One other notable 'alleged' incident, was reported by skipper Derek Fabian and his crew and their guests aboard the *Mistress Malin.* On their arrival at the Scresort anchorage on Sunday afternoon while everyone else was on the hill they, and here I quote the skipper:

'Observed a derelict GRP sloop on its beam ends on the rocky shore near the pier – closer examination found her to be flying (in sad disgrace) the new SMC pennant. She was the *Souple Jade.* Her crew, ashore in the hills, reboarded at high tide, apparently unaware of her near demise.'

This sad interlude has been denied of course, and here, as cabin boy on the *Souple Jade,* under the dual captaincy of Professor Malcolm Slesser and Robin Shaw, I am instructed by these gentlemen to inform you that 'photographic evidence', (a slide was produced at the 1997 Club Dinner at the Alexandra Hotel, Fort William, which appeared to show quite clearly the *Souple Jade,* lying on her side, high and dry on a rocky shoreline, a slide, I must report, produced with not a little touch of Schadenfreude) is clearly a photo-montage of the type so beloved of the tabloid Press. The owners

of the *Souple Jade* do not wish to comment further on this scurrilous allegation, and trust that the matter is now laid to rest.

The crew of the small private boat *Dubbel Dutch,* club members Richard Bott and Gavin Swinton, had undoubtedly the most adventurous course to Rum. Having overnighted in Tobermory they rose late on the Sunday morning (courtesy of the bar of the Mishnish!) and sailed to Muck, accompanied much of the way by a school of dolphins, and after making a quick ascent of Beinn Airein made for Loch Scresort in a Force 8! This resulted in a rudder bent through 30° and torn through half its width. A visit to the estate workshops of Kinloch Castle, a blow torch and some gate hinges, made all the difference, and *Dubbel Dutch* lived to fight another day.

Monday morning saw a freshening wind provide ideal sailing conditions, and after a private and fascinating tour of Kinloch Castle, the crossing from Rum to a calm and sheltered anchorage in Loch Scavaig on Skye was made in brilliant sunshine under a cloudless sky. Nestling in through the narrows under Gars Bheinn one couldn't help but compare our visit with that attempted by our predecessors 100 years earlier;

'It was at last decided that a resolute attempt to return to Loch Scavaig should be made in the morning and that the President should be roused at an abnormal hour and that he should be authorised to change the vessel's course only in a case of an absolute decision of the captains that landing in Scavaig was impracticable. So we woke once more to find ourselves tossing about after the peace of the last two nights, and with the prospect of a very transitory breakfast. But at the last minute, prudent council prevailed and we ultimately breakfasted at anchor in Loch Nevis instead of off the churlish coast of Skye.'

How different it was for us who spent a glorious two days in Scavaig with a colony of seals for company and I think it unlikely that such a wonderful sight as these classic yachts rafted together in such majestic surroundings will be seen for many a long year (another 100 perhaps!). No sooner were the boats at anchor than Ravey and the Commodore were at it again, puffing up another new route (Outhaul 120m HVS 5a). This was on the crag above Scavaig Slabs on Sgurr na Stri.

The next day the pattern of fine weather continued, and I would imagine that rarely, if ever, have 'The Dubhs' been so well and truly 'Done' on that one day, with the majority of crews opting for that classic route. There was a fairly insistent mist early on which cleared spectacularly around lunchtime to give those parties lucky enough to be on top superb views

of the whole Cuillin Ridge. One such party, Messrs Fabian, Chalmers and Bennet, on confirming that they were indeed part of the 'Centennial Meet', were asked, unthinkingly, by a young couple encountered on the ridge if they had been on the original expedition!

There were more adventurous things done that day, just in case anyone is reading a shift of emphasis into this dalliance with the sea. Robin Campbell and Peter MacDonald attempted a route to the right of The Chasm on Sgurr nan Eag, while Richard Bott and Gavin Swinton climbed King Cobra (E1), Bott in bendy boots, the old 'forgotten PA's' ploy failing to cut any ice with his partner.

There was a 'very social' party held on the 'Classic Raft' that night which was ably summed up by Richard Bott in his diary: 'Great party, time and method of return to *Dubbel Dutch* unknown!'

Knoydart was our next port of call, but before finally departing Loch Scavaig on Wednesday morning activists were at work on Mad Burn Buttress above the anchorage. One climb of note done here was a 'first ascentionist's second ascent', with former President and septuagenarian Malcolm Slesser repeating Warsle, a 300ft Severe, a route he had pioneered 35 years earlier! He was ably assisted on this occasion by Bill Wallace and Charlie Orr. 'Slightly more difficult than I remember it,' he said with a wry smile. This impressive performance was witnessed by two ropes from *Alpha,* namely Ken Crocket/Brian Dullea and John Peden/Chris Ravey, who climbed the unfortunately named Mayday (300ft Severe).

The fleet then made its way round the Point of Sleat, in light winds, giving a gentle cruise to Loch Hourn. The main fleet anchored in the shelter of Eileann Rarsaidh, below Beinn Sgritheall, but some eschewed conviviality in favour of late evening sunshine at Barrisdale. Those intrepid Dubbel Dutchers (again!), last to leave Loch Scavaig (and the smallest yacht in the fleet), were involved in the rescue of five people and three dogs from Soay, adrift in an ancient open fishing boat, whose engine had coughed its last. Their just reward, in addition to an ascent of Beinn Bhreac

(464m) on Soay, was to round the Point of Sleat as the sun set dramatically behind the Cuillin.

The weather was clear, bright and calm on Thursday morning, and most who could leave their boats opted for an ascent of Ladhar Bheinn, shooting straight from the shore to its full 1020m. (One of the disadvantages of a boat approach is that you've got to climb it all!) I would be surprised if Ladhar

Bheinn has seen so many on its summit at once for many a long day, if ever. One poor couple, having made the ascent from the landward side, were clearly surprised and doubtless disappointed at what they found when they breasted the summit. And their chagrin was doubtless not helped one bit when our phlegmatic President Bob Richardson offered his consolation,

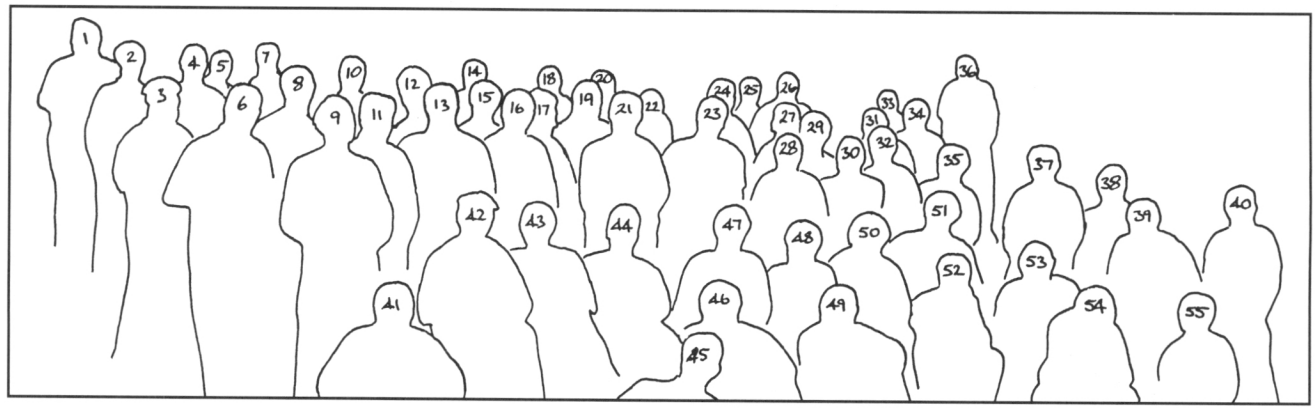
'Ach shoor enough, we're all here for the solitude now,' he said in his best West Highland accent.

Many made the traverse over Aonach Sgolite and Sgurr Coire Chonnichean to Inverie on Loch Nevis, and it was during this traverse that the crew of the *Mary Bryant* came on an interesting natural phenomena on the slopes of Aonach Sgolite. A huge lightning strike had shattered rocks over a large area and formed scorched tracks radiating out up to 50m in all directions. At least, this is the explanation that Bob Duncan records in his diary! (The answer is out there!) It was a drouthy multitude that regrouped at Inverie in the afternoon, and the stocks at The Old Forge were seriously depleted by the time the party rejoined its transport for the short trip round the coast to Doune, at the western tip of Knoydart.

Doune comprises a small scattering of rebuilt houses and newly-constructed outbuildings from where the Robinson family charter the refurbished Danish sailing cutter *Eda Frandsen,* and cater for those in pursuit of that '– bit of solitude'. Here on the Thursday evening followed an undoubted highlight of the week, as 66 of us sat down at one sitting to a marvellous meal of local crayfish followed by local venison and all the trimmings and, wonder of wonders, free beer, courtesy of club member Russell Sharpe and Caledonian Brewery. Mary Robinson did us proud.

Speaking with Mary after the meal she admitted that: 'We have only

Centennial Yacht Meet: The Sound of Sleat and Skye from Doune. Photo: Derek Pyper.



Photograph by Chris Striker

CENTENNIAL YACHT MEET – members and guests

1. Ian Philip (G); 2. Barrie Philip (G); 3. Derek Fabian (M); 4. David Grieve (M); 5. Bill McKerrow (M); 6. Mike Fleming (M); 7. Richard Bott (M); 8. Peter MacDonald (M); 9. Morton Shaw (M); 10. Paddy Buckley (M); 11. Evelyn McNicol (G); 12. John Havard (G); 13. Allan McNicol (M); 14. Derek Pyper (M); 15. Anne Bennet (G); 16. Brian Duchart (G); 17. Bill Greaves (M); 18. Dave Simpson (G); 19. Matthew Jack (G); 20. Gavin Swinton (M); 21. Donald McCalman (M); 22. Helen Thomson (G); 23. Robin Shaw (M); 24. Jim Thomson (M); 25. John Wood (M); 26. Bryan Fleming (M); 27. Andy Wightman (M); 28. Robin Chalmers (M); 29. Paul Bryan (M); 30. Chris Ravey (M); 31. Mike Taylor (M); 32. Phil Gribbon (M); 33. Keith Williams (G); 34. David Stone (G); 35. Margot Gribbon (G); 36. Bob Duncan (M); 37. Dick Allen (M); 38. Robin Campbell (M); 39. Bill Young (M); 40. John Wells (G); 41. Ken Crocket (M); 42. Bill Brooker (M); 43. Malcolm Slesser (M); 44. Brian Dullea (M); 45. Bob Richardson (M); 46. John Hay (M); 47. Bill Wallace (M); 48. Mandy Peden (G); 49. John Peden (M); 50. Iain Smart (M); 51. Oliver Turnbull (M); 52. Mike Jacob (M); 53. Bill Myles (M); 54. Charlie Orr (M); 55. Lyndsey Kinnes (G).

Members and guests on Meet, absent from the photograph.

Graeme Nicol (M); Donald Bennet (M); Ewa Maydell (G); Iain MacLeod (M); Barbara MacLeod (G); Seonachan McLeod (G); John Offord (G); Stephen Offord (G); Brian Robertson (G); David Hamilton (G); Dan Convery (G); Roger Parry (G); Graham Parry (G); Tom Butterworth (G); Bruce Barclay (M); Maggie Barclay (G); ANO (G).

ever catered for families or small parties before, so you can imagine I was having nightmares about this.' Nightmares she may have had but the meal was superb and as Bob Richardson said afterwards: 'If the SMC wasn't enjoying itself, what more could be done?'

In his speech which followed, the President was clearly delighted at the success of the venture, which boasted the largest attendance at a Meet in the Club's 108-year history, and, as we watched the great orange orb of the sun throw the assembled yachts into silhouette, as it dropped behind the jagged peaks of the distant Cuillin, the toast was 'The Mountains and The Sea'. As if blessed from on high, the skippers who had remained on their boats that evening saw the elusive 'green flash' as the sun set over the Cuillin.

The following day, in most un-West Highland like manner, the weather again continued fine (and midgeless!) and some parties took the opportunity to sail up the remote Loch Nevis with ascents being made of Luinne Bheinn and Meall Buidhe. The classic yachts set sail (metaphorically speaking – the sea was like a mirror) for Tobermory, the final port of call before a return down the glassy Sound of Mull to Oban on Saturday.

It was said 100 years ago that: 'Those of us who were not on the committee and who were therefore free from the chilling impression that they had planned something which proved impossible, would have no hesitation in asserting that the expedition was an unqualified success.'

And, if that was the case then, ours was doubly so, and our thanks should go to 'Commodore' Peden for having been good enough to allow himself to be press-ganged into undertaking the mammoth task of organising what I feel sure will be the first of a long tradition of 'centenary yacht meets'.

PS. Some members have reported spotting what has been described as a 'Hugh Munro-like figure' disappearing into the mists on the col between Askival and Hallival – not only the pastness of the past but of its presence – I hope he was pleased.

CREW LISTS

Classic Yachts

Skippers' names and number of additional professional crew in parentheses.

ALPHA – Bristol Channel Pilot Cutter Rig. Gaff Cutter Built: 1904 LOA: 60ft LOD: 51ft Beam: 14ft 6ins Draft: 9ft.
(Mike Humphries +1). Bob Richardson, John Peden, Iain Smart, Chris Ravey, Ken Crocket and Brian Dullea.

CAROLA – Steam Yacht Built: 1898, by Scott's of Bowling LOA: 70ft 6ins Beam: 14ft Draft: 7ft 6ins Displ: 59 tons.
(Ian Smith +3). Bill Brooker, Mike Taylor, Derek Pyper, Allan McNicol, Evelyn McNicol and Mike Fleming.

EDA FRANDSEN – Sailing Fishing Cutter Rig. Gaff Cutter Built: 1938, in Grenna, NE Denmark LOA: 73ft LOD: 55ft Beam: 15ft Draft: 6ft Displ: 58 tons.
(Toby Robinson +2). John Hay, Bill McKerrow, Phil Gribbon, Margot Gribbon, Mike Jacob, Paddy Buckley, Bryan Fleming and John Wood.

MARY BRYANT – Sailing Yacht Rig: Gaff Schooner Built: 1981 LOA: 48ft LOD: 41ft Beam: 12ft Draft: 6ft Displ: 16 tons.
(Anna Stratton). Robin Campbell, Bob Duncan,Lyndsey Kinnes, Jim Thomson, Helen Thomson and Peter MacDonald.

ROSA AND ADA – Oyster Smack Rig: Gaff Cutter Built: 1908, by Collar Bros., Whitstable LOA: 70ft LOD: 47ft Beam: 13ft 6ins Draft: 5ft 6ins Displ: 20 tons.
(Don Hind +1) Bill Myles, John Havard, John Wells, Brian Duchart, Oliver Turnbull and Dick Allen.

Private Yachts

CRISTALA – (Macwester Malin 32). Donald McCalman, Bill Greaves, Matthew Jack and Bill Young.

SEOL NA MARA – (Fastnet 34). Iain MacLeod, Barbara MacLeod and Seonachan MacLeod.

SOUPLE JADE – (Nicholson 32). Malcolm Slesser, Robin Shaw, Morton Shaw, Bill Wallace and Charlie Orr.

TWO HOOTS – (Spectrum 35 Cat). John Offord, Stephen Offord, Brian Robertson, Dave Hamilton and Mandy Peden (Thursday)

FREYA – (Gladiateur 33). David Stone, Keith Williams, Paul Brian and Andrew Wightman.

MOLITA – Sailing Yacht Rig: Bermudian Ketch Built: 1898 LOA: 50ft LOD: 44ft. (Dan Convery Thursday)

BESULA MHOR III – (Moody 35). Ian Philip. B.W. Philip, David Grieve and Graeme Nicol.

DUBBEL DUTCH – (Etap 22). Dave Simpson, Richard Bott and Gavin Swinton.

MISTRESS MALIN – (Fantasi 31). Derek Fabian, Ewa Maydell, Donald Bennet, Anne Bennet and Robin Chalmers.

CORUISK – (Contessa 32). Roger Parry, Graham Parry and Tom Butterworth.

MINGULAY (34) – Bruce Barclay, Maggie Barclay, and 'Frantic'.

The 1997 Yacht Meet

A Distillation of Memories from Neil Gunn (1891 – 1973)

'. . . time may give it its form and the spirit of the age its turn of phrase, perhaps, but the communication itself is timeless . . .'

Is there anything more pleasant in the world of travel than sailing by islands in distant seas, gazing at sandy bays on wild, uninhabited coasts . . . ?

And the hills! We know their shape; the uplift, the down-sweep, the flow of them; each by name, in that silence of intimacy that comes very near the dark speechless centres.

During the day sunshine and shadows keep up their endless play on these mountains; but with evening the colour changes to a strange, darkened, eerie green, deepening to dark velvet, until the western side becomes like a living hide ever approaching and spreading. The tops are now in mist; purple and withdrawn, the mountains become great in size, are changed from sleeping animals to primordial gods.

Never before had I found this part of the world so full of light, so peaceful, so beautiful . . . heavy clouds massed on the Cuillin, on the peaks of Inverness-shire, on Ben More on Mull; Ardnamurchan, Caliach Point, the Dutchman's Hat and Coll lay in a faint haze. But these Inner Isles were in a ring of light.

The great rock pinnacle high above the breast of the moor is smoking like some gargantuan factory chimney as the clouds divide upon it and sweep round it, the dark of the rock seeming itself to move like an inner black smoke. The wide floor of the sea, green over the sand, purple-brown over the tangle, and deepening blue into the far distance. You feel that this world here is not only immensely old, but that it is living now . . .

The day . . . was one of those perfect days that, falling upon the Hebrides at any odd time, are for ever memorable. Travelling then by sea in a halcyon calm, one – becomes imbued by the fabulous nature of this western world. The islands take upon them the stillness of a dream. Colour softens and holds the eyes like a memory one does not care to define, like a memory one could never define, so that it has a wash of emotion faint as the farthest purple that fades into the haze . . . a whale crosses our wake, shouldering the sea slowly . . . All at once there is the cry of the pipes . . . the piper is a Canadian who many years ago emigrated with his mother and six brothers and sisters from one of the Outer Isles. His fingering is not too sure. Phrases are slurred a little. But after a time he settles down to a tune and plays it with a fine deliberation. I know every note of it but cannot for the moment recall its name. Presently . . . I ask him the name of the tune. 'Mo dhachaidh,' he says. 'My home.' And adds: 'It was looking at those hills . . .'

(Compiled by Mike Jacob from a collection of Neil Gunn essays. Grateful acknowledgment is made to Alastair C. Gunn and Dairmid Gunn for permission to use words from one of Dairmid's 'favourite' books.)

JMCS REPORTS

Lochaber Section:– In 1997 the membership remained around the mid-fifties, that's numbers not ages, with a couple of new faces joining over the year. Most of the membership stay in the Lochaber area and many enjoy an active role in the Lochaber Mountain Rescue Team as well as participating in the Club's activities.

The section meets in the Nevis Bank Hotel, Fort William each Thursday evening. During the winter season these evenings sometimes incorporate a slide show.

In March 1997 the section was saddened by news of the untimely death of a former member – 'Wee Gus' MacLean. Gus was a local lad and had been a long-time active member of both the club and the rescue team, beginning his association with both in the early 1950s. He will be sadly missed by many.

Throughout the year the section held meets to various venues including Braemar, Glen Affric and the Lake District, culminating in the annual dinner, held in the Aultguish Inn near Garve on the last weekend of November, and was a great success being attended by more than 40 members and guests.

The section continues to lease Steall Cottage in Glen Nevis and the money received from renting the cottage is the section's main source of income. The cottage is continually being maintained and improved – utilising the skills within the Club. This year's main task was the replacement of the roof which was completed over two consecutive weekends.

Officials elected were: *Hon. President,* W. Munto; *Hon. Members,* B. Bissell, D. Scott; *President,* I. Walker, *Vice-President,* D. Ford; *Treasurer,* George Bruce, *Secretary,* K. Foggo, 4 Parkan Dubh, Inverlochy, Fort William, PH33 6NH, (01397 706299); *Hut Custodian,* J. Mathieson, 43 Drumfada Terrace, Corpach, Fort William, PH33 7JU, (01397 772599).

K. Foggo.

Perth Mountaineering Club (JMCS, Perth Section):– Club membership stands at 86 with c. six potential new members, and seven Honorary members. This leads to generally well-attended meets and full hut bookings – and all the related joys of extras sleeping on floors; in broom cupboards, and camping outside in winter snow and wind etc. BUT, we gain by having a more relaxed and contented treasurer now confident of a small, but reliable, surplus in the year. Not so relaxed that free wine is in prospect for the next Club dinner, but we are working on this as a realistic possibility for the Millennium event!

Although walkers outnumber climbers by about 2-1, the climbers continue to be very active and well catered for by the co-ordinating activities of Grahame and Mel Nicoll with Alex Runciman in support. A full spring/summer season of 17 Wednesday evening climbing sessions were held – mostly at the Polney Crags at Dunkeld. This is augmented by autumn and winter work on the climbing wall at Dunfermline. At most weekend meets there is an active climbing team who head for some of the local routes.

A total of 21 outdoor meets took place in the April/March 12 months – a weekend two-or-three-day meet each month and nine day-meets. Additional winter evening hotel-based meets are held for President's night, Member Slide nights, First Aid training, Mountain Safety presentations and MC of S presentations. The Mountain Mind Quiz was held in the Isle of Skye hotel last year with a win for the Grampian Club of Dundee, but in the event in March hosted by the Grampian Club the illustrious Perth three won, so we will host the event next year.

Club members' expeditions included climbing in the El Choro Gorge in the Spanish Sierra Nevada, trips to Pabbay and Mingulay (Grahame and Mel Nicoll, Alex Runciman and Lawrence Hughes), trekking in New Zealand's Southern Alps (Richard and Brenda Davison), cross-country skiing in Norway 1997 and 1998 (Ron Payne, Mike Thewlis, Alan Vaughan).

A new Club constitution was introduced at the December 1997 AGM, and together with a slightly more formal approach to prospective members. This is to brings the Club more into line with the MC of S guidelines as well as safeguarding the Club and members in its duty of care. Details of the document involved has been circulated to all JMCS Sections.

Officials elected: *President,* Mike Thewlis; *Vice-President,* Beverley Robertson; *Treasurer,* Tom Rix; *Secretary,* Chris Bond, 2 Mansfield Place, Isla Road, Perth PH2 7HS.

Chris Bond.

Glasgow Section:- The Section remains in good health with seven new members, including four women members, admitted during the year bringing the total to 92 of whom 19 are life members.

Activity during the last year has centred around the tried-and-tested formula of fortnightly weekend meets, together with monthly pub meets. Innovations which have been introduced this year are occasional curry (or other meal) evenings and informal slide shows.

A total of 24 outdoor meets were organised during 1997. The choice of venue for meets closely followed that of previous years. Average attendance at meets increased with a particularly successful meet in Mull for Niel Craig and Davie MacDonald's last Munro, where the weather was brilliant and the 'sand bagging' contingent was well pleased by the beaches visited. In fact, two other Club members finished their Munros the following two weekends, also in Mull, but with much poorer weather.

The 1997 winter season had never really got going. The now familiar cold spell over Christmas, with almost no snow about, was followed by a month of warmer weather with no prospect of true winter conditions. Better conditions returned in February for the CIC meet but the Milehouse meet in early March was a washout with large areas of Strathspey flooded. The early summer meet to Mill Cottage once again provided an opportunity for rock climbing but poor weather during much of May meant that this was not built upon.

Most of the summer and the autumn proved to be remarkably dry, although, as ever, what rain there was seemed to fall at weekends and on top of members out in the hills. One notable summer activity was the JMCS's first 'Yacht Meet': a two-week Hebridean adventure to St. Kilda. The first week of stormy weather and rough seas was replaced for the second by clear blue skies and light winds leading to much swimming, sunbathing and general enjoyment of the Hebrides at their best.

The overseas activities of Members this year included visits to France, Spain, Switzerland, New Zealand, Canada and the US which were visited with varied ambitions but with much success being reported.

The dinner, at the Four Season's Bistro, Inchree, was well attended and our Honorary Member, Alan Thrippleton, provided a very interesting speech in which he entertainingly detailed the events leading to the establishment of the Section hut at Coruisk.

At the AGM in November the following officials were elected: *Hon. Member,* Alan Thrippleton; *Hon. President,* Niel Craig; *Hon. Vice-President,* Ian Thomson; *President,* Alasdair Reid; *Vice-President,* David Lawson; *Secretary,* Donald Ballance, 1/R 11 Airlie Street, Hyndland, Glasgow, G12 8QQ, (Tel: 0141 357 3073, email: D.Ballance@mech.gla.ac.uk); *Treasurer,* Andrew Sommerville; *Coruisk Hut Booking Secretary,* Sandy Donald, 15 Smeaton Avenue, Torrance, Stirlingshire, G64 4BG, (Tel: 01360 622541); *Coruisk Hut Maintenance Organiser,* Alex Haddow; *Committee Members,* Dave Eaton, Mark Evans, Hilary Groom, Stevie Hazlett, Ann MacDonald, Scott Stewart, Benny Swan.

Donald Ballance.

Edinburgh Section:– The highlight of the Club year was undoubtedly the celebration of the 25th anniversary of the Smiddy, one of the club's cherished huts, which was discovered in 1966 and opened in 1972. The event (which was coupled to the AGM, the Dinner and, yes, a ceilidh for the occasion) was a real blast from the past; many of the members who worked so hard to make it what it is today, made their way up to Dundonnell.

Those of you who have been around long enough may remember that the Smiddy won the very first award given by the Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland, against fierce opposition. In 1997, the club was given an award again, this time a generous grant from the Scottish Mountaineering Trust for refurbishment of the Smiddy, which was gratefully accepted. So who knows, we might even get a microwave! Thanks to the continuing dedication of both hut custodians and the enthusiasm of the work parties, the huts continue to be a popular base for members and other parties alike.

The club stuck to its tradition of meeting on Wednesday nights, which seemed to get more popular all the time. The summer evening meets took place on various Lowland outcrops and, light and midge permitting, ranged farther afield from the Northumberland outcrops to Dunkeld. Weekend meets were held approximately every second weekend, at the club's huts in Newtonmore and Dundonnell, as well as other (wild) campsites and huts. A number of members explored the awesome sea cliffs of the Outer Hebrides, the wiser ones took their kit abroad – to those sunny crags in France, Norway, US, Spain and New Zealand.

Membership of the club started the year with 80 members and has been fortified during the year with about five keen and capable new members, while quite a few prospective members are tramping through the door regularly. The Club nearly lost two members, who managed to survived an epic in Coire-an-t-Sneachda, where one of the pair survived a rather rapid descent through a cornice while the other had to make her way down through whiteout conditions.

Officials elected: *President,* Nick Cruden; *Vice-president,* Beryl Leatherland; *Treasurer,* Charles Stupart; *Secretary,* Frederike van Wijck; *Newletter/Website Editor,* Chris Eilbeck; *Meets Secretary,* Euan Scott; *Smiddy Custodian,* Fraser Fotheringham, Tigh Na Sith, Braes, Ullapool. Tel: 01854-612 354; *Jock's Spot Custodian,* Alistair Borthwick, 2 Aytoun Grove, Dunfermline, Fife. Tel: 01383-732 232; *Other Committee Members,* Euan Scott, Beryl Leatherland, Stuart Buchanan, Douglas Hall; *Honorary Committee Members,* John Fowler, Alan Smith.

Information about the club may be obtained from the Secretary: 21 Spottiswoode Road, Edinburgh EH9 1BJ. Tel: 0131 447 8162, also on email: F.vanWijck@shore.qmced.ac.uk, via the Web: http://www.ma.hw.ac.uk/jmcs/

F. van Wijck.

SMC AND JMCS ABROAD

Greenland

COLWYN JONES reports:– The SMC Staunings Alps, East Greenland, Expedition 1996, Colwyn Jones (leader), Ian Angell, John Bickerdike, Gordon and Susan McKenzie, Jonathan Preston, Stephen Reid and Brian Shackleton.

The Majestic Central Staunings Alps of Scoresby Land in North East Greenland, between 72°N to 72°30' N and 24° to 26°W, were the target for our successful three-week climbing expedition.

The expedition members assembled at Glasgow Airport on July 22 and flew by scheduled airline, to Akureyri on the Northern coast of Iceland. After an overnight stop a chartered ski-equipped Twin Otter flew us north across the iceberg-studded Denmark Straits to Greenland. The first stop was the gravel airstrip on the Hurry Fjord serving Scoresbysund, called Constable Point (Nerlerit Inaat). A flight of two and a quarter hours

At Constable Point 250kg of freighted equipment, food and fuel was collected. The Twin Otter then continued north to the Central Staunings Alps where the clear weather and good snow conditions allowed an exciting landing on the Gully Glacier, within a kilometre of the top of Col Major, in the early afternoon. We had left Scotland 26 hours earlier and spent less than seven hours flying. This was the first time an aircraft has been recorded as landing in this area. The aircraft GPS altitude was 6700ft or 2040m.

After establishing camp a nearby peak was ascended by everyone and was named Susan's Peak (PD-, 2238m). The Peak is south of the descent gully called Col Major, which gives access to the upper Bersaerkerbrae glacier and is connected by a short ridge to Shirley's Peak. The first ascent of Shirley's Peak was made by an SMC party in 1994.

On July 24 four members ascended the most north eastern of four rock peaks on the continuation of the South West Ridge of Dansketinde. The Ridge was named Dodornryggen (Dead eagle ridge) as it bore a resemblance to a dead eagle lying on it's back. A party of two made the ascent by forking right in a snow gully named the Jones/Bickerdike couloir which delineated the body and left wing of the deceased raptor. Thereafter rocks were climbed to the awkward summit ridge. The peak was named Aliertinde after Ali(son) and (Rob)ert Bickerdike (AD+, 2580m).

The second party reached a snow col between Dodornryggen and the start of the South West ridge of Dansketinde. This col was ironically christened Col Wyn. A rock peak on the Dansketinde (north east) side of the col was ascended and named after (Ja)ck and (Al)ex Reid; Jaalspids. The second party then climbed directly from the col to the summit of Aliertinde and both parties descended by this route (AD-). The West Ridge of Lambeth was attempted but poor snow conditions forced a retreat.

Two members of the expedition experienced nausea and vomiting on the first day. Both members had recovered sufficiently to climb the next day and the likely diagnosis was mild altitude sickness coupled with dehydration.

Overnight on July 26 there was 5cm of snow. Camp was struck and an attempt was made to descend the Gully Glacier. Despite absolute calm the weather worsened to a whiteout, the move was abandoned and camp was re-established. The ridge from Susan's to Shirley's peak (PD+) was later climbed by Angell and Bickerdike.

Brian Robertson and the Squirrels at work on Birnam Quarry 1970. Photo: Robin Campbell.

Next day a party of four ascended the larger snow gully on the other side (south) of the body of the dead eagle. This more Westerly gully was called the Reid/Preston couloir.

Annsketinde – *North East ridge of Annsketinde (2460m, D) via Reid/Preston Couloir.*

Despite my back-to-front balaclava the early morning sun blazed off the snow and prevented me from returning to the arms of Morpheus. John was snoring again. Cheynes/Stokes breathing apparently – he breathed deeper (and noisier) until he suddenly stopped completely. This was bliss until my medical training took over and I started wondering if I should try and resuscitate him. Then with a groan and a snore he would stumble back to the world of the living. I rather brusquely got up.

It had been the coldest night so far, -7°, but it was a perfect day. Clear and still with an azure sky framing compact granite and glinting ice. The MSR was soon purring and I carved out a chair to sit on and provide snow for melting. Stephen was already about, busy in the middle of his white fitted kitchen, complete with breakfast bar. We passed steaming mugs to our respective tent-fellows with coarse suggestions that they should get up before they, and the snow, got too soft.

The 24-hour daylight favoured a leisurely start and as we readied ourselves Susan, Gordon, Brian and Ian left to attempt the highest peak in the range - Dansketinde. Shortly afterwards we skied off in a more westerly direction, back to the Dodornryggen. Stephen and Jonathan were ahead and we followed them up the Reid/Preston couloir, torn between the choice of breaking trail and getting first choice of the two unclimbed peaks ahead, or conserving energy at the back. In reality we couldn't catch them anyway.

At the breche on the Dodornryggen proper they opted for the northerly peak. The summit was a perfect triangle of rock and I had suggested we call it the Dead Eagle Beak Peak, no one had seemed very keen.

The peak to the south west was a long, complex, uninviting ridge. I led off the snow and climbed some rotten choss, before reaching solid rock on the ridge proper, where a tower blocked progress. I belayed as I couldn't see a way up and had no intention of going back down onto the broken rock to turn it. John came past to the foot of the tower, found a crack line on the left and was soon grinning on the top. Perhaps we would reach the summit after all. From there the ridge unfolded, never too hard, too loose or unprotected. Usually we climbed along the crest with short airy traverses on both faces of the ridge until we came to the summit block.

Abandoning plastic boots, we climbed lovely, warm, golden, granite in rock boots, up a well-protected corner/chimney to a notch, then a not-so-well protected arête, to finally pull onto the billiard table sized summit. The view was breathtaking and we could see the party on Dansketinde and Stephen and Jonathan descending from the Beak Peak. The ice-cap to the west, the shapely forms of Norsketinde and Bolvaerket, the jumble of the Gully glacier tumbling down to Alpe fjord and the smooth Bersaerkerbrae flowing down to Kong Oscars Fjord with its icebergs.

We built a small stoneman over a note left in a film container to mark the first ascent and abseiled back down to our gear using a blue sling. The return along the ridge was slow, as we relished the exposure and took the photos we had been too nervous to stop for on the ascent.

Back at the breche we decided to climb the Beak Peak. Two lovely pinnacles of solid rock, plenty of holds and gear in a beautiful, isolated place. There was a cairn

Mark Garthwaite on 'The Silk Purse', Upper Cave Crag, Craig a' Barns, Dunkeld. Photo: Neil Gresham.

on top which didn't look new and on return to the UK we found it had been climbed by another route and named Tårnet (The Tower) two months' earlier by a Norwegian ski-mountaineering expedition.

We found an abseil sling at the top of the Reid/Preston couloir which explained our companions fast departure. So gratefully clipping in to it, I nearly slipped off the end of the rope. At last I found the next sling about 6m below and remembered Stephen was using 60m ropes. A couple of abseils later we crossed the bergschrund and were soon skiing back to camp.

The peak took some time to name and after Stephen suggested Annsketinde after Ann MacDonald, the partner of one of the first ascensionists, no one could argue. Dansketinde had been climbed by the party of four via the original east col route and included Susan MacKenzie – the first woman to ascend the highest peak in the Staunings Alps.

Next day a party of two ascended the long unclimbed North West ridge of Dansketinde (TD), the highest peak in the Staunings Alps (aneroid height 2870m). After crossing Col Wyn they ascended a steep 500m couloir (Preston/Reid Couloir) to the ridge.

Dansketinde – The North-west Ridge

STEPHEN REID reports:– At 3.30a.m. I poked my nose gingerly out through the rime-covered tent door and surveyed the scene. Crystal clear, Dansketinde stood outlined against a cobalt sky, the golden granite of its South Ridge an open invitation to sticky rubber and a rackful of Friends. The snow of its glaciers looked crisp and firm too, enticing forth the cramponed boot. But, already in a few days, we had learned not to trust the fickle weather. Calm conditions in the morning could turn to blizzards by mid-afternoon, and then just as quickly become still again, leaving rock faces plastered with snow. No-one fancied being stuck high on a long and technically difficult ridge in such conditions, and while we all had prevaricated in the name of common sense, the weather had grown more unsettled.

The South-west Ridge looked more assailable, until, that is, one studied it with binoculars and examined closely a gendarme the size of the Eiffel Tower. Then it too became over-daunting eliciting endless 'will it, won't it' conversations. So, instead, we had climbed three of the peaks that formed the continuation of this ridge and thus gained a view round the corner to the north where Jonathan Preston claimed to have seen an easier option, the North-west Ridge. I was not so sure how much easier it would be but we were unlikely to have another chance to find out. I prodded him into wakefulness and we had a hurried breakfast.

Skis swished swiftly on frozen crust as we descended a few hundred feet from base camp to a snow bowl at the division of two glaciers. If all went well, our descent would be by the right-hand one while our present path lay to the left. We left our skis and crunched onwards to a small col, a nick in the ridge ahead.

Thus far, all was explored ground, and the going simple. We had christened this col, Col Wyn, in honour of our esteemed leader only two days' earlier and also made the first ascents of the peaks on either side of it. Now we were descending into *terra incognita* - in fact we suspected no-one had ever crossed this col or stepped on the glacier beyond before.

The west side of Col Wyn was considerably more impressive than the east. The ground was steeper and comprised of 50° hard ice and shattered rock. One could opt either for an abseil descent from a succession of disintegrating rock pinnacles

straight down a nasty looking couloir that steepened rapidly out of view, or for a long traverse on icefields that might, or might not, lead more directly to our distant goal. Jonathan favoured the latter and settled the issue by setting off directly. I followed on, finding it to be the type of mountaineering I most dreaded, rock hard, easy-angled ice. The sort of teetery, awkward climbing that always sets my calves aching, my axes skittering and my nerves jangling. I confessed as much to Jonathan who quite rightly told me to stop being so negative and get on with it. There was really no reply to this except to grit my teeth and run the rope out diagonally downwards for four pitches until a single abseil and a short down climb dropped us over the bergschrund and onto the glacier.

Our route to the start of the ridge lay up a wide couloir with several branches at the top, the left hand of which appeared the best option. It all looked straightforward enough, but one of us had to go first, and I could see no good reason for risking life and limb when I had a newly-qualified Mountain Guide with me. So Jonathan set off up the couloir leaving a token ice screw every 50m or so just to keep me happy. The only hitch occurred at about the halfway point when our strange expedition diet began to do odd things to my stomach. Squares of tissue paper, floating skywards in the updraft, accompanied me for much of the rest of the pitch.

Near the top, hard ice gave way to easier snow and the cornice, though of Kilnsey Overhang proportions above the central section of the couloir, dwindled to nothing on the extreme left. We accordingly exited leftwards and took a well-earned breather to survey our first view of the Vikingbrae, mysterious and dark through gathering clouds. On our left a broken ridge of snowy high ground extended westwards towards Norsketinde. It was peppered with summits and pinnacles, three of which seemed significant and were unlikely to have been climbed. A short jaunt along the ridge and they could have been ours. But our hopes lay in the opposite direction and we turned to the task in hand and the traversing of the cornice. Jonathan stepped cautiously ahead caught between the Scylla of north-facing avalanche prone slopes on the one hand and the Charybdis of a honeycombed cornice on the other. There was a muffled gasp as, poking tentatively at the snow in front of him, his axe thrust through into space and revealed a large hole giving a fine view down the 500m couloir up which we had just ascended. A hurried detour in favour of Scylla brought him quickly to solid rock at the base of the North-west Ridge where I joined him. It had taken us eight hours to reach this point from base camp.

Sensing easy ground, I took over the lead and we moved together for half-a-dozen pitches up mixed terrain and snow slopes that by-passed initial gendarmes on the left but soon forced us towards a very obvious nick in the crest of the ridge at the foot of a huge and seemingly unassailable pinnacle. So daunting was this megalith, that initially we had tried to outflank it to the north but quickly retreated from the rotten rock and bald snowy slabs that confronted us. So I was pleased to discover, on eventually reaching the breche that things now looked easier than they had seemed from below. Crampons were removed and Jonathan led through, up an easy groove and over the most unlikely looking overhang at surprisingly little more than Severe.

Ahead was an even more impressive gendarme. The left flank looked impossible, a direct attack improbable, but rightwards a tricky traverse on dubious flakes and shattered grey blocks led me to a comfortable flake belay on a snow ledge and a fine view to the south-west of the endless grey Gletscher and a tantalising glimpse

of the distant Greenland Icecap. A corner looked obvious, but a chimney to its left proved easier and took Jonathan back to the crest and a belay in the bowels of a monstrous gendarme. My pitch took us to its summit and a regaining of the crest which was followed for several more rope lengths.

None of these pitches were easy, all involved bypassing gigantic gendarmes, and yet the view ahead showed yet more gendarmes, each one more impressive than the last, and no end to them in sight. What is more, the bell clear skies of the morning were now half masked by fleeting wraiths of mist that boded snow, wind and other evils and hid from view what lay ahead – though we suspected further gendarmes. Perhaps we had bitten off more than we could chew? Perhaps we should turn back? And yet the climbing so far, on coarse golden granite, had been of no great technical difficulty. Anyway, retreat was unthinkable; carrying on, the lure of the unknown, beyond the next gendarme, was far too exciting!

The 10th pitch, or thereabouts, and Jonathan's turn. He took the obvious shelf on the left of the umpteenth gendarme ahead, but eventually, stuck on a sloping mush covered shelf. After a while he returned, offering to swap places. But from my vantage point some 10m back I had spotted the non-obvious line to the right (as they should say in guidebooks) that he had failed to see through being too close. Now, like an air traffic controller landing a fog-bound plane, I talked him through it. Up a flake the size of that on the Central Buttress of Scafell and then down it's other side. Then hand over hand down a jug ladder on an impending wall, feet feeling blind for hidden holds, until a roof on the right could be undercome by a sudden swing on the rope and a lunge for holds on the rib beyond. Thankfully mine bergenführer found a stance immediately and protected his faithful second with a top rope on the pendulum – teamwork at its best.

Leading through, I found myself in an area of loose blocks and poised pinnacles and sought sanctuary in a rotten chimney. Common-sense forced me to leave it immediately for a more solid wall on the right and a thin descending traverse ended in an icy corner. A few bridging moves regained the crest and a howling gale that almost pitched us from our holds and tore ragged fingers of mist from the gigantic tower that confronted us, the biggest of any so far. Its right-hand side was perpendicular and smooth, plummeting into swirling nothingness, but up and right a broken cavity stretched to God knows where. Jonathan clambered up to a stance at its entrance. There was no other choice.

My final lead and again the rock was rotten - only two bad pitches on the climb and both of them mine. Great teetering flaky piles and ground granite mush. I distributed my weight like a spider and tried to be careful. If only I wasn't so tired, or so cold, or so hungry . . . Up to the right was a chimney but I could not reach it directly - everything I touched broke off in my hands. Instead I was forced downwards and traversed underneath it, tricky moves on ice coated holds. Runners were placed more for effect than through cause and a decent belay seemed but a forlorn hope. Then at last I reached a snow ledge and a single but solid, welcoming flake: there was no rope left to take in.

From the stance, Jonathan made the chimney in two quick moves and thrutched onward into the murk. On following, I was amazed that he had managed to avoid precipitating any of the huge blocks that formed the only holds. All ended at a wind-swept breche where we could see, from what little we could see, that the difficulties were truly over. We abseiled quickly into the lee and donned crampons. The ridge stretched ahead, firstly mixed and then on rapidly-deepening snow, for by now it

was snowing hard. Several isolated looming towers were easily by-passed on the left until a final one seemed more prominent than the rest. Could it be the summit? We ploughed up steep snow and climbed it just in case, but there was no sign that it was – surely there should be a cairn. But if this was not the summit, then what was and where was it? Looking back, the cloud parted for a second and golden shafts of Arctic midnight sun pierced the gloom and warmed our hearts. Then the gap closed and we were enveloped in dusk again.

We took compass bearings and discussed the matter but our befuddled brains could not cope with a magnetic variation of anywhere between 30° and 45°. Ahead I felt that I might have glimpsed a soaring snow arête, but did it go up, or down? East or south? Whatever, it was the only recognisable feature and I duly struck out along it, keeping as near as I dared to its corniced edge as every step to the other side released worrying little avalanches of powder slab. Ahead, in the whiteout, a shadow lay across our path. I approached it tentatively, fearing it was a crevasse or the edge of a broken cornice. At only a few inches distance, it suddenly resolved itself into a footprint, a trace left by Angell, Shackleton and the McKenzies from the day before. Twenty steps or so farther and we were joyfully shaking hands at the true summit. It was 1a.m.

Little needs to be said of our return journey via the Original Route except that it was steeper than we would have liked and that the route-finding would have been a deal harder without the footsteps of the previous day's party to follow. Visibility got progressively worse as we descended, and this coupled with the gradual receding of obvious features as the couloir flattened out into glacier meant that we were more than a little astonished to happen on our skis where we had left them, standing upright in the snow like Narnian lamp posts shining forth a friendly light.

Gratefully, we skinned back the last few hundred yards to camp, arriving at 4 a.m., exactly 24 hours after we had left, and collapsed into our sleeping bags where my restless soul still seemed to hear a bitter snow-laden wind that smarted my face and roared in my ears. I drew my hood up tighter and snuggled in more deeply, a little warmer for the knowledge that we had 'done our bit'. And what a 'bit' it had been.

A snowfall of 150mm overnight led to a day (July 29) of rest and recuperation. An attempt to descend the Gully glacier revealed a badly-crevassed icefall which proved impassable to the lightly equipped party.

On July 30, a party of two ascended the unclimbed South Ridge of Hjornespids (TD+, 2860m). Another two reached the same summit by the col between Hjornespids and Dansketinde (D). During the descent a huge avalanche was triggered on the North Face as the party of four descended the slopes of Hjornespids to the col.

The South Ridge of Hjornespids

COLWYN JONES and JOHN BICKERDIKE report:– The cloud was hanging down in the valley as John and I skinned slowly in the tracks left by Ian and Brian earlier that morning. Hjornespids was the target and we had procrastinated over breakfast again, avoiding the need to break trail. We reached the ski dump, and crossing the big crevasse which splits the glacier basin between Dansketinde and Hjornespids, set off up to the connecting ridge. The early morning sun prompted us to stop and take some photos, and while studying the south side of the peak, I suggested we approach the summit directly. We had taken only one rope but felt we could easily traverse onto the main ridge if we got into difficulty.

The bergschrund was quickly crossed and we started up a steep ice gully (Pearly Gates gully) to the west of the ridge. We stopped to put the rope on as the ice was hard but continued moving together for 1000ft until we reached a snow crest between two obvious towers like gate posts of a stately home. These we christened the 'Pearly Gates'.

From the breche we climbed up a chossy mixed gully to gain the ridge proper and crossed onto the face beyond. A vague groove line was followed for three pitches to a small snow gully then a small overhanging corner was turned on the left. Far below the cloud seemed to be thickening but retreat from here was problematic. A further three steepening pitches lead to below an imposing steep wall. It looked impossible apart from a thin traverse line 10ft up which traversed round the right edge of the wall to a 15ft detached flake with a 'thank God' jammed block. I seconded the pitch on a tight rope with both rucksacks and had to agree with John that a technical grade of 5b was appropriate. From the wide ledge we were belayed on, I moved right again, with only one sack, up a short snow gully and an ice choked chimney to the crest proper.

Above was a steep thin corner to the left and a shorter but overhanging crack line, which we avoided by moving up and traversing rightwards round the corner, into a short V-groove. This was climbed and exited to the left to arrive at a big ledge above the steep alternatives. From there a climb up a pleasant 12ft crack and a move left onto a large platform just below the summit block, led us to the top.

We had imagined a simple walk off the north side of the peak and were dismayed to see a long complex ridge leading to the snow beyond. As we sat wondering how long the descent would take, footprints around the base of one of the gendarmes were seen and a few minutes later Brian appeared and hailed us from the distance.

We spent the time taking photos and looking for the orange nylon scarf allegedly left by the first ascenders to mark their success (ACJ 1961). There was no sign of any gear left on their retreat from the summit down the south ridge where we had ascended. The big disappointment, however, was that another fashion victim must have beaten me to the genuine Slesser orange nylon scarf.

Ian and Brian arrived directly and after congratulations and photos all round we returned, not without incident, following their footsteps. I slipped and fell while traversing across the top of the North-west Face and although slowing courtesy of an ice-axe arrest, was happy when an ashen-faced John held my slide. A few minutes later while now leading, John shouted that cracks had just appeared in the snow. Then, the whole north face avalanched just below his feet. A 1m crown wall was a sobering feature just below the crest as we delicately continued back to camp.

Next day, July 31, Lambeth (2450m) was ascended by the North Ridge. A prominent pinnacle on the ridge was climbed by Stephen Reid and Brian Shackleton and named after Jilly Reid; Point Jilly.

On the same day a party of three, Bickerdike, Jones and Preston, left camp at 1900 hours to ascend Dansketinde by the 'Tourist Route'. The summit was reached after midnight and it was confirmed the sun never dips below the horizon. It was a perfectly still night. All eight expedition members had now reached the summit of Dansketinde. Poor weather prompted a descent to climb lower down the Bersaerkerbrae but agonisingly slow progress was made from August 1-5. The descent of Col Major in soft snow and a large bergschrund took 14 hours. Then roped together we skied as two parties of four in very poor visibility to the main icefall on Bersaerkerbrae where fixed ropes were needed.

It brightened on the 5th and with the better visibility a fine view into the Skel valley and down to the coast of Kong Oscars fjord appeared. We crossed onto the lateral (south) moraine of the glacier and established camp in the Skel valley after ferrying many loads.

Sadly, there was plenty of evidence of previous expeditions. Plastic sleds, tin cans, broken survey poles and tattered lengths of tape measure, heralded our return to 'civilisation.' The sun did come out in the evening and mosquitoes appeared.

August 6 saw an early-morning wade over the Skel River. Ferrying loads over to a camp on the Gefion Pass on our returning for a second load in the afternoon the river was at least a metre higher. Next day, the sun shone and a lone Musk Ox circled the camp before fleeing the paparazzi attention. We continued down to the Washburn Hut above Mestersvig. Some ferried, others carried huge single loads.

Next day, we arrived in Mestersvig to have our papers checked by Danish Military personnel but returned to stay in the Washburn Hut overnight. There was mild excitement as a polar bear had been spotted two days earlier and as it was overcast, and the return flight was cancelled, we went on a bear shoot, with cameras of course. There was a storm overnight with snow down to 200m. A Fairchild Metroliner collected us at 12.30 (midday) but it was a disappointing flight with low cloud all the way to Akureyri, and we returned to Glasgow on August 12.

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Australasia

JOHN STEELE reports:- Last December, John Steele and Barbara Gibbons made a return trip to the Mount Cook region of South Island, New Zealand.

The first week was spent watching the snow fall, but ascents were made of Mount Ollivier (1900m), Mount Kitchener (c 2000m) and Mount Annette (2200m) all from the Mueller Hut, which is sited on an exposed ridge above the Mueller Glacier. The second week was spent watching the snow melt in high summer temperatures, during which ascents were made of Baker Saddle (c 2200m), Mount Sturdee (2700m) and Nazomi (c 2800m) all from the Gardiner Hut, sited on a precarious rock dome under the west ridge of Mount Cook. The third week involved the inevitable long wait for Cook to clear and the wind to drop, however the prospect of soothing tired limbs in natural hot springs, swimming with seals and dolphins in the ocean and going on a whale-watch eventually won the day and caused us to move north and quit the high mountains.

Notes: In Mount Aspiring park, a new hut has reportedly been constructed close to the old Colin Todd Hut at the foot of the mountain's North-west (Shipowner) Ridge. A quick descent can be effected from the low point on this ridge (opposite the top of the Ramp) by two tricky abseils onto the Therma Glacier to the north.

In Mount Cook park, the normal severe conditions are taking their toll. The Beetham Hut, located halfway up the Tasman Glacier, has been destroyed by avalanche and is not being replaced. Access to Malte Brune etc. is now either by camping or bivvy. The path to the Hooker Hut has been destroyed by a massive washout and access is now by climbing a dangerous moraine wall direct from the glacier trench below the hut. The ancient Sefton bivvy has reportedly been condemned by the park authorities and the Copeland shelter has moved location nearer to the col. The daily hut rate is $NZ 18 and to fly into Mount Cook Hut is $NZ 100 plus. (For the good news see *SMCJ* 186 p 692).

Canada

SIMON RICHARDSON reports:– In August, Dave Hesleden and I made a two-week visit to the spectacular Coast Range mountains in British Columbia. A 500-mile drive, followed by a 20-minute helicopter flight saw us on Tiedemann Glacier within 24 hours of arriving in Vancouver.

The weather was unsettled, so we kicked off with a two-day ascent of the South-east Chimneys route on Mount Waddington (4019m). We then turned our attention to the unclimbed South Ridge of Mount Asperity (3716m) on the 1500m high Combatant-Tiedemann-Asperity wall. The South Ridge is made up of a series of towers divided by deep notches. We reached the summit on the morning of the third day after some tricky route-finding and 65 pitches of varied climbing on good granite and mixed ground. The weather was superb, so rather than risk a descent down the dangerous south-east couloir, we decided to traverse the Serra Peaks to reach the Upper Tellot Glacier.

The traverse began with the free-standing tower of Serra V (c.3600m), which is reputed to be the hardest summit in the range. We climbed a new mixed route on the North Face and made the fourth ascent of the peak. Our route then followed the line of the 1985 traverse of the major peaks of the range (Waddington-Combatant-Tiedemann-Asperity-Serras V to I). As expected, the abseils down the overhanging loose diorite on the east face of the Serra V into the IV-V notch were the technical crux of the traverse. We bivouacked that night below the summit block of Serra IV, continued along the complex mixed ridge to Serra III next morning, and descended the icy Serra II-III couloir to reach the Upper Tellot Glacier by mid afternoon. We arrived back at our tent on the Tiedemann Glacier that night, and concerned that the weather was about to break, we flew out next day. We spent the next few days sport climbing near Penticton before rounding off a memorable holiday with an ascent of the classic North-east Buttress on Mount Slesse in the Northern Cascades.

America

NIALL RITCHIE reports:– With Jon Taylor I spent the Easter fortnight in the desert areas of Red Rocks, Nevada and South California's Joshua Tree. With usually assured, warm to hot weather in spring, El Niño's presence meant unseasonal cold temperatures to begin with – giving snow down to tent level and a green desert beneath. Although not entirely welcome it was still possible for Scots to climb in this while locals retreated to warmer spots like Ceasar's Palace in the nearby surreal Las Vegas.

The superb sandstone walls at Red Rocks offer sport and traditional climbs of high quality from single pitch to big multi-pitch mountain routes. It is worth noting that in Vegas accommodation, food and drink are all at ridiculously cheap prices.

From Red Rocks – after a three-and-a-half-hour drive – it gets better and better at the even more surreal Joshua Tree with its Granite Wonderland of rocks which provide superb crack and face climbing in an exquisite setting. Other highlights were the colours of the wild desert flowers in bloom and the weird and fantastic rock formations that abound.

In between these two main climbing areas we squeezed a brief visit to Utah's Zion National Park. In the land where big is beautiful Zion's walls were no exception. Unfortunately, the A4s couldn't be attempted because the snowploughs were still out in the park clearing the roads!

Get across there – and as they say: 'Have a good one.'

TIM PETTIFER reports:– I made three overseas trips during 1997. The first in April, ski-touring in Austria and Italy with Robin Chalmers, my wife, and a close friend from Bavaria.

The second and the most interesting trip was a mountaineering venture to Turkey in June. Very easily and economically arranged, as a package holiday to Cavus, it opened up the Taurus mountains on the Mediterranean. In this area they rise to approximately 8250ft, and apart from the highest, they are largely unpathed. Useful maps of even the most popular mountains are hard to obtain and don't exist for the back country. Guide books cover only a small area of Turkey so you can choose a mountain because you like the look of it; figure out a route as far as you can see with binoculars, and hopefully, find your own way up to wherever the summit may be and then design your own cairn. The way all climbing should be.

Most of our routes involved steep scrambling over weathered limestone and we left the car at about 6am and got down by late afternoon. The rock-climbing potential is immense with all grades of routes from V. Diff. up to E Impossible and close to the road/tracks. There are long ridges there rising from sea level to 3000ft, not dissimilar to Tower Ridge.

You don't achieve as much as when climbing in an area with a comprehensive climbing guide. There are the inevitable *cul-de-sacs* and disappointments and going down if you are planning a circular route is often harder than going up. But above all else you will have truly climbed your 'own' mountain and you can have endless recriminating arguments as to what went wrong or right. The climate and vegetation are very like the Balearics but the mountains are far rougher. As in Majorca the family can enjoy the coast. Cavus and nearby Olympus are quiet, pleasant resorts with turtle beaches, boat trips to archaeological sites, islands and secluded beaches. Adventurous members with young families or non-climbing partners could achieve the impossible – do a new route, perhaps every day and still be on speaking terms in the evening. Valhalla!

The third trip was in October, again with Jan, and was a cycle trip across the Spanish Camino. This is an ancient pilgrim's route that crosses the north of Spain, east to west and traditionally used to finish at Cape Finisterre. Finisterre or Fisterre in Spanish, translate as 'The End of the World' so pilgrims were literally walking just as far as they possibly could as atonement. A most beautiful and historically interesting path, 500 miles long across plains, through delightful countryside and rising to 5500ft and 4400ft through the Galician mountains. Some 3000 to 6000 pilgrims walk this route during July and August and it is a lesson in environmental care that so many walk, cycle and horse ride the route with little impact on the villages, the physical nature of the path, the old refugios, or huts, along the way and maintain the very best of relations with the indigenous population.

Pyrenees

ADAM KASSYK reports:– I visited the Sierra del Cadi in the Spanish Pyrenees while on a family seaside holiday on the Costa Brava. The Sierra lies south east of Andorra and about two-and-a-half hours' drive north of Barcelona. With my brother, Andy, we climbed the North Buttress Diretissime (via Anglada-Guillamon) on the Pedraforca, 2491m. The area, and this climb, are described very briefly in the English language series of guidebooks to the Pyrenees. This 600m route was very fine, with sustained climbing in the lower part. We encountered climbing up to E2 standard, with some aid – despite the guidebook reference to a TD grade. The Pedraforca offers many other routes at a variety of grades, and the area as a whole appears to provide good climbing in a quiet and unspoiled mountain setting.

CASTLE RIDGE
JOHN MITCHELL

REVIEWS

The Duke of the Abruzzi - An Explorer's Life:– Mirella Tenderini and Michael Shandrick (Bâton Wicks, 1997, £17.99, ISBN 1 898573 38 1).

The Duke is best known for the eponymous ridge on K2, and most of us might have some vague recollection of a huge expedition way back in 1909. (Eight Italian 'amateurs', four guides and 150 porters to carry five tons of equipment to be more precise.) We might also have some impression of an aristocratic thrill-seeker being cosseted along by guides and porters. This would be to do Luigi di Savoia a grave injustice, as this book makes clear. He was a more than competent mountaineer who was well used to hardship and who left parts of his fingers north of the 80th parallel.

The House of Savoy provided kings of Italy and, very briefly, Spain. Luigi was not directly in the line of succession (although his father was King of Spain for two years) but lived in a culture in which he was severely constrained by the expectations of his family and public opinion of the time. Part of the interest of this book is that it shows the way in which, even then, the 'media' could help screw up people's lives. The book fails to bring him alive as a person, although, the facts make it clear that he must have been an interesting character to know. This may not be the fault of the authors but more a result of the milieu in which he had to live.

The facts are interesting enough. It is obvious that his membership of the CAI and the Alpine Club were not merely gestures to his position. When Mummery decided to make his second ascent of the Zmutt Ridge, (25 years after the first), he was accompanied by Norman Collie and Luigi de Savoia, who was 21 at the time. By this age he had already made a number of difficult (guided) ascents in the Alps and was intending to attempt the Zmutt when he met Mummery who thought highly enough of him to invite him along.

The Duke is best known for his exploration and mountaineering. The arduous first ascent of Mt. St. Elias in Alaska after five previous expeditions had failed seems to have given him a taste for discomfort for it was followed by an abortive attempt to reach the North Pole (which involved the aforementioned loss of parts of his fingers). A thorough exploration of the Ruwenzori mountains gave him experience of a different set of discomforts. His last big mountain expedition was to K2 in 1909. Thereafter, his naval career and war intervened. The Italian drive for colonies took him to Somaliland where he again managed to do some exploration. He founded a farm settlement for Somalis and eventually lived there until his death.

This book is not primarily a mountaineering book, but as a portrait of a complex and able man it manages to be both interesting and frustrating. The life of the Duke of Abruzzi is there but Luigi di Savoia, the man, is only briefly glimpsed. One is left with the impression of a man who was the victim of his station in life. Being a member of a Royal family could have its drawbacks even then.

Bob Richardson.

Classic Rock - Great British Rock Climbs:– Compiled by Ken Wilson (Bâton Wicks. 1997, 256pp, £19.99. 130+ photographs, crag diagrams. ISBN 1 898573 11 5).

The first edition of this milestone in climbing history was in 1978, and it marked a personal pleasure for this reviewer too, as he wrote, and photographed, one of its 80 routes - The Chasm on Buachaille Etive Mor, Glen Coe (or Glencoe, as the Glen was then called). Looking back at the review of it in the 1979 SMCJ is cause for

some angst however, as it was not only written by a friend and climbing partner (who indeed suffered for the art in The Chasm), but it was also given what could only, even with charity, be called a harsh and even heartless review. And don't even think that I'm in Wilson's pocket. I'll fax this review to him tomorrow (he hates e-mail) and he'll phone me up the same night and spoil my herb tea with a breathless and ear-dinning critique of my critique.

So how does it compare with the first edition, and what do I think of both? Remaining dispassionate, and despite my youthful input, I always found in the book much inspiration. It provided a warm glow, in the sense that I felt I could climb any of its routes (unlike *Hard Rock,* with its granny-stoppers). The routes I had climbed could also be re-climbed through another's eyes, often with rosy specs on. The writing, of course, was as widespread in quality as the routes themselves. The Long Climb (not the longest climb in the country, despite the gush) is, I feel, not worth half the praise it receives. Two-and-a-half good pitches out of its 1400ft is hardly an objective rationale for excellence, while Clachaig Gully, despite several fun ascents, still gives me arrhythmia at it's recollection. The vivid memory of a head-sized rock whirring past with my name on it, dislodged by a clumsy soloist above, is a cooling thought. The lush Spring flowers would have made a handy wreath.

One obvious test of the book is to ask whether, after an interval of some 19 years, the routes stand the test of time. Would you still want to climb them? Yes, mostly, The Long Climb excepted. Time has changed some factors of course. On the Cuillin Ridge you may well get run over by other parties, while approaching Ardverikie Wall you will definitely get run over by gleaming mountain bikes. But time has changed other factors, and in these cases the book is partly deficient. I pulled out my first edition (pristine dust-wrapper, nice photo) and set it against the current book (pristine dust-wrapper, even nicer photo).

It is not an exact facsimile, as it has been added to with a *Historical Commentary. The Preface* too, has an appended note, in which Wilson worries over the current trend to upgrade routes. He at least acknowledges that four of the Scottish routes upgraded since 1978 (The Chasm, The Long Climb, Clean Sweep, and Ardgarten Arête - all Severe to VS - corrected bizarre local anomalies), but states that the bulk of the other 26 upgraded routes, out of a total of 80 routes in the book, represents something to be worried about. It may be that many of these route grades are not actually experiencing a natural upward progression, but are instead, showing the cushion effect, whereby pressure from above, squeezing the grades ever closer, work down so as to have an osmotic effect on the easier routes.

Another Wilsonian worry is the death of climbing rock in big boots. He's right that it is a dying art - we did Red Slab on the Rannoch Wall in big boots at the same period as we were posing in The Chasm (also in big boots, see p.50 *et seq.*) But not all rock climbers go on to the Alps, and even there rock boots are much more widespread anyway. But then Red Slab was supposed to be a Severe then and it is now a VS. Ignorance is bliss, if you get away with it.

So differences? Photographs first. The dust-wrapper has a different shot, one which ironically has a climber wearing the old EBs. Many of the old, grisly black-and-whites remain just that – grisly (e.g. John Mackenzie in The Crypt – the photograph that is, not John), while many have been improved. I am unaware as to the techniques used; scanning or reprinting, but the contrast of many in the first edition, often too high, has been reduced, e.g. the big shot of Tower Ridge on pp.30-

31, the traverse on Sou'Wester Slabs on p.91. This allows more details of the cliff or route to filter out. Some of the colour shots are either new, such as the excellent telephoto looking up The South Ridge (p.89), or again have been improved to some extent. The full-page colour shot of the Buachaille for example (p.44), no longer has its awful green cast, redolent of many a Sunday morning under the Glen Coe clouds after too good a Saturday evening. It now sports a reddish cast, closer to the rhyolite I daresay, and definitely an improvement.

At first look I was irritated that all references to guidebooks were as in the first edition. By all means keep these references, but I feel that the current guidebooks, over which the SMC, to name only one club publisher, has sweated long and hard, should also receive a more prominent mention, with each route, and not be tucked away in a tiny note later in the book. As I said before, it is not a true facsimile, so why not make it more functional with this small, but important, point?

It is understandable that Wilson, to keep costs down, does not seem to have gone round the scene asking for new photographs of the routes. Even a score of updated colour shots might have made a huge difference in its visual appeal. I would, as no doubt Wilson was, have been sorely tempted to chuck out the dozen or so shots that were not worth keeping, and commissioning replacements.

It is a better book for the tinkerings however, and one that should still inspire the silent minority who don't climb E-something. I'll keep on taking the vitamins, meanwhile, and stay up late waiting for the phone call. And I know who gave Wilson my number. The lads will be around.

Ken Crocket.

Escape Routes:– Further adventure writings of David Roberts. (Cordee Books, 1997, pp267, £15.95. ISBN 0 89886 509 3).

Nearly 300 pages in hardback written in essay format without illustration may at first glance be a bit off-putting but the cover of this wonderful collection gives us the clue to the quality of writing which lies within. A lone figure, the author? You? Me? Silhouetted in the doorway of a mountain hut looking out onto snow-clad mountains and blue sky. This is the 'escape route'. It is one that all of us with a love of the mountains and adventure know well and the same feelings of escape apply whether the tunnel mouth gives out, as in this case, onto the Coast Range of British Columbia or onto the ice-draped cliffs of Ben Nevis or indeed to any number of places limited only by the power of our imagination.

The mark of a good essayist is that he does not leave his reader as a spectator, sitting on the bus as it were, but carries him along into the action and Roberts does this to perfection. Whether it be a bouldering picnic in 'Bleau' while taking in a brief history of Millet (the painter not the sac!), Rousseau and the Barbizon School: 'Venturing each day into the forest, I began to see Fontainbleau through the painters' eyes and to recover the wild revolutionary fervour with which their landscapes teem.'

Or cave exploration/archaeology in New Mexico: 'At 0815a.m. on the morning of a new day, I emerged from Lechuguilla after a push of 18 hours. As the sun touched my head and shoulders, I breathed in the smell of earth, and saw the green of the grass and the blue of the sky and I could not help whooping out loud wordless cries of self congratulation at my successful rebirth into the world.'

Roberts here lets you experience the mud, the fear, the claustrophobic enclosure of the caving experience and share his relief, buoyed by euphoria, when you complete the journey.

In this particular essay he broaches a theme to which he returns again and again, when he says of the Lechugilla cavers: 'They reminded me of the homey oddball ranks of climbers I had joined in the late 1950s, when I had first taken up mountaineering, an all but vanished breed now that climbing has become a trendy sport whose stars wear Day-Glo lycra and make good money endorsing everything from tents to lipstick.'

Now some may argue that this is just an old fogey's failure to embrace change, but I think in Roberts' writing this amounts to something more than a longing for some far-off youthful idyll. His arguments in *The Moab Treehouse* will doubtless upset some of the conservation lobby. When speaking of Moab, a small, but growing, town in the Canyonlands of Utah, he flags up some of the paradoxes that far too few conservationists are willing to acknowledge, never mind address.

'I observed that the most avid voices for keeping Moab small and pristine belonged to residents who had moved there relatively recently.'

While another long-time resident says: 'Some folks have found our treehouse. Now they want to pull the rope up.'

These are real debates relevant world-wide and Roberts, not known for pulling his punches, senses their climax: 'At it's most extreme, in the strictures of the eco-fanatics who would teach us never to step on a meadow or camp within sight of stream, to drink our own dishwater, to shit into plastic bags and pack them out, a germ of nihilistic misanthropy is at work. Rather than an arena for play, these watchdogs imply, the backcountry is such a deadly serious place that it can only be approached in a spirit of self expunging ascetisim. Only a short logical step leads from these strictures to their *reducito absurdum:* the best way to treat the wilderness is never to go there at all.'

Roberts has an impressive climbing record behind him, having led a total of 13 expeditions in Alaska including many major first ascents, but I get the feeling that now in his 50s he feels the need to diversify, to look for other *Escape Routes* whether it be mountain biking, caving, river-rafting and even, horror of horrors, golf! Although, it has to be said, two crisp three-iron shots off the summit of the Gamshag in the Austrian Tyrol were included in the itinerary which he relates with a wry humour in the essay *Wandergolf in the Tirol.*

There are many exciting, and indeed, dangerous moments included in this book but Roberts' philosophy with regard to danger, and one which is shared by the many and varied companions he will introduce you to, is well summed up in the prelude to the essay *Storming Iceland:*

> ***Who travels widely needs his wits about him,***
> ***The stupid should stay at home.'***
>
> from *The Words of the High One,* a medieval Icelandic poem.

This is a book to read at home and one which will doubtless inspire the reader to find and explore his own escape routes and in the pen of David Roberts, you couldn't ask for a better companion.

Charlie Orr.

Into Thin Air – A personal account of the Everest disaster:– Jon Krakauer. (Macmillan, 1997. £16.99, ISBN 0 333 69527 5).

I began by wondering if I would like a book which fed on a mountaineering disaster. Reacting to the bad Press our mountaineering scene gets in Britain, I almost hoped I wouldn't like it. Unfortunately, it was the opposite; I couldn't put it down, which shows how well written it is, mixing a dramatic tragedy tale with calculated analysis by an author who was immediately involved. The fact that we already know the outcome (hermits excepted) didn't seem to spoil the drama which, as in a Shakespearean tragedy, built up to an inevitable finale.

They say that knowing when to turn back is the ultimate mountaineering skill. Certainly the author, an experienced mountaineer himself as well as a client, centres his analysis on this point. The non-mountaineer, more interested in the story than the analysis, might just leave it as a simple mistake. But the mountaineer knows that it's not that simple (with just a nagging doubt that perhaps it is that simple), and the nearer you have been to a mountaineering accident, presumably having survived, in contrast to many of the players featured in this book, the more you can relate to the decisions made on Everest despite their grim outcome. And if you've climbed in the Himalayas, you'll know how there are always apparent reasons for turning back, and only by ignoring some of them do you ever achieve anything. And if you've ever guided clients, or perhaps if you've been guided, you'll understand the pressure to achieve a successful result, and that can lead to a slight influence on decisions which can, if you're unlucky, each add to the total picture, which suddenly a small unpredictable event can turn to disaster.

Turning to Scotland for a minute, you might think of a time when you were avalanched, all the clues that you ignored, possibly aware of them or possibly only in retrospect (because we never know what Rob Hall was thinking). And you know that in Scotland if you never leave the road unless the official avalanche risk is classified as 1 (safe), you'll live a long time but achieve almost nothing (except in August). So why didn't you pay attention to soft snow, spindrift and wind direction, or why didn't you dig a snow pit? Was it because the risk didn't occur to you, or was it that you were so keen to climb the route that you decided to chance it, and how deliberately did you decide to chance it? And were you a little bit unlucky?

But if you push your luck often enough, you're bound to be unlucky eventually. Was this the case on Everest? Jon Krakauer strongly argues not, at least for the Rob Hall expedition of which he was one of the few members who survived unscathed. Nor does he claim that the Himalayas, especially Everest, are safe. So he comes down largely on commercial pressure and rivalry, allied to unspoken client pressure, influencing Rob Hall's decision making, which was clearly flawed. And it's hard not to notice how seriously the friendly but still rival teams of Hall and Scott Fischer got in each other's way. Not literally, but the agreed co-operation (the best Sherpa from each group teaming to fix the Hillary Step ropes) failed and delayed the ascent.

It must be said that if the groups had been summiting on separate days, Rob Hall's team on its own would have failed and turned back, forcing the correct decision. But those delayed by slow rope-fixing were not the ones who died. It was those who later in the day used the fixed ropes to continue into a trap who died. Which leads to a crucial question. Does fixing rope for clients, which seems an obvious thing to do, lead to more safety as one would expect, or lead weaker clients into a trap? Obviously, it can do both, and the leader's decision as to their use is crucial. Here

the decision was certainly flawed. Agreed you might have to push clients a bit, but how come the stronger clients turned back (with the exception of the author who was strong enough to reach the summit somewhat independently) while the weaker ones continued to be guided to the summit, and subsequently, no return for them and their guides?

The fierce criticism by Jon Krakauer of an incompetent Taiwanese team and a disruptive South African team sounds very justified and is good for the story but seems a minor factor in the accident. And the rather brutal analysis of the survivors' roles suggesting that some of them, particularly himself, failed to help enough seems unduly hard. So any analysis ends at the problem of the two rival teams climbing simultaneously and causing a dangerous competitive atmosphere.

In terms of my personal high altitude guiding, all my clients have returned in good condition, but the success rate is very low. What sort of a guide does that make me, good or bad? Depends on your priorities, and judging by the tunnel-driven attitude of some of the Everest clients, bad would be the answer. Or did they just have too much faith? Wandering farther off the point, whose fault is the high expectation of clients? Not only in the Himalayas, but in the Alps too. My observation of British guides is that they are much more amenable to the clients' wishes than my impression of many Continental guides. Both in terms of the difficulty of the route and the number of clients taken (i.e. price). But is this a compliment, or are safety margins being unwittingly trimmed to fit commercial pressures? Will we learn a painful lesson sometime? Who knows, but the British have done well so far. And will future expeditions to Everest learn the lessons of this ill-fated one? Is it possible to be safer and still have any chance of success?

So it's easy to blame the leader (or the pilot in an air crash, or the driver in a train crash). But no-one is immune to error. So perhaps it is the system that is at fault to put the leader in such an exposed position. In other words, don't relate guiding Everest with any safety. Maybe Rob Hall's high success rate had conned him into thinking he could? I won't be typing in 'Everest Guide' at the Job Centre. But whether you want to get involved in the analysis (like I obviously have) or just read the story, you'll find it as compelling a read as Joe Simpson's story.

Andy Nisbet.

Deep Play:– Paul Pritchard (Bâton Wicks, 1997, 192pp, £16.99, ISBN 1 898573 14 X)

Paul Pritchard is a 'big wall' climber. Most of the world's big walls lie in mountain environments, and over the last 10 years we have seen an explosion of activity as talented climbers have turned their attentions to these great alpine challenges. In the main, it has been those with a rock-climbing background, rather than mountaineers who have been most successful, and reading this book, we can begin to see why.

The book consists largely of re-worked essays that first appeared in *On The Edge* magazine or American journals. The opening chapter, previously unpublished, describes Paul's early life and his beginnings as a climber. This sets the book up on an autobiographical theme as we move into the 1980s North Wales Llanberis rock-climbing scene. I found the descriptions of new routing at Gogarth very exciting, and a real insight into the commitment, motivation and skill required to climb some of the most serious traditional rock climbs in the world today. As the

book progresses, we move on to Paul's mountain successes, starting with the first ascent of El Regalo de Mwono on the East Face of the Central Tower of Paine. The story of this awe-inspiring 1200m route climbed with Sean Smith, Noel Craine and Simon Yates makes fascinating reading as the necessary mountaineering skills are painfully learned by a process of trial and error. Paine was a fantastic entree into the world of big wall climbing, and easily one of the most impressive British mountaineering achievements of the 1990s. More successes follow - The West Face of Asgard in Baffin, a new route on El Cap, and a lightning ascent of the Slovene Route on Trango. Interspersed with this are various excursions in Brazil and Columbia and more routes in Patagonia.

The key Scottish content is a chapter about the first free ascent of the Scoop on Sron Ulladale with Johnny Dawes – surely one of the most inspirational rock-climbing achievements in our islands. Pritchard writes well and with a variety of different styles as diverse as his own climbing experiences, and in my view, this book was a worthy winner of the 1997 Boardman-Tasker award. If you want to understand more about the hard end of traditional rock-climbing, or want to know what it is like to be high up on a remote big wall, then read this book.

Simon Richardson.

Hamish's Mountain Walk and Climbing The Corbetts:– Hamish Brown (Bâton Wicks, London, 1997, 704pp, 215mm x 135mm, 17 b/w and 15 colour photos, 36 maps cased/jacketed, £16.99. ISBN 1 898573 08 05. First published separately by Victor Gollancz, London 1978 and 1988 respectively).

Never such innocence again:
***Hamish's Mountain Walk*, and the Munrobagging Big Bang.**

Back in 1978, Hamish Brown reportedly disliked his publisher's insistence on an eponymously-titled book, and rightly so. The intervening years have given us too many Bob's Full Houses and Noel's House Parties, and the trend is still heading that dumbed-down way: how long before we all have to raise our hands and ask nicely for favours from Tony's Government? It would be wrong, however, to judge the book by its cover, to see Brown as just another name-checking self-publicist with froth oozing where the creative juices ought to flow. When read, or re-read, this book (now issued in an omnibus edition with *Climbing the Corbetts)* seems not only a work of great driven energy and considerable linguistic beauty, but also, two decades on, to be wiser by the minute. Whereas many accounts of hills, or climbs, or contorted stravaigs such as this often feel stale and stultified after only a short shelf-life, the story – and, crucially, the perceptions – offered by Brown show no sign of becoming any less rich or refreshing.

Hamish's Mountain Walk is now a period piece, yet this has become its greatest strength. Without at all reading as some kind of pre-cagoule costume drama, it feels very much of its time. Yet the balance with time-less hillscapes provides a sense of the fading of a more easy-going era, an end to what Brown refers to as The Long Tradition. Even as *HMW* was written, older ways were breaking down, the hills were being overtaken by a hustle-bustle attitude, by a more dynamic demography. Positioned so pivotally, and already possessing a canny wisdom, *HMW* now also has an uncanny prescience.

Looking back via books, newsclips, films, music, the late Seventies mark the threshold at which things suddenly seem really dated. It was one of those straining-

in-every-direction periods of social reform and cultural turmoil, the iceberg tipped by politics, music, fashion, the media explosion, but with weightier and more profound changes creaking beneath the visible waterline. Society (whether or not such a thing existed) was changing tectonically, undergoing crazy structural mood-swings, with the effects felt not just in the housing schemes and financial markets, but in the quiet places too. Even when acquiring a ski-slope here, a bulldozed track there, the hills have remained largely the same: that is why we love them. But the people who come to walk and climb have changed radically, in type, in number, in how they come. And so the landscape, most subtle and susceptible of backdrops, has changed too. This is why *HMW* is so evocative and so pertinent: it's not just about landscape, it's about us, and what we do in the context of landscape.

Chiefly a day-to-day narrative of a meandering trek across Scotland's highest points, the basic facts will be familiar to most readers. First published in 1978, *HMW* tells of a marathon Munro-bag made in 1974 when its author was chiefly known for the oddity of already having appeared in triplicate in the list of Munroists. That much is weel-kent, as Hamish would have it, as is the localised fame and glossy-magazine ubiquity which has accompanied Brownian Motion through the subsequent decades. Yet the book's broader feeling, of the walking world about to change, comes partly from Brown's adroit casting of his own drives and frustrations on the very stage where 'peripatetic catharsis' could be enacted. To draw a parallel from a far larger theatre, *HMW* shares timing and feeling with the much-discussed 'pause' before the start of the First World War, when a seemingly never-ending idyll stumbled blithely into the rude awakening of the modern era. Compare Hardy's April, 1914 poem, *Channel Firing,* with its eerie foresight (the writer hears the crump of the big guns practising in France, and thinks ahead). Or compare the sublime rural world of Sassoon's *Memories of a Fox-Hunting Man,* doomed by a far less tranquil future. Their context was much weightier than any discussion of hills and those who climb them could ever be, but the same poignant, almost elegiac sense of impending change runs through Brown's hill-tale. Here again is the brief, pivotal silence which immediately precedes the clamour and clatter of a new and not altogether alluring dawn. To understand this, it's necessary to recall the sepia-toned situation in Scottish hillwalking before Brown's appearance. Think back. The walk, and the book, spanned the final few years before the Munrobagging Big Bang, whereupon everything suddenly went exponential and a little haywire: books by the shelfload, eroded paths on every ridge and plateau, a broadening highway of access problems, muddled (and often muddied) thinking on what to climb and where, shiny new equipment racked up as the commercial feeding frenzy blurred distinctions between 'luxury' and 'essential'. And, above all, sheer weight of walkers. At the end of Hamish's mountain year there were only 130 recorded Munroists; indeed, his introduction suggested that the list 'now grows at an annual average rate of five people'. Yet the present Tables Editor, Derek Bearhop, is able to indulge in a little joke by cropping the latest Munroist listing at the emotive figure of 1745. That's 130 names in 73 years (129 in 51 if A. E. Robertson is sacrilegiously omitted), followed by 1615 in 23 years. Hyper-inflation. And that's without considering the sprawl of Corbetteers, Grahamists, etc. (although walkers were perhaps more tick-eclectic before the Munro boom, back when size – or at least height – wasn't everything).

If the late Seventies and early Eighties saw the Big Bang (or Big Bag?), they also produced a generation of Munro babyboomers – this writer is one such – for whom

hill activity was suddenly trendy, almost in fashion, seeming to fit like a Dachstein mitt. Overnight, hillwalking became worthy of mention on CVs and in lonely hearts columns; and, if sweaty days on dreich slopes were now viewed as a fast-track to sex, then something must have changed. Gone was the old, stuffy division of Scottish hill-demography, Bentleyed gentry versus hitch-hiking Clydeside fitters. Perhaps this schism never existed half as much as touted, but now both it and the hills themselves were overwhelmed by a middle-class, middle-income muddle of eager outdoors-men and – women, thronging northward of a weekend to collect a windfall of freedom and space. For all that archaic feudalism in landownership remains, there was great democratisation of the Scottish hills during these years, with many old elitisms literally trampled underfoot. It was like watching those folk who rush on to the pitch after the last game at a much-loved football stadium and haul up squares of turf before the contractors move in. And so the reasonably pristine, only slightly charted hills (or at least those of Munro height), were avalanched by solitude-seekers, all trying to spirit away sods of wilderness experience. First come, first served, don't get trampled in the rush. A bagfest. That Brown's book now seems a prelude to the deluge is perhaps because we're nearing the end of this supermarket-sweep era of Munrobagging. More and more pub-discussions and magazine inches are given over to broad-based doubts about activity-ethics. Not doubts about going on the hill *per se,* but about how the hills should be approached, where 'approached' is meant in the abstract, not the turn-left-at-the-sheep-fank of the cheesier guidebooks (and which Brown smoothly avoids with the ease of one who knows his hills and knows he can write).

There is another take on this. Look not just at the hills themselves, but at the accompanying literature. Again, Brown's book is pivotal. And, again, think back: to a time when there was no shelf-wide welter of glossy hillbooks, no pick-and-mix scoop of Munro guides. Before 1985-6, when the SMC's *The Munros* and Butterfield's *High Mountains* appeared, most mid-table Munrobaggers spent their Friday planning sessions poring over maps (these were days when folk still thought for themselves), and over Hamish's book, with its vital – in both senses – account of crafty routes and boobytrap no-noes. That was it really: a smattering of other books, with Poucher's *Scottish Peaks* the pick of a poor crop; and some older, wiser, out-of-print words, hard to find even had anyone the patience for their flora and fauna and thoughtfulness. Thus many were the walkers who skimmed the relevant pages of *HMW* before their day's walk, then cross-checked again once safely home and wet the next night. Brown's pen-portraits, plus the exasperating imperial/metric hotchpotch of the Landranger First Series: speak with anyone who took up Munrobagging in the late Seventies or early Eighties, and these will provide a common thread, almost a folk-memory.

I was one such walker. My cracked-spine copy of *HMW* was a 1982 Christmas present, received just as I was starting to climb hills. I had been up the Mither Tap of Bennachie, on a deep-snow trudge to the Dubh Loch, had inspected the Canberra wreckage on Carn an t-Sagairt, and had, crucially, twice climbed Lochnagar on 20-20 days. The first was in blazing summer: my first Munro, an experience so new, so uncertain, that I took two changes of clothes, a sleeping bag, four cans of Tennent's Special, and 24 (24!) salmon sandwiches. The second ascent came in deep winter, a day so startlingly clear that The Cheviot could be seen 100 miles to the south. Already hooked from the sandwich day, this time I was planning ahead, dreaming, gazing around at other hills with a wanderer's eye, thinking . . . And now,

post-pressie, I knew what a Munro was. It felt like all I needed to know. The Tables themselves, and Hamish's book: essential reading, and as inseparable as Tolmount and Tom Buidhe.

It might seem strange that *HMW* affected a novice so deeply, being written by someone who, even before his Big Walk, had climbed and explored extensively in Scotland and beyond. Strange perhaps, but a sign of the book's catch-all quality. Reading it again now, 15 years on and with 100s of Munros climbed and re-climbed, with more than half the Corbetts and nearly 100 Grahams visited, with a second round of Donalds almost done, with the watershed walked and with even, heaven help me, a century of Ben Cleuch ascents achieved, it still seems fresh and meaningful and relevant.

What manner of book is it that appeals to an eager, bright-eyed, wet-behind-the-ears proto-bagger, but also to a grizzled, grumpy clag-cynic? A good book, that's what. Brown conveys enthusiasm better than any other Scottish hill-writer, recognising that it's one thing to walk a great walk, quite another to write a great book. He knew this implicitly, and had the physical and intellectual machinery to carry off both parts. There have been Big Walks poorly written – Caldwell's Munros/Corbetts round for instance – while several fine hill-writers have never attempted an epic, restricting themselves to weekend forays. Brown managed both, marvellously.

What makes it so satisfying, so rounded? Many factors, obviously, but, fundamentally, Brown being both a readable writer and a considered walker. Lovely descriptive phrases abound, full of energy and vigour. From the macro: 'the veldt sweep of ocherous miles' for the Grampians; to the micro: bracken fronds unfurling, insects heard ahead of being seen. Individual hills, as would be expected from a writer with 2000 Munros in his bag, are beautifully evoked: Beinn Heasgarnich is 'a gently-sloping chaos'; Beinn Mhanach, encircled by the Achaladair ridge, is 'a ball held in a fist'; Sgurrs a'Ghreadaidh and a'Mhadaidh are 'two jagged hedgehogs meeting nose to nose'; and Beinn a'Ghlo, most clean-limbed of massifs, is penned near-perfectly: 'big brown and grey domes, clean-honed by the wind, runny with screes and seamed with deer tracks'. Shiel, Affric, and Farrar are rightly 'the big glens'; 'a casual weekend ploy' delightfully understates the Cuillin ridge; and 'the whole dome was icy' (Aonach Beag) has come to mind on many subsequent bare summits.

This sense of shared experience, of being part of a scattered but like-minded community, is endlessly tapped. Any well-trod walker will empathise and reminisce along the lines of, say, my own grilling on Sgulaird, or peeling pegs from fingers on frost-rimey campsite mornings. And as one with the added angle of having undertaken my own Big Walk, I can identify with Brown's odd disengagement at the start, his periods of cocooned focus (what modern sports-speak calls 'the zone'), and the hard-to-convey importance of steadily-upped numbers and day-to-day landmarks.

Stylistically, Brown is a classicist, yet also his own man, lovely rhythms and fine timing interspersed with evocative Scots ('slaistery', 'spreug') and trademark single-sentence paragraphs: 'I did not recognise the col' (Sgor na h-Ulaidh). Being also a cratur of habit, it's a book of tics as much as ticks. He forever stops for 'a brew'; he bellows arias; he seems to wear few if any clothes, and then never new; he has a love/hate relationship with cuckoos; he reads on the hoof (usually Scots Lit. such as Neil Munro or R.L.S.) without once tripping over; he abhors litter but

wedges questionnaires into cairns. His basic character wells up too: work-ethicsome, unexpectedly competitive, nervously secretive (second is no use: he dreads 'letting on' too early); his occasional sermonesque homilies; his love of adventuring in the spirit of Shipton and Tilman (who, along with W. K. Holmes, come across as mentors).

He rarely, if ever, slates a hill, utilising previous ascents to balance a 'dull' Munro with a good story. All walkers favour certain hill-types: the cluttered spiry west, or the spacious sweep of the east. Despite openly espousing love of the north and west, Brown keeps his occasional mild reservations not for the easy-target Monadh Liath or Drumochter (he sings the praise of A'Bhuidheaneach Bheag!), but for craggy-tendency hills which 'just fail to fire the imagination': the Crianlarich group, or Beinn a'Chlachair. This holism is as it should be: too many moorland-lovers mouth paeans of crag-praise because that's the macho, glossy-picture, complete-mountaineer accepted admissible thing to do. Brown also deserves a medal for his long, self-analytical recounting of the battlefield bogs of Mount Keen; likewise his lowest ebb (entering Knoydart) is no more flinched at on paper than it was on foot. And he is, perhaps oddly given the context, an unusually fine describer of woodland and lowland; the ornithological thread, never just some twitcher's checklist, always seems to fit (and flit). Bird-life, not just birds, period.

Human wildlife crops up all the while: Hamish's Highlands are well-populated. Dewi Jones, visited in Blair Atholl, wrote in a letter: 'no great kudos in that: I think Hamish crammed in the names of all friends and acquaintances, plus a few more!' It's here that the book feels most dated, although in a quaint, endearing, unavoidable way: talk of Syd Scroggie, of a meeting with A. E. Robertson's widow, of the dreadful time when Crianlarich hostel was little more than a barracks complete with bugle-blowing sergeant-major, of late lamented Nancy's drop-in (although its retention in the 'useful addresses' is needless). This was the era when Tranter (and not Ramsay, Belton, or Broxap) was the name by which mega-Munro-days were judged. Similarly, Brown's own precursors – Cousins, Hinde, the Ripleys – all seem very distant now. Even the hills have moved on: Beinn an Lochain was a Munro, Beinn Teallach and Sgurr nan Ceannaichean weren't; indeed, it's chastening to realise there have now been two major revisions, such that Sgor an Iubhair ('deserves to be a Munro') has been and gone. Even Ballachulish Bridge was only just being built.

What most of all connects the book's text with its 'feel' is Brown's layered experience, which he converts into language with great facility. Hamish knew his hills even then: having climbed all Munros thrice or more, his walk was no passing whimsy, no bag-on-sight impulse. (But note that 18 further months of planning preceded his stepping off the Craignure ferry.) He had strolled, skied, slithered, sneaked, and scurried across these hills since boyhood: a boyhood with which he seems wonderfully at ease. The youthful enthusiasms make it easy to forget that he turned 40 soon after the walk, particularly since his fitness is so understated; only occasionally (the massive Mamores day; up and down Schiehallion in well under two hours) are figures allowed to boast for themselves.

Crucially, Hamish had had a life. Too many modern experts seem to have done nothing but: the blank-faced generation of snooker automatons, the flat-charactered, straight-out-of-Uni politicos. Far more walkers now blitz-bag their hills young; and, while it's in the nature of the game that they'll soon have tales to tell, they often lack a wider context in which to embed them. Not so Brown, since the underlying

energy for his walk came from the perfect combination of push and pull: the pull of the hills themselves, the push of disaffection from being 'tied to a desk with no view of sky or hill'. He never pretended to paper over these raw motivations when writing of his walk, thank goodness; it shows, and provides much of what makes the book.

Some readers find the Dollar-pupil and Braehead-teacher tales an irritant, just as the religious quotes and snatches of poetry jut out like barns from the Ben Avon plateau; but any book of this scope needs personal input and idiosyncrasy so as not to seem bland. Brown maybe doesn't go far enough in giving of himself: there's a moment (on Mhanach again) when a mention of 'most erotic imaginings' cries out for more such clues. If the book does have a structural failing, it's the over-use of historical plug-ins (not that Brown doesn't know his stuff), when space could have been cleared for more personal thoughts. This is offset, however, by one of the most relevant threads for a late-Nineties reader: Brown's outspoken radicalism, his unwillingness to leave politics out of the hills. When first read, this stood out less; but now, with so much subsequent change and regression, clear common-sense jumps from every chapter. Few have been more vocal about SYHA upsizing than this hostel-lover who tallies bednights as diligently as he counts Munros. There are heartfelt doubts about the over-certification of youth leaders, fears of burgeoning bureaucracy and the risk of destabilising the qualification/experience balance. And fierce anti-trackism: another situation which has steadily worsened.

Yet, for all the positive aspects, any attempt at two-decades-on assessment of the book's Munro-core inevitably throws up a possible paradox, or at least the worry of a circular argument. Was Brown not merely a prophet of the Munro explosion, but its progenitor, central to the event, integral to the changes, instigator of what followed? While no-one doubts his voice crying in the wilderness, was he not so much John the Baptist as Jesus himself? It's tempting to see such a popular, well-written book proactively rocketing the list of Munroists skyward; and Brown, via his subsequent writings (and his perhaps unfortunate co-editorship of the 1981 *Munro's Tables*), has not been altogether adept and surefooted at debunking this notion. Wise words on eclecticism in walking seem not always to have translated into legwork: a rare case of foot-not-in-mouth disease? His round of Corbetts didn't come until the mid-Eighties, while only now is he beginning to close in on the Grahams. This wouldn't matter so much, if at all, were his a general behavioural antipathy akin to that of unequivocal anti-baggist writers such as Watson or Crumley. Yet while Brown pleads, as he has done many times, that he is 'not a Munro-bagger' (it first crops up on p23: pre-emptive retaliation), a glance at the scoreboard shows five, then six, then seven rounds clocked up. Heads are scratched in puzzlement, phrases about protesting too much drift into mind, wisps of doubt swirl around the high tops of achievement.

The problem is that Brown, deny it though he might, surely is a bagger, by nature. There is nothing wrong with this, it's the way many hillgoers are. What is ironic is that, far from single-handedly instigating the Munro boom, he fell victim to it by failing to delineate his overall motivations as precisely as those for the walk itself. He was – and perhaps still is – fearful of 'Wainwrightism': the inadvertent popularising of hills you love, such that they forever change in consequence. It's a high-ground version of Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle: the very thing recorded inescapably altered by trying to record it. Wainwright, a populariser on a more thorough and perhaps more wilful scale, responded to flickers of guilt by

hedgehogging further into curmudgeonly invisibility. Brown, a lighter, more enlightened character all along, was never likely to do this – for all the occasional old-fashioned sexism, his writings are more egalitarian than elitist – so he now and again half-apologises for enthusiasms in an awkward and ungainly manner. It's the classic hill-writer's bind. Non-scribbling walkers have it easy, not needing to write (or even think) about what they're doing, where they're going.

There should be no need for squirming, yet it has taken until the late Nineties, amid the explosion of hill-lists and increasingly open discussion of tabular revision, for this to be seen. Brown, of all people, has nothing about which to be embarrassed. If baggerish (or precise, log-keeping, orderly) is the way he is, then that's fine. A whole character-type loves the hills in ways every bit as subtle and scarcely definable as the rest, yet needs an exoskeletal structure to coax motivation into action. Hill-bagging provides this, beautifully: far more than 'trainspotter' or 'twitcher' preoccupations, it is inherently healthy, and brings fantastic, otherwise unvisited, places. It might even (although whisper this not near Ridgway's junior executive boot camp) build the character. It's okay. What is less satisfactory is when eyes are narrowed instead of minds broadened, when obsession stands in for enlightenment, when the bagger sees nothing beneath the notional 3000ft cut-off. That is good neither for walker nor for hill, whether the hill is big and over-subscribed, or small and under-frequented; and, admittedly, that situation has arisen, to a degree, through the years of the Big Bang.

Brown should have no fear of this, should have no guilt pangs that being a witness to the explosion makes him somehow culpable in the death of quiet spacious hills he loves (not that this is the reality anyway: the rumours have been greatly exaggerated). He, more than most, has hill-maturity, is able to view summits far more fully than as ticks on lists or names and numbers in logbooks. His dilemma – if indeed he has one – is not resolved by retreat into defensiveness and gawky self-apology, rather by heeding those who offer reassurance that there's nothing to be afraid of, that everyone should go with their natural leanings.

Considered as a whole, enthusiasms and doubts together, it's unsurprising that Brown has written nothing quite as good again. There are many fine passages and heartfelt thoughts elsewhere, but none as meant, none as together as in *HMW*.

The other book bundled in this reissue, *Climbing the Corbetts,* (originally from 1988) provides a good example. It too is a cairn of information, yet the ascents and reascents often seem cluttered, confused, in need of good sub-editing, and lacking the ooomph that gave *HMW* its shape and energy. The second book is more amorphous, although not unpleasantly so: in the absence of Big Walk pressure or worries about Munrobagger-denial, it feels more relaxed. It's more of a dipper-in, a book at bedtime, of daily readings, whereas *HMW* (which was already hinting at the worth of Corbetts) is a big-dipper of weather-changes and mood-swings. So very different in shape and character, they're an odd pair to bind together; but maybe this works, just as Glen Coe works despite having the orthogonal complexities of Bidean and the Buachailles on the page facing the Aonach Eagach's linear unavoidability.

As one whose own Big Walk and book[1] were inspired by Brown, it seems entirely natural that *HMW* offers more direction, since a certain type of walker has a burning need to do One Big Thing. And, when achieved, there follows a more mellow period, possibly happier, healthier, less desperately driven. Just as 'there's a book in every man', so the same may be true of the walk behind the book. It seems less

natural that, for all its influence, *HMW* hasn't prompted a completion of Munro's list: I remain nearly 40 short. But look on it another way. A sign of the book's maturity is that, although an account of a ringfenced round of Munros, it can be read on a deeper level: no list can ever be 'completed', only started, restarted, endlessly cycled. Munros, indeed any hills, are never 'done', or 'completed'; only gradually, imperceptibly, known.

Concepts of reprise and return bring back the initial thought: were Hamish to belatedly rename his first book, and stick with the eponymous idea (it would now be difficult, after all, to think of it otherwise), he might do worse than steal a title from American crime writer James Ellroy: *Brown's Requiem.* Ellroy's metier (cops, criminals, urban mayhem) could hardly be farther removed from, say: 'An Teallach and Coigach, vanishing into a haze of apple redness'. But the title is wonderfully apt, since *HMW* is, however inadvertently, a hymn to a bygone age, with thought given to present and future too. On this basis alone, the reprint is timely.

Some say that Bill Murray's first two books were great works, and they surely are – although I have never felt qualified to judge, being neither a climber, nor relishing Murray's style and outlook. *HMW,* however, felt familiar the first time round, and still does. I would argue against all-comers that it was, and remains, the finest of all Scottish hill books.

Dave Hewitt.

[1]*Walking the Watershed,* TACit Press. (Ed.).

Eddie Campbell, An Appreciation. Available from Editor, Leen Volwerk, c/o Lochaber High School, Camaghael, Fort William, PH33 7ND, £3.50 inc. p&p. Cheques to Lochaber Athletic Club. All profits to charity and a commemorative running trophy.

In any year, the hill-going world sees a startling number of new books. Big-format glossies; small hand-drawn guides; joshing, jocular stories; precise, pedantic, number crunching lists; even books which inadvertently provide the hill-equivalent of Anthony Burgess's nicely narky poem, *The book of my enemy has been remaindered, and I am glad.* But, for each reader, there is usually only one Book of the Year, one book which moves you and makes you smile but leaves you sad and makes you think. And this, for me, in 1997, was it.

It's scarcely even a book proper, merely 20-odd pages stapled in A5 form. But who cares? In literature, as in life itself, content is everything. From 1951 until his early death in 1996, Eddie Campbell never missed the Ben Nevis hill-race, winning three times in the early Fifties, becoming so much a fixture in the fixture that it's now named after him. (Quite right: don't name sporting events after corporate sponsors, fag companies, car firms, insurers, booze merchants; that is not only crass, but abusive and exploitative of the memory of great competitors. When last did an insurance company sweat? Name events after people, and sod the lost revenue.)

Despite the 1997 race being just about the only event to resist cancellation in the wake of Di's funeral, it hasn't always gone ahead: bad weather, if not bad etiquette, can put a stop to it. But not to Campbell: in 1980, with conditions so foul as to prevent an official start, he led a happy rebellion, a splinter saunter to the top and back. This type of tale forms the basis of the booklet: hotch-potched memories and tributes from friends and friendly rivals alike.

Campbell emerges as a cross between Old Testament patriarch (that mad mop of

white hair! that beard!), anti-materialist minimalist, and kindly bloke. The minimalism appeals hugely. In middle-age, Campbell woke one morning, impulsively decided to run the 95-mile West Highland Way, set off from the Fort in sweltering conditions, and had reached Rannoch Moor before standard notions of sense and logic began to kick in and he turned back to the Coe. Like Harold Wilson's housewife, Campbell had a pound in his pocket (he always had a pound, only a pound), and this would have comprised his survival rations in the urban jungle of Milngavie had he made it that far. As it was, he backed off; but what was crucial was the initial move having been made. Many walkers and runners have 'the legs'; far fewer have this level of psychological motivational ooomph. There are other fine stories, especially of Campbell's near-mystical ability to materialise ahead of rivals having been minutes behind at the summit. There are also great pictures: of middle-aged Campbell loping down a snow slope like a yeti with a number pinned to its chest; of a young Campbell, big-hearted Highland youth personified, stretching out on some quiet backroad.

The hill-running world (as with the running world generally, but more so), seems a loose knit shuffling-striding mobile community, an off-road roadshow. As with any unsung, unhyped mass participation event (a weekend chess congress for example), for all that there are Top Performers, and, occasionally, Stars, the main thing – the thing that makes it happen, the thing that it's All About – is for people just to turn up and take part and love it for what it is: a purposeful gathering. Eddie Campbell knew this, intuitively, down to his gristle.

It may be that Massacre of Glen Coe grievances linger on in Lochaber, that the McDonalds still see themselves as holding the moral high ground, that the sign in the Clachaig – 'No Campbells' – is still there and still meant. But, if so, now's the time to take it down – and to put up a picture instead. A picture of a massive, slightly mad, certainly kind, ramshackle ragbag of a man from just over the hill, who paid more than enough dues for his name and whose messy, indeterminate role model would make the ad-men and image makers cringe and flee. Campbell the athlete was miles from Sky Sports or some Golden Four money-earner in Oslo; Campbell the man was even farther from cushy, cosy shallowness and frippery. As with Nancy Smith before him, he deserves to be remembered for application and attitude, for what we all need to do if we're to make the hills (and life generally) that bit better for everyone. This booklet forms a fine start-line for such hopes: nothing so human or so heartfelt was published last year.

Dave Hewitt.

Arran, Arrochar and the Southern Highlands:– (The Scottish Mountaineering Club, 1997. Graham Little, Tom Prentice and Ken Crocket. 385pp, 22 illus., 46 maps and diagrams. £14.95. ISBN 0 907521 49 5.)

Nine years after the last edition, the latest Arran, Arrochar and the Southern Highlands guide appears with an increase of 50% in route numbers. Where will it all end? Despite the increase the guide remains the same size. This is an excellent guide and it is good to see a large number of people contributed. Photos are the first thing people notice; these are just what are expected, fine and varied, especially the Arran shots. Although I like the cover photograph of Nimlin's Route it has already appeared in Donald Bennet's book and the Journal, couldn't we be treated to something new? Previously unpublished rock climbing areas include the Mull of Kintyre (which will be handy if I miss the ferry to Ballycastle), and the Arran conglomerate – how many KiloNewtons will a tied-off rusty bicycle spanner hold?

The winter grounds around Bridge of Orchy have been expanded, Ben Lawers and the Tarmachans are included for the first time. A collection of snowy routes at Beinn Mhor should keep the Dunoon climbers busy.

There is plenty of history to read in a wet tent – the aid and bolts are written up for people to draw their own conclusions about Arran. The Glen Croe bolt created quite a stir 10 years ago, but didn't get a mention, neither did the fact that Wild Country was originally recorded at E4! The black-and-white pictures are an interesting idea and spice up the historical section.

Many routes gain a grade (a healthy trend that will hopefully catch on at Newtonmore) and a few even go down. I'm told the peg on Lawyer's Leap is past it's best and the route might now be worth E2.

I have found diagrams to be the biggest irritation in recent guides. I couldn't find Bullroar with the diagram from the latest guide, and I now carry the 1969 guide up Ben Nevis. Similarly, the latest Glen Coe guide diagrams lack the detail of the 1980 guide.

The diagrams in this guide are as good as any but are very faint, presumably to make the lines of the routes stand out. Other guides avoid this by marking the routes in red or blue. The drawing of Goatfell South Slabs is a bit cluttered, again the 1980 drawing of the Etive Slabs shows a way out using different symbols. Finally, what criteria is used in deciding whether a crag gets a diagram? Kinglas Crag has several icefalls which can be checked from the road thereby avoiding a wasted day, if there was a diagram.

After seeing this guide I'm keen to get back to the old haunts but I'll still pick on a few more points. Right On and Silo are not fully described, some sad person might want to climb them. Creag Liath still seems a bit confused, Hadrian's Wall (renamed Paranoia) is probably Guides Route. The Abseilers at Glen Croe get a bad Press but not the Pegomaniacs. The rock routes at Kinglas Crag are too steep for any self-respecting seepage.

A couple of years ago a friend in England said the SMC guides were the best in Britain – praise indeed. Keep it up.

Colin Moody.

Munro's Tables and other Tables of lower hills:– (1997 The Scottish Mountaineering Trust, viii + 168pp, ISBN 0 907521 53 3, £15.95. Revised and Edited by Derek A. Bearhop.)

The new edition of Munro's Tables arrived with unprecedented publicity which many an aspiring author must have envied. Even the daily papers latched on to the announcement of eight new mountains in Scotland. The outdoor Press were more circumspect and in some cases critical but certainly none could ignore the deliberations of the SMC in promoting further summits to Munro status.

With this review coming some time after the event it is perhaps best to accept the changes as *fait accomplii* and concentrate on the book itself. Essentially, with the welcome addition of the Graham list, it is very much the mixture as before, albeit in a smart new format.

Tops are now more clearly differentiated from their parent Munros by the use of a lighter typeface. The heights are given only in metres which is perhaps inevitable now that all the figures are based on new surveys but this accentuates the quirkiness of a list which cuts off at 914.4m. It would be convenient to be provided with space for recording the date of ascent but one feels that the SMC rather disapproves of

Munro-bagging and provides this list purely as a scientific record of hills above a certain altitude.

A welcome addition is the list of 34 hills furth of Scotland. It would be pleasing if the next edition of the book incorporated a list of the 53 furth Corbetts and the 134 furth Grahams.

The list of Munroists inevitably occupies more and more space and might seem designed only to boost the egos of those whose names appear therein. There is much of interest to be found in perusing this list. It is pleasing to see the columns for completion of tops and furth reappearing. The drop, over the years, in the percentage of those tackling the tops in addition to the Munros is particularly noticeable. It is a matter of conjecture as to whether the majority of those ascending the Munros are completely ignoring the subsidiary tops or omitting only a few awkward summits. The percentage not completing the tops seems destined to increase with Knight's Peak added to the list.

Of course, the Munros are the heart of the book and come with both an index and a height order list, as do the Donalds. The Corbetts have an index but no list in height order, while the newly-included Grahams have no index and their height order list includes only the top 20 which seems particularly pointless. A major wish for the next edition is a height order list for all the hills. Perhaps there is a fear that people will notice how close the top three Corbetts come to qualifying as Munros and may go and climb these fine hills which are currently the preserve of the connoisseur.

There are excellent clear maps which show both Munros and Corbetts, two extra maps being provided for those Corbetts (in the Southern Uplands and in Morvern, Sunart, Ardgour and Moidart) which are far from any Munros. An obvious wish for the next edition is that the Grahams should be added to these maps. Oddly enough, although the Corbetts lie beyond the Munros to north, south, east and west, the Grahams do not extend the boundaries in all directions. Corbetts Beinn Spionnaidh and Mount Battock are the most northerly and easterly hill more than 2000ft in Scotland, respectively.

Although essentially a triviality, the irritating issue of sections should be mentioned here. After climbing more than a 1000 of the Scottish Marilyns listed in Alan Dawson's addictive book the section numbers still cause confusion, which is further compounded in this book by the use of different but still illogical numbering. There seems no good reason why the Munro section numbers cannot be used throughout, with the introduction of appropriate sub-sections as has been done for the Corbetts. Dawson's region 18 is the same as Corbett Section 10A. Graham region 19 straggles some 20kms beyond Beinn Bheula into the Cowal peninsula and perhaps, to prevent Section 1 becoming too unwieldy, could become 1A which would also contain four Corbetts and possibly the cluster of Grahams immediately west of Loch Lomond and south of Arrochar which are currently left in Section 1 anyway. Graham region 21 is indistinguishable from Section 8, Cook's Cairn and Corryhabbie Hill, Morven and Mona Gowan, being a couple of convenient combinations for the sub-Munro collector. This leaves the two hills in region 23 to be accommodated. Uamh Beag was in Section 1 in the original book and remains close in both distance and character to Ben Vorlich and Meall na Fearna, its removal being based purely on a geological anomaly. The Ochils, with their single Graham, are more clearly distinct and whether they should belong to the Southern Highland Section 1 or the Southern Upland Section 0 (or perhaps some subsection thereof) is open to debate.

This is one book which is unlikely to go out of print so it seems appropriate for

this review to incorporate a wish list for the next edition. As usual Donald's tables are included in the book. Their scope is now extended to include a couple of hills, one the aforementioned Graham, Uamh Beag, which previously were assumed to belong in the Highlands.

The appendix has been dropped in this edition. As the editor rightly points out, the existence of a single contour does not, in general, imply a significant top. However, before this addition to the tables disappears for ever into unlamented oblivion it is perhaps worth pointing out here that the 1981 revision of the tables failed to understand its significance. Far from incorporating every bump with an isolated contour of any height the original appendix listed only those with a single 2000ft contour. It was designed to pinpoint areas of land which would become tiny islands were sea level to rise to exactly 2000ft.

A Gaelic Guide is included which translates the hill names into English and gives an indication of the pronunciation, although not entirely eliminating the confusion which many feel over the apparently perverse spelling. Why are there letters which are not sounded at all? The notorious Fhionnlaidh, suggested elsewhere to be Ula, appears here as Yoonly. A lot of visitors from south of the Border will probably continue to speak of 'cheesecake' and 'Ben Agony' but it is to be hoped that many will at least read this section of the book and benefit from an understanding of the meaning of the names.

Along with this goes the wish, expressed in a short coda, that the many walkers and climbers drawn to the Scottish hills by books such as this one, will learn to respect the mountain environment and the people who live and make their living there. In return we can hope that these people will understand that the influx of such tourists, while it may cause some disturbance and erosion, is mainly beneficial to the Scottish economy. For example, a blanket ban on hillwalking from July to February seems quite unreasonable in any area whether it contains Munros or not.

As is customary the introduction gives a brief appreciation of Sir Hugh Munro and of the first Munroist, the Rev A. E. Robertson. It reveals the fact that Munro may have failed to ascend Carn an Fhidhleir as well as the 'In Pinn' and Carn Cloich-mhuillin, now sadly only a 'top', on which he planned to celebrate his compleation.

Although few will mourn the disappearance of the other 14 rather insignificant tops it seems a pity to delete Sgurr Dearg which, as pointed out in the introduction, was once the official Munro. It has subsequently remained as a consolation prize for the many walkers who climb all except the Inaccessible Pinnacle. Here, surely, sentiment should have taken precedence over survey.

And there is room for sentiment, for herein lies part of the fascination of the Munros. As the stunning pictures in this book remind us, this is not just a list of dry statistics. Behind the figures lie real mountains, rock and snow, grass and bog, sunny days with long-ranging views and equally memorable days of mist and storm. The pictures are superb but only the one of Ladhar Bheinn captures any hint of the beauty which still haunts the Highlands on a less-than-perfect day.

These lists inspire fanaticism both among those who become obsessed with climbing the hills and those who despise them for doing so. The addition of the Grahams will perhaps persuade more people to realise that there is life after the Munros and many worthwhile hills lower than 3000ft. That said, even the most single-minded, blinkered fanatic who ascends nothing but Munros can surely not climb these 284 hills and remain unmoved by beauty along the way.

Ann Bowker.

Eiger Dreams – Ventures Among Men and Mountains:– Jon Krakauer. (Pan Books, 1997, 186pp, £6.99, paperback. ISBN 0 330 37000 6).

This is a collection of essays and journal articles by an award-winning author, all but one previously published. The book is subtitled *Ventures among Men and Mountains* and is prefaced by two intriguing quotations on the nature of adventure. One reflects on the relationship between adventure and storytelling, the other on adventure and incompetence. In his introduction the author tells us 'by the end of the book I think the reader will have a better sense not only why climbers climb, but why they tend to be so goddamm obsessive about it'.

So far, so promising. However, there is a sub-text. Both author and publisher tell us that the book is intended for a non-climbing readership, and presumably to attract these readers they trot out a string of hackneyed cliches about: '. . . the thrill of dicing with death . . . the attraction of high risk sports . . . those who elect to participate in this hazardous pastime do so not in spite of the unforgiving stakes, but precisely because of them.'

Regrettably, many of the essays merely fuel the fires of tabloid-style sensation. Krakauer paints a gory picture of glory-seekers playing Russian Roulette among the peaks and glaciers, lacing his stories with casualty statistics, morbid anecdotes and gung-ho bravado. I rapidly came to the conclusion that the non-climbing reader would merely have had his or her superficial prejudices confirmed, exactly on the lines of the publisher's hype. Equally, Krakauer's attempts to write for a non-climbing audience are unconvincing. He explains all the technical details (an ice screw is 'a threaded eight-inch aluminium or titanium tube with an eye at the end'), but his account of climbing, whether on an unprotected ice pillar or a major peak, gives too little insight into the climber's feelings, fears or motivation.

But it's not all bad. Krakauer is at his best with reportage – recounting (other people's) experiences and profiling personalities. Among several good profiles, there is an excellent piece on John Gill, based on thorough research, which does explore one man's motivation. Another tale of a solo trip to Alaska describes youthful over-ambition and a painful learning experience.

Krakauer writes for a living – and not just about climbing. His journalistic style seems most suited to interviews, anecdote and travelogue. Indeed, much of the book's subject matter is not his own personal experience, but the paraphernalia of climbing conversations – bar-room tales, recycled news, history, assorted trivia. He frequently repackages snippets of all too familiar European climbing lore for a North American audience.

Despite the promise of the book's opening, the author never gets to grips with the intriguing dichotomy about adventure posed by the opening quotations. The collection lacks any common thread, other than that the essays were first published over a short period in the Eighties. Krakauer may be a competent journalist, but the chapters seem to follow a too-obvious formula. I felt his prose (with a few rare exceptions) was mostly superficial and lacking in feeling. Apart from a few brief passages, the writing was devoid of a perceptive response to the mountain environment. For me, at least, the distinctive thing about climbing is the intensity of its experience. That intensity is rarely present in the pages of this book.

Adam Kassyk.

The First Fifty Years of the British Mountaineering Council – A political History. (1997; British Mountaineering Council; 321 pp.; illus.; £16.99; ISBN 0 903908 07 7).

This incestuous book is a potpourried compendium of historical events in the politics of British mountaineering. The Council righteously felt that it had to produce its own curate's egg and cook up something that would be sometimes good, but could often be bland and tedious after each of its numerous contributors had put in their ha'penny worth of literary pabulum.

Its first aim was to record sequentially the tale of events from one decade to another that brought in a recognisable role for a Mountaineering Council. These sections are well done. They show how 'the BMC circulated crucial safety advice in the years [before nut protection and good equipment] when the sport was particularly hazardous...the efforts that were made to secure better equipment and training standards...the tensions that came about between the over-regulating zeal of educationalists and trainers and the mainstream sport keen to keep certification realistic and marginal...' They also chart 'the never ending struggle to maintain access to mountains and cliffs', and describe 'the often turbulent relationship with the Sports Council – an organisation constantly perplexed by the anarchic nature of climbing'. Yes, the interest is maintained through a tortuous saga that led to the successful role that the Council now plays in British mountaineering.

However, the reader's concentration may falter as each of the many business committees starts a mundane litany through an agenda of the over-familiar topics of access, conservation, training, insurance, safety, technique, manuals, books, guides, walls, competitions, marketing, finance, and public relations. Worse follows as each in turn of the nine area committees blows its parochial trumpet about its local issues that can only be of much interest to those in the areas themselves. It goes on slipping downhill into mere data to make a catalogue of its sponsored and backed international expeditions and meets that go here, there, and everywhere; of its affiliated clubs and its phonebook lists of its officers, officials, and professional staff right down to the most junior toiler in the office, until it settles 'for some fascinating'...well, you could have fooled me... 'articles from *Mountaineering,* its admirable house magazine'....now defunct.

Let's flag up some redeeming national features. There are numerous antique photos: some rare mug shots arranged in gallery style that include a fair complement of Scottish personality pics. Not only Bob Grieve in his stint as a BMC patron, but from the earlier days our series of presidential worthies, like Wordie, Macphee, and Murray. Sometimes, when we filled the minor presidential role consistent with our relative numbers within the British mountaineering scene, in came Ogilvie, Gorrie and Cunningham, and there is delight in a wonderfully jolly pair of photos of two Vice-Presidential alpinists, unshaven, paddy-hatted, draped with a nylon rope halter, posing in turn on what looks like someone's verdant backgarden rockery.

Significant events turn up in long-forgotten snaps. Take the June day of the official opening of the BMC Memorial Hut at Glen Brittle, in which the style and social milieu of the mid-Sixties has been captured beautifully; the honoured guests in costume, suit and kilt ,while there plonked in the front row stands the Unknown Punter broiling in his flatcap duncher and his padded Michelin-man duvet jacket, but with his priorities right as he keeps his glass firmly grasped in his hand.

It tells how the role of the SMC within the BMC was initially uncertain and equivocal. Although at first it was antagonistic towards the existence of such a body it eventually accepted that it could dutifully play its part in this new-fangled piece of bureaucracy.

When the clubs within Scotland withdrew from the distant southern seat of power and brought into existence the Association of Scottish Climbing Clubs the SMC still kept its boots placed within the portals of the BMC. However, the pressure of conservation and other local difficulties, such as 'that farce of lies, intrigue and incompetence by officials, public bodies, etc., that was to become known as the Coruisk Affair,' indicated that a more professional and comprehensive organisation was essential to deal with all the Scottish issues, and so, in 1970 the Mountaineering Council of Scotland came into existence. Sandy Cousins, Hon. Sec., and in reality Mr MCoS, represented the new body to the BMC, BMC Technical Committee, SSC, MRCS, SMLTB, SCAC, SLF, SNSC, MBA, FC, NIMC, NTS, etc. (no prize on offer for the first correct set of translations). His informative account from memory of the first 25 years of MCoS is thankfully brief because both early and current files and minutes appear to have vanished into the mist – and that's naughty, folks.

Politics? Yes, jousting, squabbles, and creative powerplay. Take the birthpangs of the organisation in 1944. It was launched in the name of the Alpine Club, but there was a quick response from an irate cabal of AC and SMC members who wrote objecting to the formation of a Council without the AC Committee having been consulted and, further, that this project had not been brought before the members at a General Meeting for their approval. Among the signatories to this letter were such dignified SMC ex-Presidential members as Ling, Glover, Garden, MacRobert, Harrison, Parker and P. J. H. Unna. This all begins to sound somewhat familiar and topical, doesn't it? Much wind had generated much heat. A revolt had started. Consternation swept through the Club. Progressives were trying to make sweeping changes. There were those who were worried that the new body might steal the thunder and prestige of the Club. Old guard members were ready to fight any action. North of the Border was the fiefdom of the SMC and in no way did they want their authority usurped .The clans were about to rise and with a hearty shout the claymore was quickly brandished.

Like many an historical lost cause, this uprising was squashed with a carefully-orchestrated broadside driving the final nails into its coffin. Quoting from a well-crafted speech later delivered to the Committee by a major protagonist and proponent for the new body...'over-generous sympathy has been extended for Scottish nationalism...my heart is curiously unwilling to bleed for Scottish woes...the SMC [heavily opinionated in the righteousness to the letter] played a somewhat ignoble part in the negotiations leading up to the formation of the BMC – and one may be forgiven for thinking that a club which is quite unable to keep the younger and more active climbers within the club framework is scarcely the body to have any preponderant voice of shaping the future of climbing in this country'.

Great stuff, the essence of cut and thrust and how to win friends and influence people. Ain't history wonderful!

Yes, this is a 'unique and somewhat unusual publication'. Just right for archivists, club libraries, historians, archeologists, plagiarists, browsers, pedants, politiconerds and mountain trivial pursuitists. If your name is in it, buy it.

Philip Gribbon.

Into The Wild:– John Krakauer. (Macmillan, £14.99, ISBN 0 333 73542 0).

A young man disowns his parents and his affluent background, assumes the name Alexander Supertramp, and proceeds on an odyssey to seek the simple, unfettered, independent and immediate life as extolled by his heroes Leo Tolstoy and Jack London. Two years' later, Chris McCandless's body is found in the wilds of Alaska.

John Krakauer – the author of *Into Thin Air* – first came across the story when asked to write an article on McCandless for *Outside Magazine.* Intrigued and sensing echoes with his own life, he could not let it drop, and this book is the result.

McCandless befriended many people on his travels and made a considerable impact on quite a number of them. It could be said that the majority might be considered somewhat out of the mainstream and perhaps inclined to be affected by someone holding – and living – such earnest, unorthodox and uncompromising views. Still, McCandless clearly had charisma, was well-read and believed in himself completely, and was perhaps not the typical youthful drop-out.

However, what did he learn from his journey? His insights, as revealed in his journal, are those of someone yet to mature, someone still living out a kind of fantasy, and they remain unshaped by any real depth of experience. If his certainties were at all shaken when things started going wrong we do not know, because as time passes so his journal entries become briefer, until finally, they are simple factual entries of game killed or other food collected and his thoughts can only be guessed at. His great self-belief is ultimately not enough, but he doesn't live to learn that.

Many people go through similar phases, although rarely expressed in quite so extreme a manner, and fortunately, usually without fatal results, but McCandless is not alone. Krakauer places him in some sort of context by weaving in stories of others who died on similar adventures, and makes explicit the link with mountaineering in a couple of chapters on an obviously significant personal experience on the Devil's Thumb, when he was a similar age to McCandless.

In some respects any general insights don't ultimately amount to much. The young tend to reject their parents. Some people are drawn to high-risk activities, youth in particular, and arguably few fully comprehend the size of the stakes because they don't really believe they are mortal. Those left behind to worry, or to grieve, suffer the greatest burden.

However, obvious though such insights may arguably be, I found the book moving, thought-provoking and disturbing. Like many others, I suspect, I have done largely what I wanted, believing in myself and what I considered to be a sober assessment of the risks I took. Rarely have the thoughts and feelings of others significantly influenced me. It is no bad thing to be reminded that our actions affect more than ourselves, that we too are subject to the same rules as everyone else and that we may run closer to the line than we realise.

Had he survived, I suspect McCandless would have mellowed and his views become less dogmatic. As it is, he remains forever young, headstrong, selfish and a bit of a pain in the arse. But weren't we all once.

[The extremes of opinion which exist about McCandless and about this book can be explored by reading the reviews at http://www.amazon.com.]

Bob Duncan.

John Muir: His Life and Letters and Other Writings by John Muir:– Terry Gifford, Editor. (Bâton Wicks/The Mountaineers, 1996, £20.00, ISBN 1 898573 07 7) **John Muir: The Eight Wilderness Discovery Books by John Muir:-** (Diadem/The Mountaineers, 1992, £20.00, ISBN 0 906371 34 1).

The rediscovery of John Muir in the UK has accelerated since the 1970s, when the late Frank Tindall initiated the John Muir Country Park (1976) and the restoration of the John Muir House Birthplace Museum (1980). Terry Gifford has made a valuable contribution to the process of repatriating Muir as a Scottish environmental and cultural icon, through two omnibus editions of Muir's writings. *The Eight Wilderness Discovery Books* made Muir's writings much more widely available than before in the UK, and Terry's second compilation *John Muir; His Life and Letters and Other Writings* provides us with an entire library of Muir material. It includes the first, and arguably the finest biography of Muir, by William Frederic Badè; Muir's own *Cruise of the Corwin, Studies in the Sierra, Picturesque California* and the memorable *Stickeen* - which many would rate as the best 'canine adventure' ever told. The inclusion of Samuel Hall Young's *Alaska Days with John Muir* is a rare pleasure, because it gives us one of the finest portraits of Muir the mountaineer.

The Life and Letters of John Muir was published in 1924 by William Frederic Badè, Muir's literary executor and one of his closest confidants. The research for this book laid bare the bedrock from which all other subsequent works were quarried. The broad canvas of Muir's life and the epic scale of his achievements in establishing the American conservation movement are clearly portrayed. And although it is a work of truly massive scholarship, it is a well-told tale, richly embroidered with anecdote, adventure and incident.

Gifford's inclusion of Muir's *Studies in the Sierra* constitutes a self-tutor in geology and glaciation, richly illustrated with 50 of Muir's own field sketches of the rocks and mountain ranges he was exploring. Far more readable than any modern geology textbook, it reveals the workings of an incisive mind and a talented artist. If geology has always puzzled you – read this and you will be inspired to learn more.

Samuel Hall Young's *Alaska Days with John Muir* relates the engaging story of Young's adventures with Muir in the northern wildernesses. Young describes the famous 1879 expedition to the 8000ft. Glenora Peak, on which he dislocated both his shoulders in a fall near the summit. Muir saved Young's life that day by carrying him down the mountain on his back and at times suspended from his teeth! The book provides us with perhaps the best description of Muir's self-taught mountaineering skills and legendary endurance. The following extract gives a flavour of what a great read this book really is.

'Muir began to slide up that mountain. I had been with mountain climbers before, but never one like him. A deer-lope over the smoother slopes, a sure instinct for the easiest way into a rocky fortress, an instant and unerring attack, a serpent glide up the steep; hand and foot all connected dynamically; with no appearance of weight to his body. And such climbing! . . . crawling under an overhanging rock, edging along an inch-wide projection while fingers clasped knobs above the head, pulling up sheer rock faces by sheer strength of arm and chinning over the edge, leaping fissures – always going up, up, – no hesitation, no pause – that was Muir!'

Terry Gifford's compilation deserves a place on the bookshelf of every mountaineer and conservationist.

Graham White.

Scottish Highland Estate, Preserving an Environment. Michael Wigan (Swan Hill Press, 1991, £18.95, ISBN 1 853101 62 1. Also in paperback at £15.95, ISBN 1 840370 03 3).

This is no more than a brief note to draw your attention to a book which was first published in 1991 but only came to the attention of this reviewer last year.

Michael Wigan is a North of Scotland landowner and journalist, and his book is a most readable, and entertaining, account of the various economic activities on which the highland estates and those who live on them depend. Anyone who recognises that the Highlands are more than a public park for mountaineers will find this handsome, well-illustrated volume compulsive reading.

Bryan Fleming.

Trekking in Nepal, A Traveler's Guide. Stephen Bezruchka (7th Edition, Cordee, 1997, £12.95, ISBN 1 871890 93 4, 383pp, paperback, many illus.)

Quite simply, this is a labour of love and it shows. It is much more than a guide, though it excels at that function. It also educates, drawing on almost 30 years' of personal experience of the author. If you buy one guide to Nepal, this is the one.

Ken Crocket.

Also received: Romsdal, **Norway. Walks and Climbs in Romsdal** by Tony Howard. (3rd Edition, 1998, n.o.m.a.d.s., ISBN 1 871890 04 7, £14.99, softback. 128pp.) More than 200 routes in this reprint of a long-out-of-print guide.
Kilimanjaro and Mount Kenya. A Climbing and Trekking Guide. Cameron M. Burns. (Cordee, 174pp, ISBN 1 871890 985, £11.95) A guide to the top 30 routes. How to get there and how to get up.

Journals of Kindred Clubs

The American Alpine Journal, Vol. 39, 1997. Editor Christian Beckwith.

Just like our Journal the American Alpine Journal is a very impressive publication. Enclosed within its 432 pages there are many striking monochrome and colour plates, 19 separate articles, more than 200 pages on expeditions and climbs followed by American Alpine Club activities, reviews, obituaries and three appendices – the most useful to me being an attempt to compare some of the main climbing grading systems in use throughout the world. It shows no deterioration in quality following the death of the former Editor, H. Adams Carter.

The editorial and articles reflect many contradictions and tensions within climbing. One theme that features throughout the many excellent pieces is the influence of sponsorship; the resultant commercialisation of climbing and the recognition that many climbing decisions (both routine and at the elite end of climbing) are increasingly business decisions. Described elsewhere in the journal as 'Raging Consumerism', the Editor's preface asks if this was the real reason why

two guides (Rob Hall and Scott Fischer) died while working on Everest in 1995. The labyrinthine influence of money seems present at every level of Himalayan guiding and a later article asks: 'Do commercially guided expeditions attract clients (consumers) with mediocre abilities who pay $65,000 but are not competent for Everest.' This is complemented by a thought provoking article on the use of supplementary oxygen for high-altitude climbing. Does it reduce the ascent of Everest to a drug enhanced experience for those with money to spend. It also introduces extra danger such as an oxygen system malfunctioning close to the summit, plus inadequate acclimatisation by an individual; very likely to be fatal. Empty oxygen cylinders are reported to be an even bigger eyesore on the South Col of the highest mountain in the world than the bodies of dead climbers.

The first main article is an account of a Slovenian Alpine style ascent of the North-west face of Ama Dablam. It captures the danger and seriousness of the climb and on reaching the summit the first activity is 'taking our advertising shots for sponsors'. There is also a very readable and terse account of Catherine Destivelle breaking her leg in Antarctica resulting from her falling through a cornice while posing for summit photos.

In addition to addressing the tensions within climbing, it is occasionally a journal of refreshing honesty. Mount Kennedy is in the St. Elias range in Canada and an epic ascent of the North-west Face in May 1996 ends on the North Ridge, linking nicely with an established route. It begs the question, should the route or the summit be the prime goal of mountaineering? If it is just the route are mountains then reduced to big crags? On page 86, at a low point in the epic when both climbers are exhausted, they are entirely committed and then a crampon is irretrievably dropped. The comment here is: 'We keep moving up. Could be worse . . . we could be in Scotland.' I'm still not sure what was meant! Then in a late addendum to the article the author candidly states: 'But we failed to stand on the highest point of the mountain . . . I know that deep down really, we failed.' Well, they may have failed to reach the summit but at least they got their article published!

The climbs and expeditions sections naturally favour North America, but later Worldwide sections appear well researched and comprehensive, and include the SMC Greenland expedition in 1996. Another SMC member who climbed Kulu Eiger was also included although credited as coming from the UK. The journal is in no sense parochial.

There are short reports of the activities of different sections of the American Alpine Club and of feeder clubs, emulating the way we record JMCS activities.

The AACJ is excellent for general mountaineering reading and earlier volumes provide an excellent resource for research about the history of climbing in remote areas throughout the world. The inclusion of outstanding photos, hand-drawn diagrams and topos evokes in this modern journal a solid, traditional feel. As our former president D. F. Lang once wrote: 'I implore members to borrow this volume if only for armchair excitement.' However, unlike the membership, I have to await the next edition.

C. M. Jones.

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Articles for the Journal should be submitted before the end of January for consideration for the following issue. Lengthy contributions are preferably typed, double-spaced, on one side only, and with ample margins (minimum 30mm). Articles may be accepted on floppy disk, IBM compatible (contact Editor beforehand), or by e-mail. The Editor welcomes material from both members and non-members, with priority being given to articles of Scottish Mountaineering content. Photographs are also welcome, and should be good quality colour slides. All textual material should be sent to the Editor, address and e-mail as above. Photographic material should be sent direct to the Editor of Photographs, address as above.

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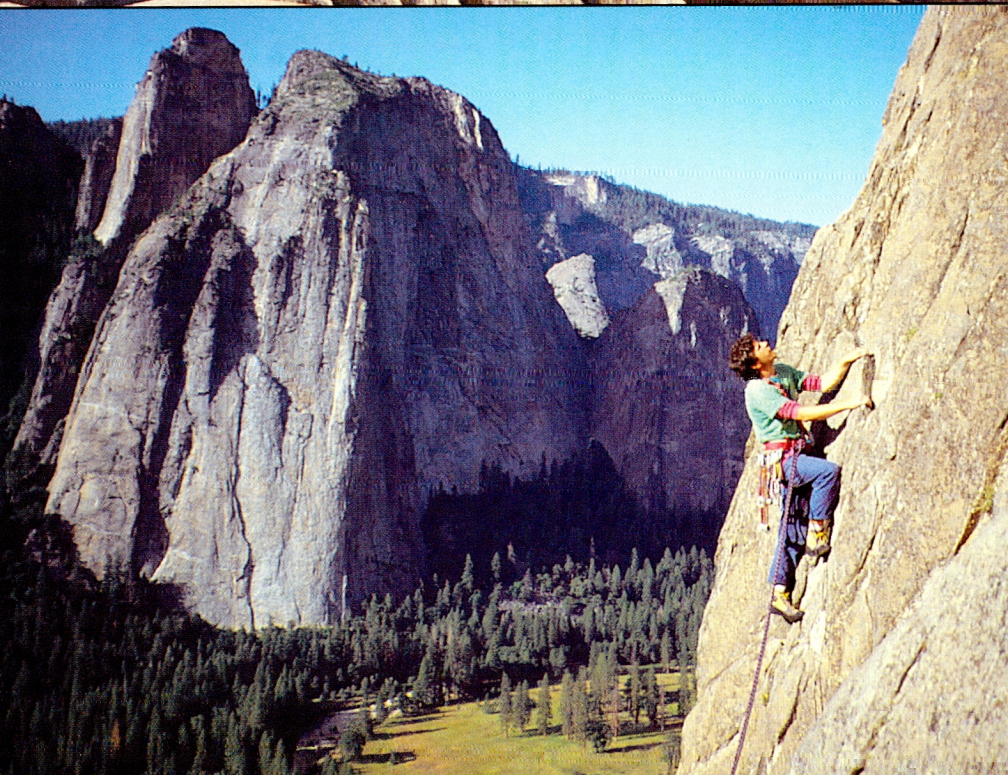
David Hesleden on Mount Asperity, Canada. Photo: Simon Richardson.



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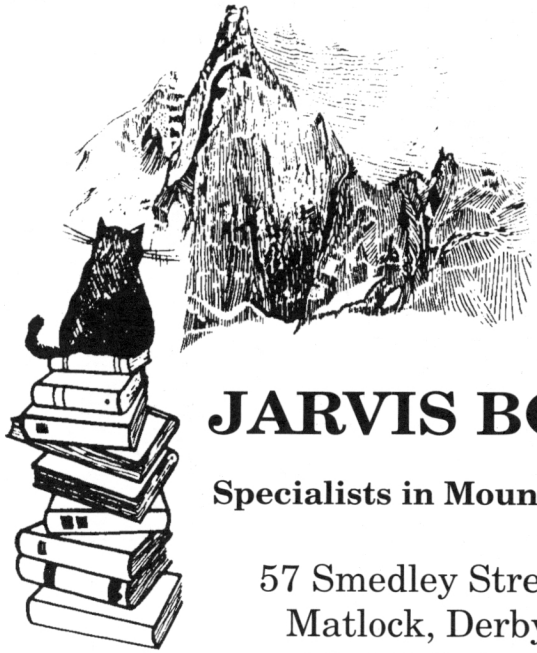

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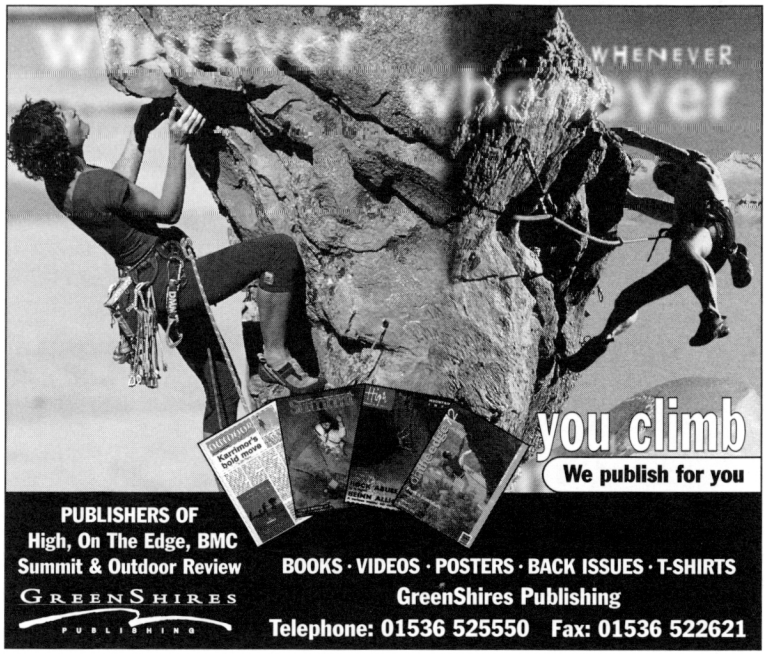

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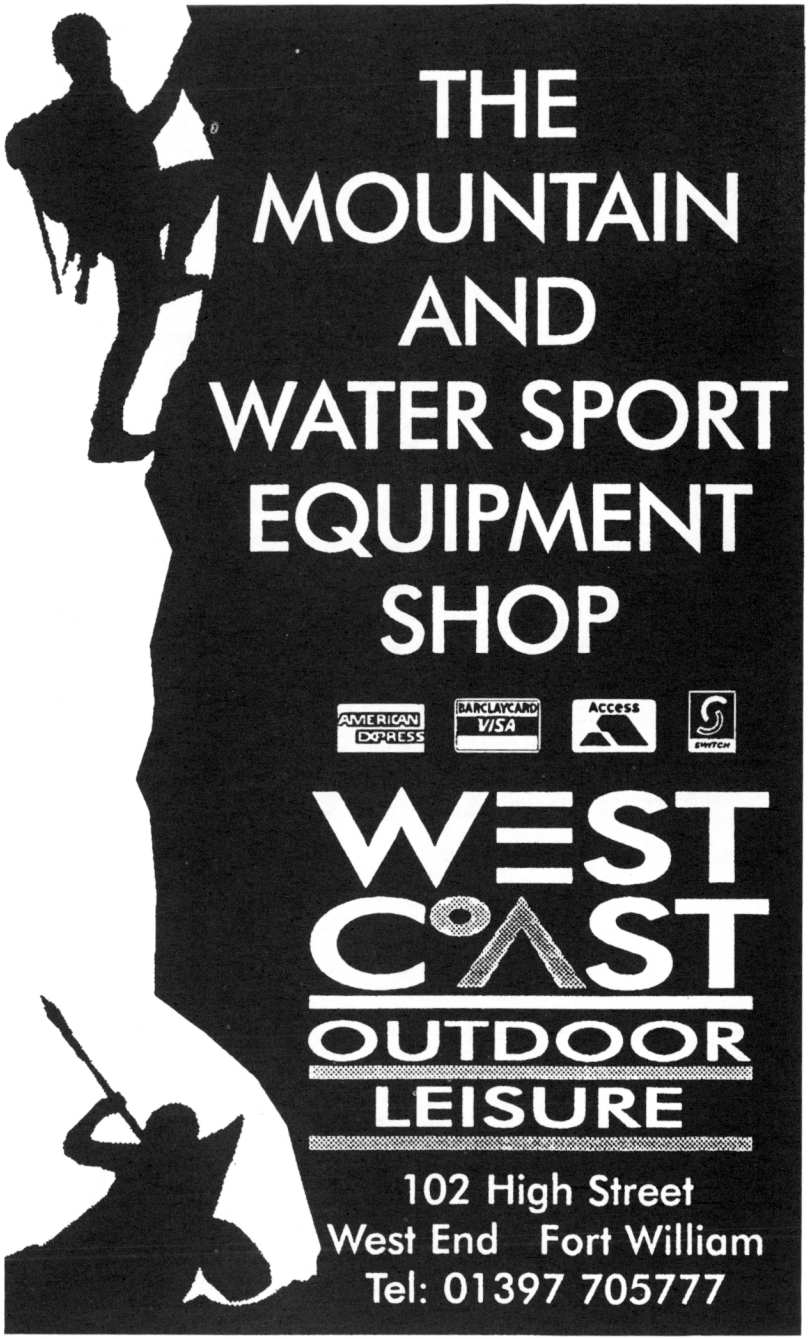
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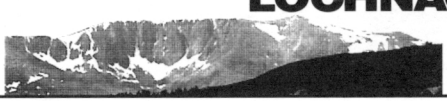

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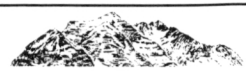

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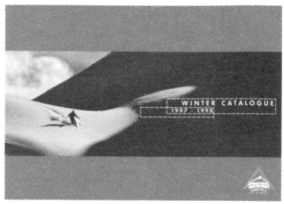

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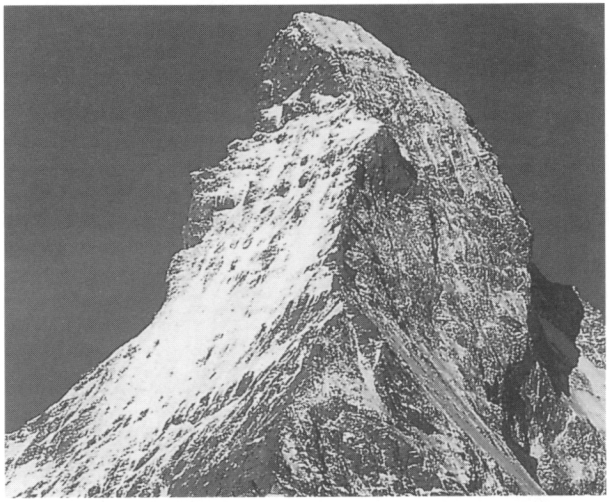

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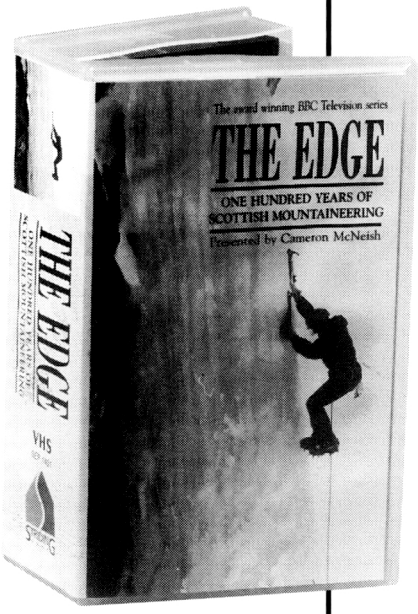

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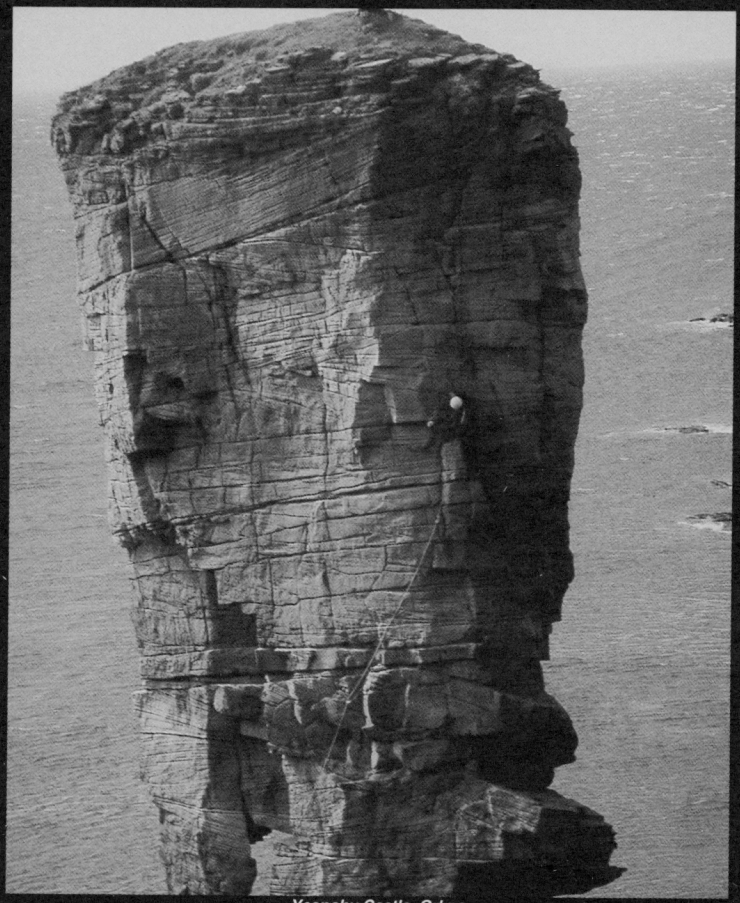

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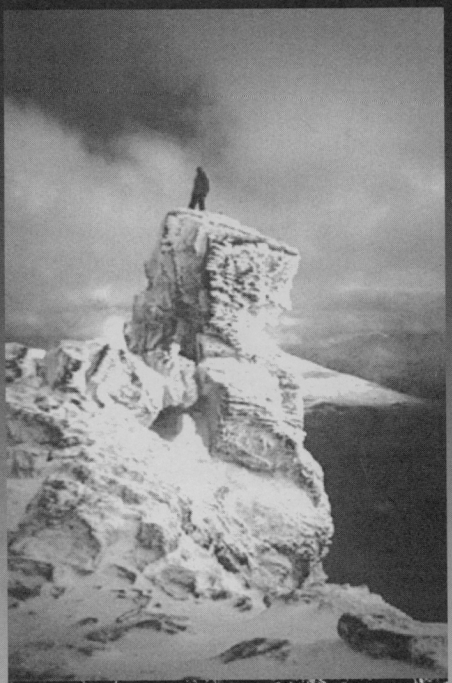

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