

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 set up 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 prize is run with a deadline, as is normal, of the end of January each year. So assuming you are reading this in early July, you have, for the next issue, 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 Entries must be of original, previously unpublished material.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 2005

THE winner of this year's W. H. Murray prize is club member, Graham Little, for his piece on the first ascent of the Lammergeir Spire, a 5350m. summit above the eastern flank of the Miyar Glacier in the Lahul region of India.

Graham's opening lines immediately signal that this is more than a straightforward account of a first ascent: "The ageing process is a matter of compromise, of balancing ambition and ability. To pretend it isn't happening is a sure-fire route to frustration and suffering."

Graham gives us his personal thoughts on the impact of ageing on a lifetime of top-flight mountaineering achievement and how he is coming to terms with that. This is not done in a dry analytical way, but in a style that weaves what at times amounts to poetry into the narrative of what could probably be described as a 'watershed' climb in the author's life.

"As we reverse down the ridge a great bird glides below us, wide wings stroking the air in effortless glide. The ease of the Lammergeir's flight contrasts with my own clumsiness. It is *of* the mountains. I am *in* the mountains."

It is also interesting to note that, like Mick Fowler, a previous recipient of the W. H. M. prize for his article *Climbing In The Cold*, Graham takes the opportunity to point to "climbing as a way of life" as opposed to a competition. "It is very clear to me that mountaineering is not a sport, is not about winning, but is a way of life."

"The walk in, the climb, the walkout – they are the journey of life."

And although Graham perhaps sees himself about to start the long walk out, it seems, judging by the acceptance and understanding displayed in his writing that he will carry the limitations of age comfortably.

Coincidentally, this issue of the Journal also has text and photographic evidence of Graham during his 'walk in' period on the first ascent of a route in Galloway in 1968, included in Stephen Reid's fine article *Dungeon Days*.

Also coming in for praise from the judges was Adam Kassyk's *A Tale Of Three Accidents* which, in the regrettable absence of the 'The Accidents' for yet another year, perhaps goes someway to dishing up a portion of Schadenfreud to those feeling the need.

Phil Gribbon also hit the mark with his *Dancing With Sticks* "a delightful and at times thought provoking tale" and as one judge remarked. "Anyone who can wander without contradiction from Pic d'Entard to Chernobyl, to the pier at Mallaig and all while telling the tale of a cowherd's stick deserves a prize."

The limitations of age seems to have been in the air this year as Bob Richardson chose to examine the same theme in his well received piece *The Peak Of The Quarters*. This memoir details an early rebuff from this Highland peak and a return during his Littlesquian 'walk out' period.

"Nearly 50 years later I realised if it were to be done, it were best done soon (if not quickly.)"

One senses however, that unlike Graham, Bob perhaps adopts more of a Meldrewian approach to old age: "The heat, the decrepitude of age and the weight of my pack combined to tell me firmly that my days of scampering the hills had gone and another day like this might just about be terminal – *The Peak of the Quarters* had taught me two lessons and I didn't much like the second one."

Congratulations again to Graham Little, and for the rest and all the other budding authors out there, there's always next year. The winning article as well as appearing in this year's Journal can also be read in full on the SMC website.

Charlie Orr.

ARCHIVING THE A. E. ROBERTSON COLLECTION

THE Reverend Archibald Eneas Roberston (AER) is celebrated not only as the First Munroist but also as an early and enthusiastic amateur photographer.

With his bout of Munrosis cured, following the completion of his round in 1901, AER turned his energies to photography. In two periods, the early 1900s and the early 1930s, he recorded his activities on the crags and hills of Scotland; his journeys through the glens and islands; his social life, and his travels outwith Scotland and England and beyond. Many of AER's photographs have graced the pages of early volumes of this Journal. They have also been used to illustrate a number of the older District Guides and other, more recent, SMC publications. Through the Journal and the Guides, several of AER's photographs have become iconic images of mountains and mountaineering in Scotland.

My interest in the AER Collection began in the late 1970s. At that time it was my custom to take a regular dram with the late Graham Tiso. On one such visit to his house I found him surrounded by a pile of boxes full of glass plate negatives. It appeared that Graham had just agreed, following the death of AER's second wife, Winifred, to take in the Collection until a more suitable home could be found. The Collection remains to this day in Graham's house where Maude Tiso now acts as guardian and gatekeeper. Back then I knew little of the Collection but, with Graham's permission, I borrowed a couple of the boxes and made some conventional photographic contact prints. I was intrigued not only by the quality of many of the images but also by the range of their subject matter. If these two boxes, chosen at random, contained such delights, then what lay elsewhere in the Collection? However, the limitations of my darkroom and a lack of time meant that there the matter lay, aside from a few desultory conversations with the Club Archivist along the lines that: "Something should be done about AER."

It was not until the Autumn of 2002 that the opportunity to do something arose. Work was no longer a burden on my time and I had finally abandoned the wet darkroom in favour of digital imaging. It seemed that with a bit of effort the Collection could be properly catalogued and digital copies of the images made. Making digital copies would have a number of benefits. Firstly, they would provide an alternative to the original, and often fragile, glass and film negatives; secondly, the images could be digitally enhanced to remove the blemishes accumulated over the years and restored to something close to their original condition; and, finally, once archived, the Collection could be made more easily and widely available. And so it was, with the agreement of the Slide Custodian and the Archivist, that I undertook to catalogue and copy the Collection.

There are two principal parts to the Collection. There is, firstly, a set of glass slides, with positive images for projection, and, secondly, a set of glass and film negatives. The slides are housed in a set of fine wooden boxes, made, it is believed, by AER himself during his woodworking phase. There are 29 wooden boxes, each holding between 50 and 100 slides. The glass and film negatives are stored in the cardboard boxes in which the unexposed plates and film were originally purchased. There are 173 such cardboard boxes, of various sizes, and each holds between 10 and several hundred negatives; (one recently opened box contained no less than 488 negatives). There are, then, probably something like 4000 images in the Collection. At the time of writing, approximately 2250 images have been catalogued and scanned.

In addition to the slides and negatives, there are two other parts to the Collection. There is a number of portfolios of photographic prints and a collection of AER's notebooks. There are 10 large print portfolios and four smaller print albums. The notebooks, 11 in all, seem to have been used by AER to jot down the odd note or

thought. Some of the notebooks were designed specifically to record photographic data (*Wellcomes Photographic Exposure Record and Diary*) but AER does not seem to have been particularly punctilious in doing this. Other notebooks contain random jottings, details of days on the hill, the weight of kit carried, the cost of lodgings, the names and addresses of keepers and, as befits a man of the cloth, thoughts of a spiritual and uplifting nature. Neither the print portfolios or the notebooks have been investigated in any great detail in this current exercise.

The first task in cataloguing and scanning the Collection was to set up a database to record details of each image. AER had been fairly diligent in organising and ordering his collection. The majority of the slides are annotated with a description of the image and often the date on which it was made. The boxes of negatives are, similarly, labelled and dated. It is clearly difficult to annotate individual negatives but where the negatives are housed in sleeves or grouped in tissue folders, AER has made pencil notes of their content.

AER's organisation of the Collection has been preserved in the database, down to the position of individual negatives in the boxes. Each record in the database consists of six fields. The first field is a unique identifier which records the type of container the slide or negative is housed in (wooden or cardboard box), the box number and the image number. Thus, CB(S)127-5 is the 5th negative in the small cardboard box numbered 127. The second field simply records whether the image is a slide or a negative. The third field records, *verbatim*, AER's own annotations, if any. The fourth field is used to add to AER's annotations or otherwise describe and identify the image subject matter. The fifth field records the number of the CD on which the image is backed up. And, finally, the sixth field records the number of the contact sheet where a thumbnail of the image can be found.

Each image is scanned at a resolution sufficiently detailed to allow enlargement, if needs be, to a reasonable display size without recourse to the source slide or negative. The image is adjusted to give a good tonal range and any major, and easily dealt with, blemishes removed. Details of the image are then recorded in the database. Once a box has been completed, contact sheets are made with the images as thumbnails, which will allow collections of the images to be conveniently printed and viewed. Once a sufficient number of boxes have been scanned, they are burned onto a CD and copies lodged with the Slide Custodian and the Archivist. Ultimately, it is envisaged that the entire Collection will be available on-line or by way of some portable storage device but the CDs now provide an essential backup to the work in progress. The entire catalogue scanned so far is also archived on an external hard disk.

At the time I undertook to catalogue and make digital copies of the Collection, I had little idea of the scale of the task ahead. What I had fondly imagined to be a few months' work, looks like extending, albeit on a part-time basis, into several years. It has, however, proved to be an absorbing exercise. Each box holds the promise of new and interesting images and working through the Collection has helped to pass many a wet winter's day and dark winter's evening. It has to be accepted that AER was an amateur and that his images cannot be compared with other early mountain photographers such as Sella or the Abraham brothers. Nevertheless, his photographs often show a good eye for composition and a number of his images have real aesthetic value. The technical quality of his negatives may not always be of the best but I have often found his images strangely evocative and moving, despite their imperfections. The Collection is perhaps best known for the mountain images but AER did not confine himself solely to landscapes. Like all enthusiastic amateurs, he carried his camera with him on his travels and recorded what he saw. There are, then, photographs

of his social circle and the houses where he stayed as a guest. There are photographs of his various means of transport, tandem bicycle, motor bike and cars, complete with gloved and uniformed chauffeur. There are some fine architectural studies of the antiquities of Rome, with hardly a tourist in sight, and of the cathedrals of England and the Cambridge colleges. And there are images of Highland ways of life and industries long since gone; keepers and their wives in lonely glens; black house crofts at Ardnamurchan and Morar; the herring fleet in Stornoway, and weavers in the Uists.

In the AER Collection, the SMC has been gifted a unique archive, a record of a time when few climbed the hills and wandered the glens solely for pleasure, when a different social order prevailed and when the pioneering activities of the Club were gaining momentum. It is an archive that needs curatorial care and attention. Over the years a number of authors and editors, both from within and outwith the Club, have foraged in the Collection for images to illustrate their work. Perhaps inevitably, the Collection has suffered a little as a consequence. Some images seem to be missing and others have been damaged in transit. On the sleeve of one glass negative, a fine and well kent image of Gearr Aonach in Glencoe, AER has somewhat poignantly noted: "... a perfect Negative! Handle him as if you loved him."

Sadly, the negative has been broken and then crudely repaired with sellotape. It is to be hoped that once this present exercise is completed, then the Collection will have been put on a sounder footing, properly catalogued and made more easily accessible for others to explore and enjoy.

Footnote: Four images from the Collection, taken from those already scanned, have been selected to accompany this article. None of the images have, it is thought, been published before. The first image is a 1908 study of the Cobbler on what looks like a fine Spring day. The identity of the two seated figures in the foreground is not known. The second image is annotated 'On Sgurr a' Mhaim looking East'. It is possible that the photographer in the image is W. Lamond Howie. If this is the case, then AER may not have taken the photograph as Howie was active before AER took up photography. The third image is of a group of climbers at Sligachan in the early 1900s. The gentleman on the left is probably Thomas Meares, AER's usual Skye partner. Next to him is the guide John Mackenzie. The gentleman in the centre is thought to be R. Arnold Brown. The two figures on the right may be other members of the Mackenzie clan, Murdoch and young Rory. The final image is somewhere on the West Ridge of Sgurr nan Gilleann and is dated 1905. AER's notebooks have an entry for June 12, of that year recording: "Sgurr nan Gilleann by the Pinnacle Ridge and the Gendarme with Meares and John."

John Mackenzie is seated left with, possibly, Rory Mackenzie standing just below him. Kate, AER's first wife, is seated centre. The standing, roped gentleman is Thomas Meares. The seated lady on the right is unknown. We might speculate that Rory Mackenzie had taken the ladies up the Tourist Route and that they are all descending the West Ridge together. How the ladies would have coped with the Gendarme in their heavy skirts is, perhaps, best left to further speculation. I am indebted to the Club Archivist for his help in the identification and description of these images.

David Stone.

A 1948 WINTER ASCENT

By Malcolm Slessor

THERE is so much brilliant climbing done these days, that when I look back at our antics 57 years ago (1948) I am truly impressed at how much climbing technology and skills have advanced. Here is an excerpt, word for word, from my diary of February 15. 1948. What is interesting about it is that we had no guide book, knowing only that we were seeking a way up Central Buttress on the Buachaille Etive Mor. It was my second time on the mountain.

"On the Sunday, Maurice Bramah and myself with an English chap working at the British Aluminium Co. at Kinlochleven set off for a scramble on Central Buttress

of the Buachaille. In spite of the cares of life – and there were many that weekend – the lovely weather, warm sunshine and rolling ground mist on the Muir of Rannoch soon brought one to a pleasant frame of mind by its recollection of a previous similar day in the Lost Valley in December 1947.

“We toiled up in a shower of sweat, peeling rapidly the clothes put on earlier for breakfast at Lagangarbh. Maurice, we persuaded to lead and so after the odd scramble on loose rock intermingled with looser heather and snow we arrived beneath our first ‘insurmountable’ obstacle. There we dallied, chewed the cud, made conventional and time-honoured cracks about leaders and the incidence of their falling off. Finally, with the juice of a dried apricot dripping from the corners of his mouth, up went Maurice. A good lead up a vertical crack. Nos. 2 & 3 looked on not quite unconcernedly, for we had no belay. However, Maurice did not disappoint us and soon we had joined him. The rest of the ascent up to a heather ledge was interesting and in places severe. We were rising high in the buttress now and there occurred an abrupt metamorphosis in the scene. We were suddenly plunged into Alpine rock faces, snow ledges and couloirs. Mist below us and snow everywhere on the higher hills. It had a salutary effect on myself, and my form, which up to now was fit only for a third man on a moderate climb, now rose to the required level. At least I felt up to preventing people falling off – just as well too. A neat lead by Maurice round the right-hand corner and his disappearance caused our last traces of anxiety to disappear and we (i.e. Nos. 2 & 3) lost ourselves in comparative contemplations of Nevis versus Binnein Mor, the latter looking the higher.

“Maurice’s perch at the top of his pitch was unsatisfactory. It consisted of (no belay) an arch in the rock face down which dripped an uncommonly large quantity of iced-water drops – most penetrating. From here I body-belayed him while he led the crux in appropriate manner and made it look so easy that (Nos. 2 & 3) were later caught unawares. The crux is a 10ft. groove on small holds made ice-cold by an icy drip from a cornice 100ft. above. There follows a rib traverse up a narrow sloping ledge to reach the only stance and belay. I got up with difficulty and a small margin. No. 3, alas, froze to the rock and then fell off, thereby executing a most commendable acrobatic panegyric in which my rope held easily (good man Tarbuck!) he embedded himself not so elegantly in a snow patch. No time was wasted. In five minutes he had forged a new route up the face and reached us with little more to show for his brief aerial levitation than an inward muttering at the follies of cold fingers and winter rockclimbing.

“The worst was over and with confidant knowledge we pressed on for the top. Once more into an Alpine scene we climbed a sharp snow crest and treaded warily and unroped to join our president George Chisholm. (on Curved Ridge). I suggested Coire Mor for the descent. This presented a magnificent glissade. No limbs were lost, but a considerable number of new seats (patches) will be in demand. We were able to descend to the 1300ft. contour. In all 12 hours of bliss.”

1. Maurice Bramah survived Arnhem (as a paratrooper). Later that winter he was to slip on ice while descending Dinner-Time Buttress on Aonach Dubh and died of head injuries.
2. Then primitive and unheated.
3. A Tarbuck knot was all the rage at the time. It was a modified prussic knot whose merit was supposed to be that the knot would slip under load, thus breaking the shock of a falling leader.
4. Obviously, Bell and Harrison’s route.
5. George was then president of the JMCS. He died in 2003, an active hillwalker to the end.

IT'S A DOG'S LIFE

By Dave (Heavy) Whalley

I READ with interest a letter in a mountaineering magazine, asking if any dogs have done the Munros and thought it was time to share a small part of a special dog's mountaineering life. My dog, Teallach, (the softest long-haired Alsatian you could ever meet) finished his Munros in 1985 and he had only 12 left for his second time around when he, unfortunately, passed away. I am sure Hamish Brown's dog, Keltie, completed his before Teallach, but Teallach was possibly the second dog to do the complete round and would have been an early Dog Munroist.

The most difficult Munros were on Skye, where we had a great two-day traverse. I have some great photos of him on the Inaccessible Pinnacle. As my rock-climbing ability is limited, getting to the summit with Teallach made it a major operation. However, with the addition of a few extra abseils and help from more talented rock climbing friends, we succeeded. His route finding ability was exceptional, usually vanishing around a ledge to arrive before us above the difficulties.

Teallach made several outstanding walks including two complete traverses of Scotland, a North to South and an East to West – 145 Munros in seven weeks – very hard on the paws! His apprenticeship was spent in Wales where he completed the 14 peaks when still just a pup. He did this hill route on many occasions, learning his basic skills on many of the Welsh classics, besides doing several winter routes here and in the Lakes. During my exile in North Wales, the lesser hills proved good training for Scotland and every six weeks or so we would take a trip to the big hills in the North, this being where he excelled. I have been a member of RAF Mountain Rescue Teams at Kinloss and Leuchars and many long hours were spent on big hill days with the young team members. Teallach's logbook included, the Skye Ridge in two days, 11 full traverses of the South Cluanie (including The Saddle), six complete traverses of the North Cluanie, nine full Traverses of the Mamores, seven full traverses of the Fannichs, three ascents of the Shenavall Six and three ascents of the Affric Munros. In addition, he completed 'The Tranter Traverses' in Kintail and Lochaber *and* was a regular user of the CIC hut, until he was banned by the members.

He was a very accomplished climber on rock and ice and in the end, had to be tied up as he was soloing way beyond my ability to rescue him. Regularly he would meet us at the bottom of the Cioch Slab in Skye, finding his way up from the Sgumain Stone Chute and across Eastern Gully with ease. On one occasion on the Cioch Nose in Applecross, we left him attached to the rucksacks at the bottom of the route. On returning to our kit and having attempted to flee the midges, we found him in the loch more than 2km away, complete with our rucksacks still tied to his collar. He was a regular at Glenmore Lodge, before it was in vogue, until he was banned for annoying too many of the instructors assessing in the Northern Corries at the time. After hearing my shouts while climbing, and thinking I was calling to him for help, many a Winter Leader's assessment was disturbed by Teallach trying to find his way up a Grade II gully. For this I now sincerely apologise to the Principal. The Lodge even sent a formal letter addressed to the MRT at RAF Kinloss, complaining of his abysmal rope work.

Though not a rescue dog, he was superb on the hill and could sniff out a cornice

in any weather. His area knowledge was exceptional and he never used a map or compass, always finding the summit and leaving his mark on it! He had two big falls. The first one was on Creag Meaghaidh where he went a 1000ft. in a whiteout. He was out in front as usual and at the over-confident stage in his mountaineering career. After I descended into the Coire expecting to find him in a bad way, I found him okay, a bit shaken and by now very 'cornice aware'. On the second occasion, I left him below Black Spout on Lochnagar. After having an epic on Black Spout Buttress, I was faced with getting off the hill in poor weather, late on a wild winter's night. The only way off was over the cornice down Black Spout Gully. Two following climbers brought the cornice down on top of us – we fell 600ft. Teallach arrived on scene and began digging us out, even though the avalanche had hit him as well. We eventually got back in the wee small hours, battered and bruised.

In those days, snow-holing was fashionable. One night on the Cairngorm plateau after the usual few drams, we all drifted back to our own holes. Just as we were falling asleep, I heard a noise outside and, thinking that it was a raid on our whisky store, sent Teallach out to chase them off. Even though Teallach was a big softy, in the dark and around the snow hole, he must have looked fearsome. Imagine my consternation the following morning, when I went out and found two climbers curled up and shivering. They had left their sacks below Hell's Lum and could not find them. Having seen our light they thought they were safe, only to be met by a huge dog, who would not let them in the snow hole. I brought them in, gave them a brew and walked them off later in the morning, meeting Cairngorm MRT, who were coming to look for our 'lost' friends – another confession.

I rarely saw him tired, only once while completing the Big Three in Torridon, (Beinn Eighe, Liathach and Ben Alligin) the heat got to him and he refused to add Beinn Dearg to the day, heading off down the glen on his own to the vehicle. As he got older like us all, aging began to take its toll. Problems with his hips and back became chronic, but he still loved every minute on the hill. On rescues he was a great asset and was always well behaved. He knew when we had a fatality to deal with, or when the situation was serious and kept out of the way. He found a few casualties in his time and was a warm bivouac partner on many rescues.

After a hill day and back in the bothy, he would always find the new lad's sleeping bag, make himself comfortable in their bag and fall fast asleep. Few were brave enough to move the huge Alsatian and many a novice had a cold night curled up on the floor. Good training for the Greater Ranges! As he got older he would enjoy walking up to the crag and watching our epics on the classic routes, occasionally pinching any food that was left in open rucksacks. Even after a long climbing day he would still be there after 12 hours, waiting for you to come down. He would even know where the descent gully was and meet you. Later on, he developed a love for Sea Stacks and would enjoy the day while we climbed on Am Buachaille or Storr, swimming around the stack, watching what was going on. Every hill loch would involve a swim whatever the weather or season.

Each Friday night he would wait patiently by the Land-Rover ready to go out on the hill, even when his health was failing. He would get upset at not being able to go out at weekends and still sit in the wagon waiting. In the bothies and after a long hill day, he would crawl next to the fire and once burst into flames in the Ossian Youth Hostel after lying too near the stove.

Teallach was an exceptional dog, well behaved on the hill, no problem with

sheep or any of the wild life and most of all a great companion. The ultimate Party Leader, always looking after his party, regularly rounding up any stragglers. He was not a just a Munro bagger but an all round 'Scottish Mountaineer'. He used to be able to jump and climb deer fences when in his prime. Unfortunately, he nearly hanged himself when his karabiner caught in the top wire of one fence, much to the consternation of my five-year-old step son who was very worried. I managed to sort it out and Teallach became very aware that his screw gate karabiner should be locked closed at all times. He always wore a screw gate karabiner round his collar and had one terrible habit. When he was thirsty, in the middle of the night. He would head to the toilet for a drink. The noise of the karabiner on the toilet bowl woke everyone.

Even though he died back in 1992, I sorely miss him, what a friend he was, what a life he had.

COLLIE – ACROSS THE BORDER

By Mike Jacob

In last year's Journal, Robin Campbell described how, as a result of his study of previous Journals, he abandoned his youthful opinion that the early climbers were incompetent and wrote that "technical standards - particularly on ice climbs and mixed routes - reached a level in the 1890s that they did not regain until the 1950s".

In support of his contention, he cites: "Harold Raeburn's winter ascents of Crowberry Gully (1898, Buachaille) and Green Gully (Ben Nevis) and William Naismith's winter ascent of the North-East Buttress (1896, Ben Nevis)" – I have inserted the years. To these, perhaps because it preceded them, although normally technically easier, should be added Norman Collie's ascent of Tower Ridge¹ (Ben Nevis, 1894, first with the Lakeland climbers Godfrey Solly and Joseph Collier and then, the following day, with his regular climbing partner Geoffrey Hastings) but, to nit-pick, Green Gully should be subtracted because its ascent was actually in 1906. Today, N.E. Buttress has a grade of IV,4.

Now Robin's statement may seem surprising but, upon examination, is essentially true, although some might argue that the word "regain" in the quotation should be replaced by "exceed". Winter standards may not have risen very much in those 50 years but there is evidence that they were maintained². These, of course, are all Scottish routes but it has recently been pointed out³ that, across the Border, there was at least one notable winter ascent in the Lake District that adds weight to Robin's assertion – Steep Ghyll (Scafell; Grade V,4) climbed at Christmas 1891 by none other than Norman Collie (with W. Brodie and E. Marshall and not, as previously thought, with G. Hastings and J. W. Robinson in 1890) and the first Grade V route in Britain. This ascent is not to be confused with the controversial ascent of Moss Ghyll in 1892 when Collie used his ice-axe to chip a hold in the rock. Although he contributed articles to various journals,⁴ Collie was notoriously reticent about recording details of his climbs; for him, the exploratory nature of climbing took first place and he may also have felt that this particular route was unjustifiably hazardous. The issue of grading is bound to stir debate between the tribes but there can be no dispute that this was a significant ascent by fit and tough Victorian gentlemen whichever side of the Border they happened to be.

Collie, who was on his first visit to Wasdale, had travelled from London by train with his two companions. At the start of the holiday the hotel proprietor, Dan Tyson, was shocked to see them going into the hills in what he thought were their

Sunday clothes but they had no choice as all their luggage had been delayed at Drigg station. Then, on Christmas Day, the three of them climbed Steep Ghyll in full winter conditions. Collie later wrote that "it is one of the most dangerous climbs I have ever made". (*FRCC Journal 1926*). The party may have been deceived by the relatively easy start to the gully and climbed to a position from which they could not retreat, leaving them with no choice but to proceed upwards. The weather over the next few days continued to be unsettled with strong winds, low temperatures and snow but this did not deter further exploration of the crags which included a lucky escape on Pillar's North Climb when the rope, remarkably, held a long fall by the leader.

Norman Collie was aged 31 at the time of this ascent having started climbing in 1886. His association with Skye and John Mackenzie, and how he became a renowned world mountaineer and explorer, are well documented⁵ elsewhere but it is worth recalling some of his most significant mountaineering achievements across other borders.

He had made one visit to the Alps in 1888 (recorded in his application to the Alpine Club, to which he was admitted in 1893, but apparently not mentioned in either of his two biographies). By 1895, which was to be a pivotal year, he had several Alpine seasons under his belt and had climbed the Matterhorn by the Italian ridge, the Aiguille de Grepon and the Petit Dru as well as first ascents of the Dent du Requin and the south-west face of the Aiguille du Plan climbed with C. Slingsby, G. Hastings and A. F. Mummery. It was with Mummery, too, (who, flying in the face of the Alpine Club's⁶ stuffy conservatism, had come to believe that true adventure lay in self-dependence⁷) that Collie made the first guideless ascent of the Old Brenva Route on Mont Blanc in 1894.

In 1895 Collie was part of a small expedition led by Mummery (with G. Hastings, C. G. Bruce – who would lead the 1922 and 1924 Everest expeditions – and two Gurkhas, Raghobir Thapa and Goman Singh) which made a remarkable 'alpine-style' attempt on Nanga Parbat, the most westerly of the 8000m. peaks and, at 8125m., ninth-highest mountain in the world. Situated in British India (now Pakistan), yet sufficiently distant from the politically-sensitive border areas, it was comparatively easy of access even then. The party visited the south-east (Rupal) face and pronounced it "impregnable" and then crossed the Mazeno Pass into the Diamir valley to reconnoitre. The expedition had been on the mountain for more than a month when Mummery made his attempt on the summit (Collie, according to Mummery, appears to have been suffering from the altitude and "*was not keen on it*") –

Truly sticking to his principles of climbing light he set on off on August 19th, accompanied only by Raghobir and equipped with little more than ice-axes, a tent, some provisions and firewood. Their route was the most direct, straight up the steep rocky ribs cutting through the menacing seracs of the central Diamir face. After a night on top of the second rib "excessively difficult" climbing, which fortunately became easier higher up, brought them all the way to the last break in the serac barrier at around 6500m. Then Raghobir turned ill and they were forced to retreat. Now the expedition's hopes rested on finding a feasible way up the last remaining side of the mountain, the northern or Raikot Face⁸. While the other members opted for the long way around the Nanga Parbat massif, Mummery wanted to take a short-cut over the Dima Pass (6227m.)⁹

between the Diamo and Raikot glaciers and perhaps make another attempt on the summit by the Raikot face. Mummy and the two gorkhas were never seen again. On September 13, Collie and Hastings made a three-day trip to reach the camp where they had last seen their companions. However, it was late in the season and there was too much fresh snow to undertake a search and, according to Collie, “*slowly we descended and for the last time looked on the great mountain and the white snows where in some unknown spot our friends lay buried*”.

Collie never returned to the Himalaya. In 1897, he accepted an invitation extended by Charles Fay to the Alpine Club to join a memorial climb to attempt Mount Lefroy in the Canadian Rockies. This was successful and the party also made the first ascent of Mount Victoria two days later. Collie was smitten by this virgin terrain and returned to the Canadian Rockies on several other occasions and, by 1911, he had completed 21 first ascents and surveyed and named in excess of 30 peaks (including a Canadian version of Nanga Parbat). This was a unique achievement in a huge and largely unmapped mountain wilderness with arduous access problems. When he returned home after his final visit in 1911 it was to devote more time to his academic work and to his beloved Skye.

However, as President of the Alpine Club in 1920, he became an influential member of the newly-formed Mount Everest Committee and was instrumental in the choice of both Harold Raeburn and Alexander Kellas for the 1921 Everest Reconnaissance Expedition ... but this tale of derring-do, if the Editor will allow, awaits a future Journal.

1 Thus prompting W. W. Naismith to write “*the Sassenachs have indeed taken the wind out of our sails ... Flodden or even Culloden was nothing to this*”. Although often perceived as Scottish, Collie was actually born south of the Border and spent most of his life living and working in England. However, he had joined the SMC in 1891 and, in 1895, Naismith and Collie were together in the party on the first ascent of Castle Ridge (Ben Nevis).

2 The point (which, to be fair, Robin also makes in *The First Scottish Ice Climbers* SMCJ Vol. XXX, 1972) can be illustrated if we take one or two routes from each of the first five decades of the 20th century. I am using modern grading (and ignoring ‘grade creep’, the process where you discover that routes you completed 20 years ago were beyond your capability), concentrating on Glencoe and Ben Nevis and taking no account of the variability of winter conditions:

1900s – Green Gully (Ben Nevis). 1906. IV, 4. H. Raeburn and E. Philidius

1910s – No significant routes. First World War I (1914-1918).

1920s – Observatory Ridge (Ben Nevis). 1920. IV, 4. H. Raeburn, F. Goggs, W. Mounsey.

1930s – Slav Route/Zero Gully combination. 1936. (Slav Route is VI, 5). J. H. B. Bell and C. M. Allan.

Shelf Route (Buachaille). 1937. IV, 6. W. H. Murray and W. MacKenzie.

1940s – Flake Route (Bidean nam Bian). 1942. IV, 6. G. Scott and F. Cope.

3 In discussion with Stephen Reid, to whom I am grateful for providing help and information. I must also thank his fellow Fell and Rock members, Mike Cocker and Colin Wells, who wrote the research/descriptions regarding the Steep Ghyll ascent upon which I have based my account.

4 *From the Himalaya to Skye*, a collection of his climbing writing based on his visits to the Alps, Norway’s Lofoten Islands, Nanga Parbat, Canada and Eire as well as the UK, was republished in 2003 by RippingYarns.com (with all royalties going to the John Muir Trust) and is available both as an e-book and a paperback. Collie also wrote *Climbing In The Himalaya And Other Mountain Ranges* (David Douglas, Edinburgh, 1902. Copies of this book are extremely rare and can be worth several hundred pounds) and he co-authored, with Hugh Stutfield, *Climbs and Exploration in the Canadian Rockies* (also available from RippingYarns).

5 *The Snows Of Yesteryear* by William C. Taylor, 1973 and *Norman Collie, A Life In Two Worlds* by Christine Mill, 1987. A search of the Web throws up several sites with biographical information; however, there are mistakes to be found. For example, one website relates how Collie, in a speech

at the Cairngorm Club's annual dinner in 1925, described his encounter with the Big Grey Man of Ben MacDhui and then, some 12 years later, repeated the tale to Alexander Kellas, a fellow SMC member and accomplished Himalayan explorer/mountaineer. This must have been Collie's second ghostly encounter for Kellas died in 1921 while on the Everest Reconnaissance expedition.

6 Mummery was refused membership of the Alpine Club for several years despite his outstanding Alpine record.

7 Despite this, Mummery's first ascents of the Zmutt Ridge of the Matterhorn (1879), North Summit of the Grand Chamois (1880) and the Grepon by the Nantillons Face (1881) had all been climbed with guides, which included Alex Burgener on all three routes.

8 Three years earlier the explorer William Martin Conway had studied this aspect of the mountain from Bunji in the Indus Valley and concluded that "*no extraordinary difficulties other than those pertaining to the altitude and the state of the snow appear to bar the way*" (*Climbing and Exploration in the Karakorum Himalayas*, p.100), a view echoed by Kellas in 1913. Around the same time, a German mountaineering writer and publisher had acquired the German rights to Mummery's classic work *My Climbs in the Alps and Caucasus* which by then included transcripts of Mummery's letters from Nanga Parbat. Thus started the long German/Austrian attempts upon the mountain with, over the succeeding years, multiple tragedies and the loss of many lives before the summit was finally reached up this side of the mountain in 1953 by Hermann Buhl.

9 Jochen Hemmleb writing on the American Foundation for International Mountaineering, Exploration and Research web-site, which also contains excellent photographs and well-researched accounts of the dramatic history of the mountain.

P. J. H. Unna - Research

By Ted Zenthon

My interest in Percy Unna started when I read an article about him in *The Scots Magazine* (October, 1991) by Rennie McOwen, in which he thought that Percy's ancestors came from Denmark, as did my own seafaring great-grandfather. It is also interesting to note that Chris Bonington's seafaring grandfather was also born in Denmark. All rather amusing when one thinks of the low-lying terrain of that country.

Percy was born in London in 1878 at 12 Lancaster Gate – a large mansion overlooking Bayswater Road and Kensington Gardens – less than a mile from where I was born in 1921, but in a lowly mews. His father, merchant Ferdinand Unna was born in 1816 in Hamburg as was his mother Friederika (nee Reuben) in 1830. He died in 1950, the year that I was elected to the SMC. Sadly, I never did get to meet him and there are few people still alive who knew him well, so far as his mountaineering activities are concerned. Remarkably few photographs of him appear to have survived.

His keen interest in preserving and contributing to the preservation of the Scottish mountains is very well known. Alex Harrison's article *Reflections in a Diamond*, (SMCJ vol. xxxii 1980), clearly gives details of this and his great generosity. Another insight into his character is a letter he wrote to the editor of the FRCCJ on December 10, 1941:

To the Editor of the 'Fell and Rock Journal.' CAIRNS

Dear Editor,

Every member knows that stone walling is a skilled trade, and that it is certainly not easy to build a solid well shaped cairn. Also that some of the old Lake District cairns are fine specimens – notably the slender pillar on the top of Pike 'o Blisco. Whether most of these summit cairns are survey marks or of older standing, I do not know. In any case, they date well back into the last century, as do other marks,

said to have been set up by shepherds. And there a few more already fairly old, such as the Westmoreland cairn, and two tiny ones on Gavel Neese, telling one where to turn off right towards the Napes, and the line of cairns from Esk-Hause to Scafell Pike. All are more or less historic, and should be carefully preserved.

It is the reverse with the untidy piles of stones which have recently sprung up all over the more frequented parts of the Lake District. The intention may have been to help people find their way, but the proper method to do so is to teach them to find their way unaided, even if it means letting them lose it first. This should be encouraged as a matter of public policy, and as a justifiable exception to the miserable principles of Safety First. And is it not useful to be able to find the way in wartime, almost as useful in the army as at sea or in the air? Moreover, these strings of cairns, or rather rubbish heaps, tend to make hikers concentrate on tracks, with the result that almost all the fells are now disfigured with trodden paths, where 40 years ago they were still unscarred. Again in some parts, Bowfell for example, these so-called cairns have become so promiscuous that they fail to show the way at all, but merely form obstructions that trip one in the dark. There is in existence a club, the Gaderene Club, formed for the sole purpose of destroying unwanted cairns. I am an honorary member in so far as that is consistent in a club with no subscription. To justify my membership I have, during the past 18 months, managed to level out from three to four hundred of these ugly piles on but half-a-dozen Lakeland hills, and I appeal to fellow members to complete the work.

On the same principle, some years ago the SMC asked the National Trust for Scotland to discourage directional marks of any kind on its Highland property, and since then the Forestry Commissioners have decided on a similar policy for their National Forest parks in the Forest of Dean and Snowdon district. Perhaps the Fell and Rock might ask the National Trust to do the same in the Lake District.

Yours, etc,

P.J.H. Unna,

10th December, 1941.

Clearly, and rightly so, Percy had no desire to see any real change in the mountain landscape, an ethos which now seems to go largely unregarded.

Percy Unna died while climbing alone on the slopes of Beinn Eunaich, near Dalmally and was buried in Pennyfuir cemetery at Dunbeg near Oban.

Alex Harrison recalls:

“The circumstances of Unna’s death are curious. The meet was at Dalmally. Unna went there a day or two before the start of the Easter Meet. It was a winter of very hard frost and little snow and when Unna did not return from an expedition a search was made and his body was found at the bottom of a steep slope. It is not known if he slipped or his heart failed. It was arranged that he would be buried at Oban in an afternoon and we all went to find that it had suited the minister and the undertaker to have it in the morning. In some ways it seemed typical of Unna to have it that way. He was buried looking to Ben Cruachan.”

I have done some further work on the life of P. J. H. Unna, but unfortunately, old age and failing health have meant that this has not been completed. I have deposited all my research papers along with a family tree in the Club archive – they make interesting reading.

SCOTTISH WINTER NOTES

Three new routes stand out from the 2005 winter season – a technical test piece in the Northern Corries, a bolt-protected climb in the Southern Highlands, and a major addition to Pinnacle Buttress on Creag Meagaidh. These climbs are strikingly different in style, and highlight the variety in the increasingly popular sport of Scottish winter climbing.

Dave Macleod's winter ascent of *The Hurting* in Coire an t-Sneachda was something special. This 35m. high crackline slices through the prominent steep triangular wall on the right side of Fiacaill Buttress and was first climbed in 1991 as a summer E4 6a. The winter ascent was graded a hefty XI,11, making it by far the most difficult winter pitch ever led in Scotland. MacLeod's lead was brilliant, and the resulting route is highly technical and very bold. In rock climbing terms think E9 or E10.

After inspecting the route on abseil, Dave almost flashed the route on his first attempt, but fell off three moves from the top. Scott Muir then top roped the climb, and pointed out to Dave that he had gone the wrong way at the top. Dave returned three days later to settle the score. It was a cold, windy day and recent heavy snow meant the cracks were verglassed. Dave abseiled down to see where Scott had gone at the top, chopped the verglas out of the crucial gear placements, and then led the route. Dave later said the climb was like taking the cruxes of *Happy Tyroleans*, *The Demon*, *The Duel* and *Logical Progression* (considered by many to be Scotland's hardest technical winter routes), making them harder and stacking them on top of each other and then adding groundfall potential. He also suggested that his route may be the "hardest single pitch traditional mixed route in the world".

With his ascents of *The Cathedral* (X,11) last season and now *The Hurting*, Dave has created another facet of Scottish Winter that previously didn't exist. Many climbers will continue to pursue the mountaineering approach, and derive great pleasure from making their ascents ground up and on sight, while others will now be drawn to shorter and more difficult climbs that require some degree of pre-inspection for success. A key element to this new style is that the routes do not depend on pre-placed gear and the bold and serious element that is synonymous with Scottish winter climbing is preserved.

While Dave Macleod's ascent of *The Hurting* attracted universal praise, the creation of Scotland's first bolt-protected winter sports route created a storm of controversy. *Crossroads* (M6) lies on the Upper Tier on Beinn Udlaidh in the Southern Highlands and was equipped and then led by Scott Muir at the end of last year. From a traditional standpoint, placing bolts to protect a Scottish winter climb is the ultimate sin, and the route brought howls of protest.

In other parts of the world, bolts are often used to protect mixed routes, but in Scotland there has always been a strong desire to maximise the adventure and uncertainty when climbing on our relatively small crags. As a result, Scottish winter climbers tend to have excellent on-sight mountaineering skills, while the technical difficulty of our hardest climbs are several notches easier than the top end mixed and dry tool climbs in North America and on the Continent. Scott, who has extensive experience of climbing Continental mixed routes, argues that for Scottish climbing to catch up we need to start developing bolt-protected sports-style winter routes.

Scott Muir is a man of conviction and has shown great courage in going against established tradition by placing bolts in Beinn Udlaidh. From a diversity perspective it seems perfectly reasonable to create bolt-protected winter routes for those that want to climb them, but there are a number of important issues that need to be taken into account.

Firstly, there are the arguments about damage to the environment and stealing opportunities from future generations, but the greatest concern is that bolts will erode the on-sight ethic that many believe to be inherent to Scottish winter climbing.

The future of *Crossroads* now rests with other climbers. If it becomes popular with many repeat ascents it will pave the way for other bolt-protected winter routes throughout the Highlands. Alternatively, if the bolts are removed and not replaced, the climb will cease to exist, and it will be remembered as an interesting diversion in the long and varied history of Scottish climbing.

The third route that stands out was climbed in early March during the International Winter Meet. These meets are held every other year at Glenmore Lodge and are jointly hosted by the BMC and MC of S. This year, more than 40 guests from 25 different countries were hosted by 30 British climbers, and the event coincided with the finest winter climbing conditions of the winter. There were dozens of excellent routes climbed during the meet, but the clear standout route was the first ascent of *Extasy* (VIII,8) on Creag Meagaidh by Dave Hesleden and Bruno Sourzac from France. This put to bed one of Scotland's last great problems – the huge 300m. unclimbed wall between *Smith's Gully* and *The Fly*.

Dave had tried this line 11 years earlier, but had ground to a halt after the first pitch. Since then the climb had been talked about by several activists, with some saying that the blank nature of the rock meant that it would not be possible to protect without using bolts. Hesleden and Sourzac had no intention of using bolts, of course, and it was no surprise to hear that the seven-pitch climb was very steep on typically bold Meagaidh mixed terrain, and that five of the seven pitches merited a technical grade of 8.

These statistics suggest that *Extasy* is the most difficult Scottish first ascent to be climbed on sight, and in my view is arguably the most important new route since Brian Davison's ascent of *Mort* on Lochnagar five years before.

Hesleden and Sourzac are no strangers to top-end mixed climbing. Dave is renowned for his skill climbing thin ice and Bruno is one of the world's finest mountaineers. As chief instructor at ENSA in Chamonix, he is the guide that trains the guides, and three days before on the first day of the meet he had demonstrated his consummate skill by leading *Cornucopia* (VII,9) as his first Scottish winter route.

Overall, the 2005 winter season was a difficult one, with few settled periods of weather. Fortunately, a cold and snowy period from mid-February to early March, brought good conditions over much of the Highlands which resulted in some excellent first ascents.

In Glen Coe, Rab Anderson and Rob Milne added two fine routes on Bidean. On Diamond Butress, they climbed *Koh-i-nor* (V,7) which takes the ramp running up left from the left branch of Central Gully to gain right-trending grooves and chimneys. The following weekend they returned to add *Flake*

Route Right-Hand 190m V,7 on Church Door Buttress. This climbs the chimney up the right side of the huge flake of *Flake Route*.

Simon Yearsley and Malcolm Bass had a great day on the rarely-visited Stob Coire Altruim on the Buachaille, and came away with *Dog Day Monday* (VI,7), a route they'd been eyeing for some time, the superb line of hanging chimneys to the right of *Cerberus*.

During the Winter Meet, Sam Chinnery and top American alpinist, Steve House, had a great day on Bidean, climbing the steep flake-line between *West Chimney* and *Kingpin*. *Crusade* VII,8 is a fine independent line and a great addition to this brilliant high crag. Also of note in the Coe was a direct variation to *Un Poco Loco* by Es Tressider and I. Lewis at hard VII,7, and an excellent direct version of *East Face Route* on Stob Coire nan Lochan at VII,8 by Pete Benson and Guy Robertson.

Farther west, Erik Brunskill and Gavin Macfie had a good find on Maol Odhar in Ardgour with *Voodoo Buttress* (V,6) that climbs the left-hand of twin buttress below the main summit.

The Southern Highlands were the scene of some great new routes. Erik Brunskill made several visits to Coire an Lochain on Beinn a'Cheachain, the least visited of the Bridge of Orchy crags.

The best additions were *Chicken Run* (IV,4), the prominent icefall mentioned as unclimbed in the Southern Highlands guide, which was climbed with Gavin Macfie.

The next day they were joined by Dan Johnson for *The Bells* (V,5), the second last buttress up the gully. This proved to be a more testing affair and with the way ahead uncertain and retreat looking difficult, Brunskill forced an unlikely way through the final overhangs.

Ben Cruachan saw activity from various teams, but the best addition was *Pussy Galore* (VII,8) by Chris Cartwright and Dave Hesleden that takes the left-slanting line of cracks on the front of Noe Buttress. Chris also teamed up with Iain Small for the first ascent of the difficult *Fat Lip Fandango* (VII,7) – a bold and technical route that completes the triptych of corner-lines on the left side of the main cliff.

Nearby on Beinn Udlaiddh, Dave MacLeod and Scott Muir added *Fontinalia* (VIII,9), a Continental-style mixed route that takes a thin seam through a roof to gain a hanging ice fang to the right of *Cut Throat's* second pitch. The protection was placed on the lead and both climbers ensured a full tick by leading the pitch.

Farther north, there were some good new additions in the Central Highlands. Andy Nisbet and Jonathan Preston visited the east face of Aonach Beag and climbed *The Prisoner* (V,5), the fine buttress right of *Goblet of Fire*. Nearby, on Meall Garbh, Iain Small added a couple of good routes with Jason Walker and Susan Jensen. *Quiet Running* (V,6) takes the right-trending groove bounding the left side of the Inspiration buttress and *Runs with Deer* (V,6) is a counter-diagonal line to North Buttress Left Edge.

The very remote Maiden Crag on the north face of Ben Alder saw a couple of visits. Chris Cartwright and I climbed the buttress between *Ice Maiden* and *Witchwhite* to give *The Snow Queen* (V,5), and Colin Wells and Steven Reid climbed the intriguingly named *Icicles by Bicycle* (III,4) that takes the obvious gully line next left of *Ice Maiden*. The same pair also visited Creag Dubh

above Loch Ericht and added *I Scream* (V,4) the narrow icy gully between *Swordfish* and *The Hex Factor*.

After Hesleden and Sourzac's ascent of *Extasy*, there were two more big additions on Creag Meagaidh. On the last day of the Winter Meet, Guy Robertson and Es Tressider teamed up with Primoz Hostnik from Slovenia and climbed the thinly-iced hanging ramps right of *Smith's Gully* resulting in the excellent *Eye Candy* (VII,7). Robertson and Tressider returned the following weekend for *The Moth* (VII,8), which takes the huge wall right of *The Fly Direct*, although poor ice in the upper section dictated a right, then left detour through the final headwall.

The event in the Northern Highlands was the first ascent of *Final Destination* (VIII,7) on Beinn Dearg by Guy Robertson and Alastair Robertson. This bold, and complex mixed route, takes the challenge of the huge unclimbed wall left of *Ice Bomb*, in Coire Ghranda and was the scene of a blood-curdling 15m fall when Alastair's tools ripped on the third pitch. Another excellent addition in the Northern Highlads was *Prohibition* (VI,5) in Garbh Choire Mor on An Coileachan in the Fannaichs by Erik Brunskill and Garth Hughes. This takes the S-shaped groove in the buttress right of *Burdock*, and climbs through some unlikely looking terrain with ice hooks in turf for protection.

Beinn Bhan in Applecross came into good condition in February. In Coire na Poite, Iain Small and Dave McGimpsey climbed *Gryphon* (V,7), which takes the front face of the buttress taken by *Teapot*. Two days' later they were back with Andy Nisbet and Jonathan Preston for the first ascent of the spectacular *Skinflint* (VI,6) in Coire na Feola, which takes the groove running up the front face of Suspense Buttress.

Nearby, on Ben Damph, Andy Nisbet climbed the 400m.-long buttresses either side of the gully-line *Calluna*. *Fraoch Groove* (IV,4) takes the right buttress and is essentially a more direct version of *Erica's Ridge*, and *Lingo* (IV,4), climbed with Jonathan Preston, takes the buttress to the left.

Nisbet and Preston also visited Coire Ruadh-Staca (the Pineapple Cliff) on Beinn Eighe where they found *Quickstep* (IV,5), the buttress at the far right end of the cliff. Andy returned with Dave McGimpsey to climb *Jambo* (V,7), the diagonal line of chimneys to the right of *Midge Ridge* and *Chocked* (IV,6), the superb crackline just right of *Smilodon*.

Also of note on Beinn Eighe was a rare repeat of the superb *West Buttress Diretissima* (VII,8) by Guy Robertson and Es Tressider. They climbed directly up the corner of *Senior* on the lower tier, which gave two more hard pitches of technical 7 and 8.

Across on Skye, Dave Ritchie and D. McEachan had a good weekend in mid-February when they climbed *Vent du Nord* (V,6) the obvious open groove on the right side of the buttress situated between Gully B and Gully C on the West Face of Sgurr Thearlaich. The following day they visited Coir' An Lochain on the same mountain and made the first winter ascent of *Aladdin's Route* (IV,6).

In general, it was a not a good season for mixed routes in the Cairngorms. The cliffs were either bare or covered in deep powder and hoar during the cold weather in February and March. Early in the season, Dave McLeod and Scot Muir made a difficult technical addition to Coire an t-Sneachda with the first winter ascent of *Babes in the Wood* (VIII,8). This summer E2 follows a

slanting crackline on the left flank of Aladdin's Buttress and provided a sustained pitch with a thin crux at the top. The line was climbed on the second attempt and was a well known problem that had been attempted before by other parties.

By contrast, it was a good year for new mixed routes on Ben Nevis, and the early highlight was the first winter ascent of *Strident Edge* (VI,7) by Erik Brunskill and Gareth Hughes. This steep VS rock climb on South Trident Buttress is very imposing in summer, and its exposed location makes it look a very unlikely winter objective. Erik and Gareth made their ascent the day after the great storm that wreaked damage across Scotland in the middle of January. Their timing was immaculate, and the strong westerlies brought a huge amount of snow that swamped the Ben's east-facing crags with tons of powder.

Two weeks' later Andy Nisbet and Jonathan Preston also visited South Trident Buttress and climbed *Rattling* (V,5) a fine winter version of *The Rattler*. Gareth made another well-timed ascent early in the season, with the first winter ascent of *Right-Hand Route* (VI,7) on the Douglas Boulder with Ollie Metherell.

On Creag Coire na Ciste, Chris Cartwright and I were particularly pleased with *Archangel* (VIII,7), the line of impending corners to the right of *Darth Vader*. This one had been on our list since 1997, so it was great to finally get it in the bag. We also climbed *The Madness of Crowds* (VII,7), the steep corner system to the right of *South Sea Bubble*. During the Winter Meet, American climber Kelly Cordes and I headed up to The Castle to try the ominous looking hanging chimney that slices through the headwall. This is a prominent line, but it is so steep that it rarely catches much snow. Conditions were perfect, and after I had grunted up the first difficult section, I was treated to a virtuoso performance by Kelly as he stemmed up the overhanging second pitch. Kelly was so enthralled by the climbing that he grabbed the third pitch as well, and on top he enthused that this one route (*Godspell* VII,8) had more than justified his trip over from the US.

After a major thaw that stripped the Highlands bare in mid-March, most winter climbers put their tools away for the season. Typically, the 'lambing snows' arrive in early April, and this year was no exception with heavy snowfalls and very cold temperatures in the middle of the month.

Iain Small and I went up to the Ben to have a look and were surprised to see the mountain covered in fresh powder and hoar. South Trident Buttress looked like a Christmas cake, so we seized our chance and made the first winter ascent of *Sidewinder* (VII,8) the prominent groove line left of *Strident Edge*. We were happy to hang our tools up after this, but the following Saturday conditions were good as well. Gareth Hughes and Tony Stone climbed *Thompson's Route* on No. 3 Gully Buttress, continued up the deep, right-facing corner above to give a fine VII,7 direct finish, and on Stob Coire an Laoigh in the Grey Corries Andy Nisbet slipped in a final new route with Sandy Allan. *Pentagon* (VI,7) takes a steep line up the wall which forms the left side of the rib left of *Taliballan*, and draws a line under what has been a very eventful and fascinating winter season.

Simon Richardson.

100 YEARS AGO. . .

The year began with the Annual Meeting and Dinner in the Caledonian Hotel, Edinburgh on Friday, December 2, 1904. President William C. Smith was in the Chair but gave way on the following day to John Rennie, of Wellcroft, Helensburgh; Treasurer Robert Napier reported a balance of £190 13s. 9d.; Secretary Inglis Clark announced nine new members, two deaths and three resignations – a balance of 156 members; and Librarian Goggs (430) and Slide Custodian Robertson (990) enumerated their treasures. Fifty-six members and 23 guests then enjoyed a French menu of oysters, soup, turbot or whitebait, sweetbreads, haggis, roast meat, pheasant, fruit, ice-cream, pastry, and dessert – two courses better than the short commons served up in Glasgow in 1903.

New Year was celebrated at the Loch Awe Hotel, and a muster of 28 suffered dull unseasonable weather for four days. There was no snow below 3000ft. On the 31st, parties climbed the North Face of Stob Dearg from Glen Noe, the Black Shoot of Beinn Eunaich, and had “some fine climbing on the cliff of Stob Garbh from Coire Creachainn” – probably the North-East ridge. At the end of the Meet Morrison, Robertson and Goodeve climbed the central chimney of Meall Bhuiridh, which had defied attempts made at previous Meets here.

In March, the Clark family began a series of visits to the ‘Arrochar Alps’ with a failed attempt on Elephant Gully of the Brack, returning on July 14, to climb ‘Knife-Edge Route’ (now Inglis Clark Arête – wrongly dated as 1895 in our guidebook). In April, they explored the cliffs of A’ Chrois, climbing half of a ridge left of the Central Gully before finishing by the Gully. A week later they returned with the Walker cousins to climb Pinnacle Buttress (all six on one rope). Later, on May 23, Raeburn and Goggs climbed the Central Buttress (again wrongly dated as 1895). These explorations were amusingly described by Clark in two articles (viii, 309-12 and ix, 19-24)

The Easter Meet (April 20-25) was split between Skye and Kingshouse. On Skye, Secretary Clark had once again arranged a rotating Meet involving hot beds in Sligachan, Camasunary and Glen Brittle, as in 1903. But despite Easter falling a month later, the 19 members and five guests attending once again found the Cuillin in wintry condition and little new climbing was achieved. However, Raeburn and his Swedish guest, Erik Ullén, together with Slingsby and Solly climbed the Central Buttress of the Castles *en route* to Camasunary. This was the first route on this huge face, selected since it was “sheltered from the fierce north-west blizzard which blew all day”, and it involved heroic efforts of route-finding in ascent and descent. The party first attempted the South-Central Gully, failing at a huge overhanging pitch. Resuming from the foot of the rocks at 11.40, they made their way up the 1500ft. Central Buttress in under five hours, Raeburn leading the difficult sections in his cloth-soled Kletterschuh. The descent was accomplished by glissading the gully between the Castles and Sgurr na Bhairnich to a point “just before it takes its great plunge down the lower precipices”. Then a short wall was climbed to reach Lota Corrie which was traversed to the descent route under Sgurr na h-Uamha. After this, all they had to do was the six-mile route march to Camasunary! This must surely have been one of the most remarkable expeditions in the history of Scottish mountaineering.

On the following day Raeburn and Ullén enjoyed a wintry traverse from Camasunary to Glen Brittle including Garsbheinn to Sgumain *via* the Thearlaich-Dubh Gap. This obstacle “did not look an inviting spot under present conditions.

It was now snowing very heavily – soft, sticky, large flakes that drove levelly through the cleft, and quickly plastered even vertical rocks with white. It stuck also on our faces, filled up our eyes and ears, and drifted into our mouths whenever we ventured to open them. It was especially annoying to Herr Ullén, who is unfortunately obliged to wear spectacles when climbing”.

Despite these difficulties, and a stuck abseil rope, the Gap was crossed in 30 minutes, Raeburn climbing the Thearlaich side in gloves. Raeburn observed dryly that: “Arguing from this, ten minutes would be sufficient for a solitary climber, for the delay incidental to the use of the rope would then be eliminated.” Although Ullén participated in these exacting expeditions and others, and enjoyed sponsorship by Raeburn, his subsequent application to join the Club was mysteriously unsuccessful. Maylard and Solly traversed Sgumain and the Dubhs at the end of the Meet, failing on the vicious Alasdair *mauvais pas*, an exploit celebrated in the famous poem *Doing the Dubhs*, probably from the pen of Douglas. Two excellent Journal articles by Maylard (viii, 299-303) and Raeburn (ix, 59-70), and a note by Raeburn (ix, 101-2) describe these events.

Eleven members and four guests gathered at the Kingshouse branch of the Meet. No new climbs were achieved, but there was thorough exploration of the Crowberry Ridge and North Buttress. Maclay’s article (viii, 304-8) set out the topography of the Ridge clearly for the first time. James Gall Inglis recorded the Meet in an excellent (unpublished) photograph.

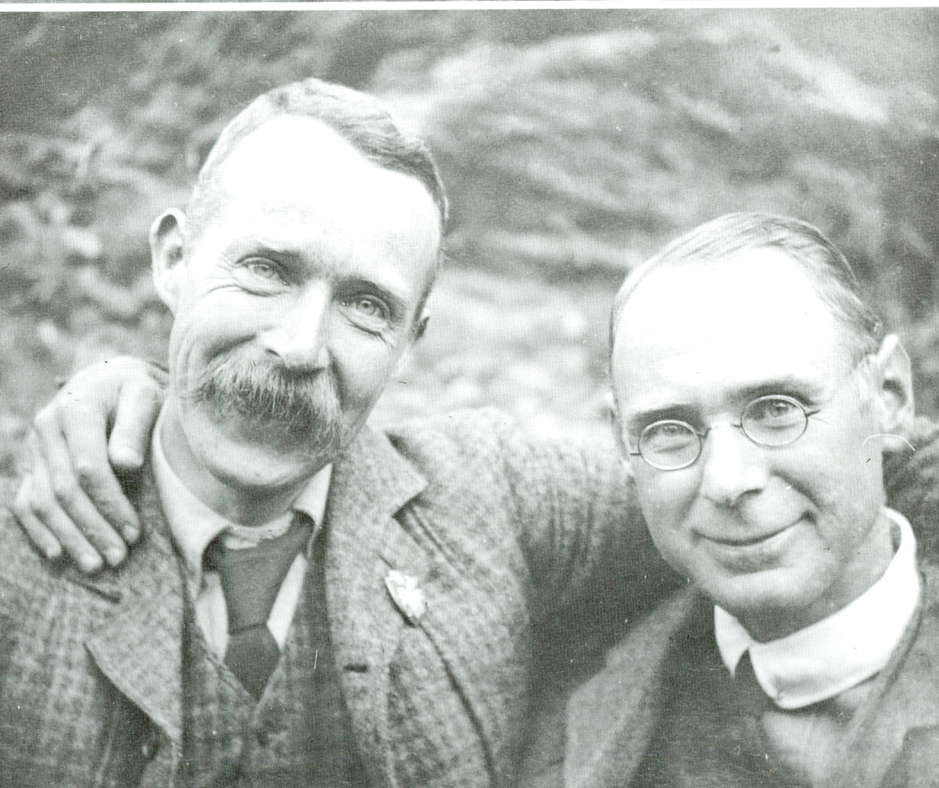
In May Douglas and Raeburn explored the Berwickshire coast from White Heugh to Fast Castle. Raeburn climbed The Stack (below St Abb’s Head) but judged that the Souter was “quite inaccessible” (not climbed until 1967 – by myself and Dave Bathgate). Douglas provided an interesting list of cliffs and stacks in his article (viii, 313-19) as well as alluding to earlier ascents by ‘egging’ local fishermen described by George Muirhead in his book *Birds of Berwickshire*.

Many members visited the Alps in what was a very poor season and some enjoyed a worse season in Norway. The only expeditions of note were made by Raeburn and Ling, who climbed the North-East ridge of the Ecrins, before moving to Chamonix where they managed the Petit Dru from the Charpoua (bivouac at 11,000ft.) and a solo traverse of the pinnacles of the Charmoz (including the Bâton Wicks) by Raeburn.

In late July two parties (Gibbs and Mounsey in BR 68; A. E. Robertson, Mrs Robertson, Goggs, Morrison and Miss MacDonald – on bicycles) met in Glen Coe and passed a few nights in the Kingshouse Inn. This informal Meet was well described by Gibbs (ix, 9-18), and comprehensively recorded by Robertson’s camera. The Church Door Buttress was climbed twice, once by Morrison and Gibbs, and then a few days later by the entire male element of the party. Both ascents involved poorly described variants of the existing route. On the second, Morrison – very much the guiding light of the party – chose a subterranean route: “[Observing] some jammed stones offering a route directly upwards from the middle of this letter-box; wishing, however, to see more of the world, he went right through to the other end of the crack, and, climbing over the jammed blocks, landed on the top. . . The ‘Meenister’ would have photographed parts of the climb had not the rainclouds descending on the hills not made good work impossible, not to mention the difficulty of getting baggage through the first section – the service as yet not being open for Parcels Post – and with five climbers on 160ft. of rope, there was none to spare for hauling; so the ‘bagpipes’ – as the camera in a sack with short legs protruding was nicknamed – had to be left at the foot of the rocks.”

Haskett Smith and William Garden.

Eric Greenwood and William Douglas.





This comical ascent sounds very like the line of the 1920 Crypt Route, but may be a similar feature lower down the buttress. Elsewhere, two separate attempts were made by Morrison and Gibbs on Abraham's Traverse. Morrison eventually climbed it on a top rope, describing it as "boulder climbing without the slightest possibility of safeguarding the leader after the first few feet". In Robertson's well-known photograph (ix, opp.1) Goggs is shown 'safeguarding' Morrison with a terrifying direct belay. Finally, Goggs and Morrison spent a day exploring the accessible parts of the Dalness Chasm and the rocks above it.

Besides the articles referred to above, the *Journals* for the year published guidebook articles for most of the Western Highlands ranges, and a long and thoughtful piece by Raeburn, *Scottish Snow* (ix, 285-98). Here Raeburn reviews with great care and detail the varieties of snow and ice found and of features such as cornices and avalanches, noting several formidable instances of the latter. He also makes many technical observations about climbing, glissading, ski-ing, etc. His concluding remarks perhaps deserve quotation: "The cultivation of cocoanut-like biceps by any of the modern methods of muscle-growing may possibly be of some use to climbers. But man after all is not a monkey, and if an army may be said to travel upon its stomach, the mountaineer travels, even though the angle approach 80°, mainly by means of his feet. It is to the education of the feet therefore, and incidentally, of course, to the education of hand and eye and brain, that mountaineers should devote their attention. There is no better field for this education, apart altogether from the aesthetic joys to be obtained, than our Scottish Bens in their wintry garb of snow."

The Journal also included obituaries of Joseph Collier and Alfred Williams. Collier, who died aged 50, took part in the well-known tour of Glen Coe and Ben Nevis with Collie, Hastings and Solly, which followed the 1894 Inveroran Easter Meet and culminated in the ascents of Tower Ridge. It was these expeditions, of course, which showed the natives what might be achieved here, and galvanized Naismith, Brown, Tough, etc. into more adventurous climbing. Alfred Williams, the Salisbury artist, was a regular visitor to Skye where he established summer painting camps in Coruisk with his son, Sidney: it is curious that despite these frequent visits, no paintings by Williams of Skye seem to be known.

Robin N. Campbell.

CLIMBING AND COURTING IN NORWAY, 1907.

GIVEN both the scarcity and expense of early climbing literature and ephemera, it was doubly pleasing to recently receive the gift of a photographic album recording a 28-day climbing expedition to Norway entitled, *Norway 1907, August*. The album is large, containing more than 180 black-and-white and sepia-style prints, a few postcards and a small map which appears to have been torn out of a local tourist guide.

Unfortunately, the map is not sufficiently detailed for someone unfamiliar with the country and its mountains to track the expedition route. Some of the prints have pencil captions, and there is a 28-day itinerary, however the handwriting is hard to decipher. This said, the overall effect is highly pleasing and very evocative of that period in climbing, and how one imagines alpine

The Kingshouse Meet, Easter 1905: From left: Walter Nelson, William. Newbigging, Gilbert Thomson, ?, James MacLay, Wm. Morrison, ?, ?, John Grove, ?. Photo: Club collection – James Gall Inglis

The informal Kingshouse Meet, July 1905: From left: George Gibbs, William. Morrison, Miss Macdonald, Kate Robertson, Frank Goggs, Wilfred Mounsey, Archie Robertson. Photo: A. E. Robertson collection

Norway must have been at the time. Tweed jackets and breeches; trilby hats, shirts and, of course, ties; and coiled chest-borne ropes which resemble a doubtful liaison between a clothes line and a MacBrayne's hawser! Turf-roofed shielings; four-storey, timber clad alpine lodges; a sprinkling of goats; and white-shirted and waistcoated (but tie-less) boatmen in elegant, clinker skiffs complete the picture – almost. For there are also a few group shots of young British and Norwegian ladies early in the album who, as the photographic record unfolds, are soon 'integrated' within the main body of the kirk. One in particular – Phyllis Procter – is never far from the side of one William Douglas (second editor of the Journal). Holiday romance? Or the start of something more permanent? Noting frequent photographs of William Garden and W. P. (Walter Parry) Haskett Smith – he of the first climbing guide to England, Wales and Ireland, with H. C. Hart – in addition to Douglas, I felt that further research might reveal what expedition this was, and where the album had come from.

The album's donor confirmed that Procter and Douglas did marry, with Douglas running a publishing and bookselling business in Castle Street, Edinburgh (Douglas & Foulis). They had two sons, one becoming a London-based impresario. The business closed in the late Sixties, and I understand that two relations (grandchildren?) still live in the Edinburgh area. The donor rescued the album from the fate of the dreaded skip when a friend of the Douglas family was clearing her office upon retirement.

Knowing a little about Douglas and Garden, I then contacted Robin Campbell who kindly supplied the missing links, in the form of an extract from SMCJ vol. X, 1908-9, as follows:

"Mr. Garden, Mr. Douglas, and four friends of the Alpine Club were in Norway in August, when they were favoured with such inclement weather as to put all the rock-climbs of the Horungtinder out of the question. They, however, crossed the Rungs Skar from Vetti to Turtegro, and ascended to Dyrhougstinder twice. They also crossed the Justedalsbrae from Fjaerland to Aamot via the Fonsdal, and returned to Fjaerland via Skei, Lunde and the Lunde Skar. The whole party were delighted with Norway, and Turtegro will ever remain in the memory of one, if not in the minds of all, as the most charming spot in the whole world."

As Turtegro was the party's main base, we can assume that the "memory of one" must be that of Douglas, albeit suitably couched in the reserve of the time.

The album is now on permanent loan to friends who are trying to map out the expedition in greater detail, with a view to perhaps visiting the areas involved at some future date.

Ian Hamilton.

Postscript:

A few weeks after receiving the album, my benefactor called to ask if I would like to see a handwritten log of a 'canoe' voyage on the rivers and canals of the English midlands, by one J. G. Stott, dated 1891. He had rescued the log at the same time as the Norwegian album, but knew nothing of the author. Excited at the prospect of photographs of a contemporary canoe,

which I thought would be of the classic, beautiful 'Rob Roy' class, I borrowed the album. Sadly, the 'canoe' was actually a double rowing skiff, and the log a somewhat repetitive account of subsequent nights at river/canal side pubs with good beers, but predictable ham and eggs as the main fayre.

A further call to Robin brought confirmation that the skipper would have been Joseph Stott, first editor of the Journal. Given that Stott left Scotland for New Zealand in 1892, the log is probably a record of his last holiday in the UK, and he must have passed it over to Douglas before leaving. On Robin's advice, I advised the donor that most of Stott's papers are lodged with the National Library of Scotland. The log has since been purchased by the Library. I. H.

SCOTTISH MOUNTAINEERING TRUST – 2004-2005

THE Trustees met on August 13 and October 8, 2004.

During the course of these meetings support was given to Miss K. Scott BSES – 2004; British Trust for Ornithology; the Cairngorm Club, (Hut at Muir of Inverey); JMCS Jock Spots, and Andrew Nisbet, New Routes Editor.

Ken Crocket (Chairman) and Matt Shaw retired as Trustees by rotation. The contributions of Ken Crocket and Matt Shaw are much appreciated. In particular, the Trustees are grateful to Ken Crocket for the initiatives he proposed during his period as Chairman, including the Scottish Mountaineering Trust leaflet (which is now available) and joining Scottish Environment Link. The Trust hopes to have an ongoing contact with Ken Crocket in his capacity as the SMC Webmaster.

The present directors of the Publications Co. are R. K. Bott (Chairman), K. V. Crockett, W. C. Runciman, M. G. D. Shaw and T. Prentice (Publications Manager).

The present Trustees are P. MacDonald (Chairman), R. W. Milne, C. J. Orr, W. C. Runciman, A. Tibbs, R. J. Archbold, D. A. Bearhop, D. J. Broadhead, C. M. Huntley and A. C. Stead. W. C. Runciman is both a Trustee and Director and provides liason between the Publication Co. and the Trust. J. Morton Shaw is the Trust Treasurer.

The following grants have been committed by the Trustees:

General Grant Fund

Miss K. Scott BSES – 2004	£250
British Trust for Ornithology	£5000
Cairngorm Club (Hut at Muir of Inverey)	£5000
Grant	£5000
Loan	£5000
JMCS Jock Spots	
Grant	£3800
Loan	
New Routes Editor	£300

Seventy-five Years of the Perth Mountaineering Club

This article is based on an address given at the Seventy-fifth Anniversary Dinner of the Perth Mountaineering Club, held at Mar Lodge on Saturday, November 20, 2004.

Beginnings:

Given the location and proximity to the Highland Line, it is not surprising that there is a long tradition of going to the hills among the folk of Perth and district. The first local organisation dedicated to climbing mountains was the Perthshire Mountain Club, the proceedings of which are recorded from 1875 onwards.¹ This club was a sub-group of the Perthshire Society for Natural Science, an organisation which still flourishes. It is not clear when the Mountain Club ceased to be active, but it was certainly moribund before the First World War. The present Perth Mountaineering Club has no formal links with the PSNS, but the two come together for an annual joint lecture which always has a mountaineering theme.

It appears that after the First World War the SMC was seeking to augment its own membership by establishing branches of the JMCS as 'feeder' clubs. Alistair Cram, a lawyer in Perth, was originally a member of the Edinburgh Section of the JMCS and, as he was the first secretary of the Perth Section, it may be assumed that he was among the principal movers to establish a section in Perth. This took place in 1929. It would, however, be unfair to think that the formation of the Perth JMCS was purely the result of a missionary campaign by the SMC. It may be assumed that there existed in Perth a body of mountaineers who recognised the benefits of sharing and augmenting their mountain skills by forming a club. A club would also, for some, solve the perennial problem of transport to the hills. One notes that all the pre-war meets were by car which says something of the socio-economic status of members, all of whom were male.

As well as being a founder member, Alistair Cram was certainly one of the club's most distinguished members. In addition to notable legal and military careers, in 1939 he became the eighth person to complete the Munros and tops. Then in 1978, along with his wife, he completed a second round of the Munros and tops. But he was not just a hill walker, he had at least one Alpine season before the war and was a mountaineer of sufficient calibre to be considered for membership of the 1953 Everest Expedition. Until his death he was a regular contributor to the 'SMC and JMCS Abroad' section of the SMC Journal, giving details of the trips he and his wife took to many mountainous areas of the world. He attended only one post-war meet of the Perth Club.

Another founder member was Jimmy MacNab. Among MacNab's claims to fame is that he took his Sunday suit and bowler hat on a CIC hut meet so that he would be suitably attired to attend the Kirk service in Fort William on the Sunday. It is not known if MacNab ever repeated this epic, but it seems certain that it is unique to him. The longest-lived of the founder members was Chris Rudie, who died in 1999. He was born in Norway and, unsurprisingly, was particularly involved with skiing and the Dundee Ski Club. Nonetheless, he was active on the hills as a climber and was Hon. President for many years. No one who heard Chris's after-dinner speeches will ever forget their inconsequential, but highly amusing content.

We do not, unfortunately, know a great deal of how these pioneers disported themselves on the Scottish mountains. By modern standards their clothing and

gear were primitive, but this does not appear to have curtailed their activities in any way and they were enthusiastically active throughout the year. If nothing else, one can look on the same hills and glens and without difficulty understand why they were attracted to these places.

Post-War:

The first post-war meet took place on November 24, 1946, to Ardvorlich on Loch Earn. This was a bus meet and it was the bus meet that was to characterise the next phase of the club's history. To those who experienced these times it was a 'Golden Age', a special time of primitive equipment, primitive transport, boundless enthusiasm and boundless opportunity. Some pre-war members rejoined at this time, notably Jimmy Grant, Tom Kemp and Walter Pethers, but most post-war members were new to the club. A considerable innovation was the 'lady associate'. These ladies soon made up a significant proportion of the 30-odd who filled Sandy Cameron's bus once a month. To be accurate, Sandy's bus was not the first transport to be used. Tom Kemp was loaned a vehicle by the Bankfoot Motor Co. which he then drove to and from the meet venues, enjoying a day on the hill between bouts of driving. This particular bus was of the war-time utility variety with wooden seats. Imagine travelling from Perth to Glencoe and back on wooden seats – and Tom Kemp *never* exceeded 30 mph! Sandy Cameron's bus, being of pre-war vintage, had the luxury of upholstered seating – no heating of course, but there were travelling rugs provided.

For many, mountaineering in these days consisted of the brief spells of intense activity when one managed to get to the hills. And once there one did not waste the time, but set out, no matter what the weather. In Robin Campbell's words: "These were the days when men were men and a wet day was three Munros."

Meets were anywhere within a day's bus journey from Perth: Glencoe, Lochnagar, Creag Meaghaidh, Glen Clova and, of course, all the Perthshire hills. Jimmy Grant was the secretary and ran the club virtually single-handed. John Proom was the rock climber *extraordinaire*, but he always had time to take some novice in hand and haul them up their first rock climb. Another interesting character was James Miller who in these days was coming to end of a climbing career which stretched back to the First World War. Among many exploits he had stayed at Maggie Gruer's cottage at Inverey, the legendary lodging for climbers on their way to or from the Cairngorms. James Miller was a tailor and cutter to trade and he wore a very smart pair of breeches of his own design.

It is impossible to do more than mention a very few of the characters and events which epitomise this time. There was Fred Barclay who had been in the RAF Mountain Rescue Team at Kinloss and who, at the end of the day, didn't believe in changing out of wet clothes. Helen Taylor, also known as Little Nell, who drove over the Alpine passes to the Dolomites and back in her bubble car. Nan Miller who became the fifth lady to complete the Munros and then went and married the Town Clerk of Milngavie.

A tradition of the club, established in these days – was that of completing a round of the Munros. Of the first 100 Munroists, eight were associated in some way with the Perth Club. If the same proportion had been maintained, the Perth Club would now have, at least, 256 members, all of whom would be Munroists!

It was during this period, in 1954, that the club celebrated its Silver Jubilee. A

dinner was held at the old Spittal of Glenshee Hotel during the Presidency of John Webster. At the 75th Anniversary Dinner at Mar Lodge in November 2004, there were three members present who had attended the Silver Jubilee Dinner: Nan Rae, Ronnie Rae and Bob Milne. Two others present, John Watt and Iain Robertson would have attended in 1954 had they not been doing their National Service.

If, during this time members had been asked to choose their favourite meet venue, it would almost certainly have been Derry Lodge. As near to the heart of the Cairngorms as one could get by car – and you could drive to Derry Lodge in these days – Derry meets were different in that the club went for the full weekend. From there parties roamed far and wide over the high tops, returning in the evening to a log fire in the lounge and an evening of songs and stories. The best stories were those told by Bob Scott who was resident stalker at Luibeg cottage and who always called by.

The coming of affluence:

Bus meets ceased to be viable in the late 1960s and then began the third and longest phase in the club's history; a phase which is coming or has come to an end. Perhaps the most significant change, after much discussion and wrangling with the other JMCS Sections, was the admission of ladies to full and unrestricted membership of the club. The Perth JMCS also decided at this time take a new name and became the Perth Mountaineering Club, though both titles still appear on the letterhead. At the time of the 75th Anniversary Dinner the club had a female President, a female secretary, a female treasurer, a female meets secretary and sundry female committee members, which suggests that the ladies are fully involved in club affairs. Since the 1960s the trend in Scottish mountaineering towards specialisation has continued, with the mountaineering scene being sub-divided into rock climbers, snow and ice climbers, Munro baggers, etc. The PMC has members who excel in all of these categories and remains a broad church and a home for anyone wishing to go to the hills in pursuit of whatever interest.

With regard to transport, events have moved full-circle and there has been no bus meet for twenty-five years. To start with there was considerable car sharing as there were still members without personal transport, but that is largely gone and most choose to travel independently. At the start of this phase too there was also considerable reliance on access to club huts, and this was a reason for joining a club. But with the growth of independent hostels and better camping gear, club huts have become less significant as a means of staying in the more remote areas, though the PMC continue to make good use of them.

Another development has been the number of members climbing abroad. This has not been directly under the auspices of the PMC which has only had one foreign meet, and that to France. But members have travelled far and wide and, apart from Antarctica, there is not a continent where club members have not climbed.

So has the third phase ended? Members can find their own transport, can get around without using club huts and because of flexible working hours do not necessarily climb at the weekends. Does this make clubs such as the PMC redundant?

Two reasons suggest that this is not the case. The first concerns changes which are as yet potential, but which may become of increasing importance. In spite of

what politicians say, in all aspects of life we are subject to increasing regulation. Thus club membership may become a means through which we can seek protection from encroachment by legislation and/or those who would manipulate the State against minority interests. For example, the recent Access Legislation has resulted in the formation of Local Access Committees. The PMC is ably represented by Ron Payne on the committee which is responsible for advising on access in Perth and Kinross; but if access now requires a committee, what else might be regulated?

A pessimist might envisage the future requirements of the Health and Safety Gestapo as follows.

Quote: "That hill-going persons within categories a) to f), but not including those holding Alpine Experience Exemption Certificates, Class III, be excluded from ascending above 400m south of the Caledonian Canal or 350m north of the Caledonian Canal, during the months November to March, except when a weather forecast for 48 hours or longer states that wind strengths and ambient temperatures are within the guidelines laid down by the First Minister's Advisory Committee on Embroidery and Mountaineering" and so on.

It is to be hoped that such a nightmare will be avoided, but the climbing fraternity should be vigilant. Club membership and membership of organisations such as the MC of S become important if climbers have to fight to maintain a congenial milieu in which to pursue their sport.

The second reason for the continuance of clubs such as the PMC is the more significant. Mountaineering clubs are not just a means to access transport, or huts or any other of the many conveniences they provide. Mountaineers are a wonderfully idiosyncratic bunch and the PMC is no exception. But throughout the last 75 years it has been plain to any observer that the club represented an entity which was greater than the sum of its parts. Members have clearly demonstrated that, whatever their reasons for being drawn to the mountains, membership of the PMC has heightened their enjoyment of them. Solitary mountaineering undoubtedly intensifies the mountain experience and many have enjoyed the hills in solitude. But most have also been members of a group which exulted in a shared experience, whether it was two or three on a rope or rather more striding over moors, along ridges or hunkered down in the lea of a cairn. Moreover, it is always more comforting to say: "Where the hell are we?" than mutter: "Where the hell am I?"

The companionship of the hills is something special. It goes beyond a mere shared interest or being in company with the like-minded. Mountaineering takes place out of doors in places which are among those least subject to human intrusion. In such an untrammelled environment, often hostile or threatening, often breathtakingly beautiful, we are perhaps more able to know each other, warts and all, to a deeper level than is usually the case. And friendships are the better for it.

The club motto is *Ascendite ascendentes* which has never been adequately translated – 'get up them stairs' will not do. A more appropriate motto for Perth climbers might be the quotation from James Elroy Flecker's, *The Golden Road*, which was adopted by the late Alastair Borthwick for his most excellent book,

We are the Pilgrims, master; we shall go – Always a little further.

Iain A. Robertson.

¹ See J.H.B. Bell in *SMCJ*, xxiii, p 308; also R. N. Campbell in *PMC, Millennium Journal*, p 19.

Virtual Adventure

The death a few years back of former *Scotsman* editor Sir Alistair Dunnett brought me to read his wonderful book *Quest By Canoe* written in 1951 (recently republished as *The Canoe Boys*) and referred to in an appreciation of his life by his partner in this adventure James (Seamus) Adam. The book describes in a wonderfully easy prose style a true seat of the pants, taste it and see, adventure, involving these two young men purchasing canoes of questionable seaworthiness, and setting off on a trip round the often hostile water of the Western Isles of Scotland.

"Any sort of sea would constantly search its way through the deck lacing, while we were to know many an occasion when it would break solidly into the cockpit itself." – *Quest by Canoe*.

It is just this type of adventure and exploration of both landscape, and perhaps more importantly, of self, that is increasingly denied the youth of today. Denied in the name of safety, of prudence and the perceived need to worship at the altar of an ever burgeoning, cossetting and costly 'outdoor industry'. An 'industry' which would have you believe that those of us who have an aversion to throwing money into its coffers and being certified by its courses, should stick very much to the well walked paths of life.

When Alistair and his pal were doing their thing, I would imagine they would look at a map, decide whether or not they should take a raincoat, and off they would go. OK perhaps I exaggerate, (slightly!) but you can bet your bottom dollar that there weren't 20 or so glossy Outdoor Monthly Mags telling them that to have any chance of success would entail expenditure which, in present day terms, would probably have been enough to buy them a small house. Neither would they be burdened with the extra cost and worry over which of the hundreds of canoe courses they would have to go on, without which, is now deemed to make close acquaintance with the grim reaper almost inevitable.

"We had never seen canoes at close quarters until a few weeks previously, and our only experience of handling them had been on a recent Sunday afternoon on the Forth and Clyde Canal." – *Quest by Canoe*.

We now live in a culture where the vast majority of people would never consider taking a physical risk of any sort and the small minority who do, want to do so in safety. Bit of a paradox that, oxymoron even, a 'safe risk', no such beast I think. And herein lies the problem.

Let's move for the moment from the sandy blue inlets of the west coast to the mountains of Glencoe. Here, duly kitted out in your latest Gore-Tex 'must haves' as advertised in 'Ever Decreasing Outdoors' monthly, you sign up for a winter mountaineering course and by the end of the week, courtesy of a large dent in your Visa Card, superb weather and the company of two radio controlled guides to provide a psychological safety net, you and your girlfriend/boyfriend/partner have climbed Crowberry Gully a 1000ft. ice-climbing test piece on Buachaille Etive Mor. After returning to your jobs in the city, your new found ability, coupled with a high disposable income, makes you an easy target for an advert in yet another glossy and before you know it you have 'climbed' to the summit of Mont Blanc in the company of 20 or 30 other 'out on the edge' types roped to some grumpy French guides on a percentage from the travel company. (If you have a spare 20 grand they'll take you up Everest apparently). Finance, or to be more

precise, lack of it, was not such a problem for the 'Canoe Boys'. "Here we were now, afloat, and our total cash amounted to four shillings and sevenpence." *Quest by Canoe*. I don't think that this sanitised, plastic, and apparently safe 'adventure' (what happens when you've done the courses and the guides aren't there and the weather's not quite like the brochures) quite fits in with Sir Alistair's ethos. It may go some way to exploring the physical landscape, albeit in a perfunctory manner, but as far as journeying through that all important 'inner landscape', it doesn't even begin to scratch the surface.

'Our steel has rusted in the night,
We fail unless we make it good.
Seek increase of our little might,
And gather up our hardihood.'
– *Quest by Canoe*.

Anyone fancy a 'virtual reality' canoe trip round the Western Isles?
CJO@ARMCHAIR.ADV.CO.UK

MUNRO MATTERS

By David Kirk (Clerk of the List)

With a further 217 names added to the List between April 1, 2004 and March 31, 2005, I have not had to worry too much about lack of material to use for this year's report. Again I must thank all the people who wrote to me. The List of this year's Completionists are as follows. As before, the first five columns are number, name, then Munro, Top and Furth Completion years.

3120	William John McAllan	2004	3167	James Philip Higginson	2004
3121	Jane Wilmot-Smith	2004	3168	Jillian Karima Higginson	2004
3122	Chris Jones	2004	3169	Mike Atherton	2004
3123	Steven Kirk	1996	3170	Trevor W. Mitton	2004
3124	George Pumffrey	2004	3171	Duncan Stirling	2004
3125	Ann Macleod	2003	3172	John Forester Thom	2003
3126	Keith Millar	2003 2003 2004	3173	Julian Kirk	2004
3127	Peter Collins	1996	3174	Ian Hamilton Rodney	2004
3128	Anthony Lang	2004	3175	Mike Elrick	2004
3129	Richard E. P. Spencer	2004	3176	Graham Pascall	2004
3130	Neil Henderson	2004	3177	Dave Crosher	2004
3131	Duncan J. MacPherson	2003	3178	Bruce S. Davidson	2004
3132	Nicholas J. L. Gardener	2004 2004	3179	Mike Knox	2004 2004
3133	Jenny Lingenhult	2004	3180	Robert Sleight	2004
3134	Steve Coutts	2004	3181	Pauline Sleight	2004
3135	Margaret Tees	2004	3182	Jon G. Moss	2004
3136	Richard Speirs	2004 2004 2002	3183	Barry Smith	2004
3137	R. Lazenby	2004	3184	Nancy C. Cox	2004
3138	Chris Dobson	2002	3185	Jeffrey J. Cox	2004
3139	Alan J. Winchester	2004	3186	Jan Crawshaw	2004
3140	Mark W. Phillips	2004	3187	Alison Philip	2004 2004
3141	Peter D. Cottam	2004	3188	Bill Strang	2004 2004
3142	Steve Chambers	1994 1995	3189	Nigel Horsfield	2004
3143	Michael Pearce	2004	3190	Alistair Drummond	2004
3144	Kathryn J. Osborne	2004	3191	Stewart Byrne	2004
3145	Rodger W. Osborne	2004	3192	Gregor Yates	2004
3146	Adrian R. Proctor	2001	3193	Elaine Anderson	2004
3147	Rosalyn Clancey	2004	3194	Gail Crawford	2004
3148	William Rawles	2004	3195	Richard Tait	2004
3149	John Smith	2004	3196	Jim Wallace	2004
3150	Marion Smith	2004	3197	Margaret F. H. Hodge	2004
3151	Eric Grant	2004	3198	Michael Cates	2004
3152	Roger Gregory	2003 2004	3199	Jane Rendall	2004
3153	Ewan Grant Finlay	2004	3200	Adam Middleton	2004
3154	Di Hollow	2004	3201	W. Keith Hamflett	2004
3155	William Casey	2004 2004 1998	3202	A. Fiona D. Mackenzie	2004
3156	Jonquil Mary Boyd	2004	3203	John Anderson	2004
3157	Stuart Boyd	1997	3204	Margaret Roberts	2004
3158	David A. Bunting	2004	3205	Avril Hedges	2004
3159	Chris Wilson	2004	3206	Wilma Tully	2004
3160	David Bridges	2004	3207	Allan Gibbon	2004
3161	Barry Arthur	2004	3208	Colin Robertson	2004
3162	Margaret Parker	2004	3209	Glenda Robertson	2004
3163	Neil Willcox	2004	3210	Robert F. Waterston	2004
3164	Brian N. Jones	2004	3211	Margaret Squires	2004
3165	Andrew Joynson	2004	3212	Derek Robertson	2004
3166	Roger Chappell	2004	3213	Charles Murray	2004

3214	Allan Adam	2004	3271	Kevin Murray	2004	
3215	William John Robinson	2004	3272	I. S. Halliburton	2004	
3216	David K. Lygate	2004	3273	Jim Hewson	2004	
3217	Kenneth Ratcliffe	2004	3274	Harvie W. Brown	2004	
3218	Margaret A. Minards	2004	3275	John Higgins	2004	
3219	Willy Slavin	2004	3276	Ann Aitken	2004	
3220	Mike Carter	2004	2004	3277	Elaine Swain	2004
3221	Derek Jewell	2004	3278	Les McPhail	2003	
3222	Craig Robertson	2004	3279	John Millar	2004	
3223	Guy Dewhurst	2004	3280	Dr. M.E. Buchanan	2004	
3224	Mike Dennis	2004	3281	Muriel Thomson	2004	
3225	Liz Baran	2004	3282	Ray Thompson	2004	
3226	Timothy Chappell	2004	3283	Paul Conroy	2004	
3227	Gordon Hendry	2004	3284	Chris Ridgeway	2004	
3228	James Overstone	2004	3285	Lindsey Ridgeway	2004	
3229	Rosemary Bailey	2004	3286	Bill Roberts	2004	
3230	Mark Whitehouse	2004	3287	Marion Craig	2004 2004	
3231	Tim Brett	2004	3288	Duncan Craig	2004 2004	
3232	Dougal Drysdale	2001	3289	Robert J. Kinnaird	2004	
3233	Irene Macgregor	2004	3290	Judith K. Scott	2004	
3234	Stephen Hunt	2003 2002	3291	Donald P. Morrison	2004	
3235	Alan Adrian	2004	3292	Donald Malone	2004	
3236	Senga Adrian	2004	3293	Paul Ormerod	2004 2004	
3237	Steven A Elliot	2004	3294	Philip J. Taylor	2004	
3238	Michael Hetherington	2004	3295	Colin Young	2004	
3239	Helena Brigginshaw	2004	3296	Colin Lesenger	2004	
3240	John M. Foster	2004	3297	Emma O' Shea	2004	
3241	Andy Pearson	2004	3298	Manuel Lapp	2004	
3242	George Henry Shearer	2004	3299	Martin Snijders	2004	
3243	Simon Grove	2004	3300	Gordon Scott	2004	
3244	Wilhelm Schroder	2002	3301	Reg Willis	2004	
3245	Peter Stewart	2003	3302	Martin Dey	2004	
3246	George Ferguson	2004	3303	Neil Campbell	2003	
3247	Roderick J. B. Rhodes	2004	3304	Francis Kelly	2003	
3248	Alison Fox	2004	3305	Janet Pitt Lewis	2004	
3249	Carmel Smith	2004	3306	Clive Smith	2004	
3250	Ian Smith	2004	3307	Neil Thompson	2004	
3251	John A. Strain	2004	3308	Phil Lancastern	2004	
3252	Tony Wilcox	2004	3309	Paul Myers	2004	
3253	Keith Jackson	2004	3310	Dennis MacGillivray	2004	
3254	Brian Lee	2004	3311	Alexander D. Spalding	2004	
3255	Colin Marsh	2004	3312	Jane O Dochartaigh	2004	
3256	Bob Allison	2004	3313	Paul King	2004	
3257	Roger Greeves	2004	3314	John Albiston	2004	
3258	Alan R. Binns	2004	3315	Stuart Malpas	2004	
3259	Alison Smith	2004	3316	Ian Maitland	2004	
3260	Jean Cowan	2004	3317	Adele Struthers	2004	
3261	Chris Ottley	2003	3318	Crawford Cumming	2004	
3262	David Law	2004	3319	Brian Billington	2004	
3263	Eddie Wilkinson	2004	3320	Alistair Morrison	2004	
3264	Jeanie Clabbie	2004	3321	Karen Parker	2004	
3265	Peter Wilson	2004	3322	Derel Capper	2004	
3266	Gerry McKenna	2004	3323	Janet Capper	2004	
3267	Susan Davidson	2004	3324	Martin Tull	2004	
3268	Tony Viveash	2004	3325	Stan Work	2004	
3269	Peter John Robertson	2004	3326	Robert W. Kerr	2004	
3270	Vincent Conlon	2004	3327	Mike Nieman	2004	

3328	Dave Bonnett	1999	3333	Martin Banfield	2004
3329	Morna Forrester	2004	3334	John C. Calder	2004
3330	Simon Mills	2004	3335	Robert O. Duncan	1999
3331	Douglas Wilson	2004	3336	Niall R. Duncan	2001
3332	Rob M. Speed	2004			

One of those unusual coincidences occurred on Sgor na Ulaigh on April 24, last year. Chris Dobson (3138), having left his wife lower down on the Glen Etive approach, was powering up towards his final summit, when out of the mist, he came upon around 30 people, also approaching the summit, but from the Glen Coe direction. This turned out to be the summit party of Steve Coutts (3134). Steve and Chris summited together.

Also managing to get 30 people on their final top were Steven Elliott (3237) and Peter Wilson (3265), on Na Gruagaichean. Steve's biggest day during his round was 19 Munros in the Glen Sheil area in 24 hours. Peter did the north side only, to get a haul of 12. A further '30 on Top' day was achieved by Elaine Anderson (3193) on Meall nan Tarmachan. She reported several real ptarmigan on top too, and someone even brought a stuffed one – she didn't say if it was originally alive. The greatest number of people on top for a Completion this year goes to Sister Margaret Minards (3218) and Rev. Willy Slavin who managed 42 on Ben na Lap. Irene MacGregor (3233) on Creise, had 10 Munroists among her 27 summiteers.

An unusual double completion of Munros and Tops was completed by Richard 'Tricky' Spiers (3136). He traversed the Corrag Bhuide ridge of An Teallach to meet up with 25 people on Bidean a Glas Thuill. After celebrating his final Munro, he tramped alone over to repeat his first Top, Glas Mheall Liath. Following a further traverse of Bidean, he then completed his Tops on Glas Mheall Mor.

Compleat Munro rounds, while based overseas, are not common. This year, Margaret Tees (3135) did just this, while based in Ireland. She was wondering if she was the first woman to do this, and I expect she is – unless you know better of course. Also travelling from afar, we had the third claimed Dutch completion this year by Martin Snijders (3299). The Scottish mountains are so highly thought of in the Netherlands that he needed to delay reporting due to having to give Press interviews and appear on local TV and radio. Despite the distance travelled, Martin managed to get 30 onto his final summit, to be met by Hamish Brown (62), who had heard about the ascent and climbed the hill from the other side. Manuel Lapp (3298) from Freiberg in Germany reports needing 16 trips to compleat. As well as the scenery, the reason he keeps returning is that: "In Scotland, the people like their own mountains and they understand people who do the same."

Niall Campbell (3303) needed to race to finish on Beinn Bhuide, just days before being posted to Germany with the RAF. He came upon a film crew on his descent, and discovered that they were shooting, of all things – *Eastenders*.

With a start in 1935, and compleating on the remote Mullach nan Dheirhgain in 2004 at 80, this year's *Munrois Longius* is Robert Waterston (3210). Partners compleating together are often mentioned, however a letter which I received from Nancy and Jeffrey Cox (3184 and 3185) has allowed me to invent yet a further 'Bad Latin' category. They are this year's '*Munrois Longius con Matrimonium*'. At completion, Nancy was 71 and Jeffrey was 69. Furthermore, it was Ladhair Bheinn they chose. Kathryn and Rodger Osborne (3144 and 3145) did every summit together and are now sharing their second round together. Six couples have completed two rounds together, but I don't expect that many have shared every summit. Also sharing virtually every Munro with a trusted partner was Richard Spencer (3129), who did all but some of Skye with his dog, Guy. Guy is even the main subject of the final

summit photo. A further joint completion of Munros and Tops was achieved by Alison Philip and Bill Strang (3187 and 3188), when they topped out on Moruisg with 20 friends. Steven Kirk (3123) had his wife as company on Mull's Munro, but could very easily have ended up with a further family member – just days after they got down she gave birth.

Also finishing on Ladhar Bheinn was Chris Jones (3122) who gave himself the additional handicap of combining his last Munro weekend with his stag weekend – it's lucky he got on the hill at all.

I often get letters from people lists other than those in Munro's Tables, but I have never had someone ticking 'airfields' before! This is what Somerset-based Barry Arthur (3161) is doing. Barry got 33 people up Ben Chonzie in May 2004, but only 32 walked down – his son paraglided off the top. Also being given a fly-past was Eric Grant (3151). As he was ascending from Glen Nevis to traverse over to Aonach Mor, a pair of golden eagles soared right past him.

A completion of Munros, Tops and Corbetts was recorded in a single letter by Steve Chambers (3142). He completed the Tops on the Basteir Tooth in 1995, but needed to return and do Knights Peak in 1999, before he felt he could record. Still, he was pleased to have a fine pair of peaks for his Top completion.

Two people completing together is quite common, but having three together is less so. There were two triple completions this year, one all male, the other all female. Margaret Roberts (3204), Avril Hedges (3205) and Wilma Tully (3206) finished on Sgurr Alasdair, and Jim Hewson (3273), Harvie Brown (3274) and David Law were on 'Ben Mull'.

When people look up Ken Crocket's final summit photo-library in the SMC website, it is often hard to tell which hill is featured without reading the caption. Ann Macleod's (3125) friends made sure everyone would know who was doing what, where and when, by unrolling a 10ft. x 3ft. professionally produced banner above her head for the summit pictures. As well as taking unusual things up final hills, Paul Myres (3309) managed to take someone with a very unusual job. It was his uncle – the Ilkley Town Crier. This gentleman had composed a poetic piece to Paul, which he delivered in typical manner on the summit. Also receiving a poetic offering was Stan Work (3325) whose brother presented him with a framed copy. The poem appeared in the Moray Mountaineering Club newsletter, and its last verse is:

But never mind, the year's drift by,
Stob Ban you see against the sky,
Is this the one or is there more,
Not for you – it's 284.

No one reported having to drag a ball and chain up their final summit this year, but Gordon Scott (3300) was made to carry a friend's son, a 10-year-old, up Sgurr Dearg of Beinn a Bheithir. More than 20 people watched him suffer, including two who had flown over especially from Oman.

The Inn Pinn always produces some good stories for this report and this year is no exception. Colin Marsh (3255) finished his last three Munros on the same day – the round of Coire Laggan, finishing with Alasdair – and all that on his 50th birthday too. As Colin was negotiating the abseil from the Inn Pinn, his wife arranged the 20 or so onlookers on Sgurr Dearg to sing, *Happy Birthday*.

A rather unusual tale came from John Millar (3279) – it was his first Munro! He was camping in Glen Brittle and decided to scramble up the hills, knowing nothing of the Cuillin's reputation, or even having heard of the Inn Pinn. When he saw the pinnacle, he initially tried the short side, but failed. He then managed the long side, but had a bit of trouble getting down the same way. His next Munro wasn't for

another 22 years, and only after that did he realise that he had already done the hardest one.

Also having an amazing first Munro day was Michael Hetherington (3238). He did the Cairngorm 4000-ers. He did them, however, by walking in from Aviemore, and that after getting the train in the wee small hours from Perthshire. His penultimate Munro trip was also a 14-hour day, walking in to Knoydart from Kinloch Hourn and back, aged 70. Brian Billington (3319), who completed on the Buachaille in July 2004, 42 years after starting, remembers meeting two men on Sgurr Ruadh in July 1962, one of whom was on his final Munro. Brian still has a photo of the men, and would be happy to pass it on to them or their family – please contact myself for Brian’s address. Only six men are listed as compleating in 1962.

Charles Murray’s (3213) brother deserves a mention. He faithfully accompanied his brother on his day of triumph on Chno Dearg, despite his boots not having seen daylight in four years. On the way up, he had to tie them together with bandages, and on the way down, as the soles fell to bits, he had to turn them upside-down and bandage the uppers to the soles of his own feet. Also with odd things on his feet was Keith Jackson (3253), who did the whole lot (including the Inn Pinn) in Wellies – the only footwear suitable for the Scottish bogs – in his opinion. Apart from Keith, there was no mention of any Fancy Dress Munroists this year, however Helena Brigginsshaw (3239) was surprised to meet a masked man, clad all in black, as she reached her final summit, Angel’s Peak. She was even more surprised when presented with a box of Milk Tray. Apparently, he had approached via Glen Feshie and had been texting a member of her party to ensure a suitably timed meet up.

Extended trips to all Munro summits are always of interest, and to finish this piece, I feel due congratulations must go to Emma O’Shea (3297), who did them all but Beinn Heasgarnich in 1999 solo (apart from Meg, her Border Collie), in a four-month trek for MacMillan Cancer Relief. The reason that she missed one out was because the “weather was very poor”.

AMENDMENTS

The following have added to their entries on the List. Each Munroist’s record is shown in full. The columns refer to Number, Name, Munros, Tops, Furths and Corbetts.

1137	Mike Weedon	1989 2003 2004 2002
1040	James Gordon	1992 1994 1998
		1996
		1998
		2000
		2004
1401	Alan Bellis	1995 2004 2002
1080	Jeffrey C. Stone	1992 2004
1238	R. J. Anderson	1993 2003
1796	John L. Robinson	1997 2003
1797	Elaine Stewart	1997 2003
1798	Colin P. Watts	1997 2003
2438	Morag Barclay	2000 2003
2579	Isabel M. G. Watts	2001 2003
634	Bill Miller	1987 1998 1991 1992
		1988
		2004
2021	W. R. Strachan	1998
		2004
494	Terry Butterworth	1987 2004

		2004	
1045	Steve Fallon	1992 1993	
		1994	
		1995	
		1996	
		1997	
		1998	
		1999	
		2000	
		2001	
		2002	
		2003	
		2004	
1419	Donald W. W. Smith	1995	2004
23	*M. Hutchinson	1955 1955	1970 1992
		1992	1998
		1998	
		2004	
2266	David S. Norrie	1999	2004
3220	Mike Carter	2004	2004
2373	David M. Raw	2000	
		2004	
359	Alf Barnard	1984 1985	
		2004 2004	
2412	Dave Windle	2000	2004
1318	Catherine S. Gray	1994	2004
1319	Robert P. Gray	1994	2004
1113	Kenneth Oliver	1989 1991	2003
		1996	
		2004	
775	Peter Malone	1990 1995	2004
		2004	
2342	Anthony P. Weetman	2000	2004
2281	James A. Thomson	1999 2004	
225	Alan L. Brook	1980 1980 1978	2004
		2002 2002	
1246	Janey Brogan	1993	2004
1247	David Brogan	1993	2004
204	Christopher Bond	1980 1986 1986	2004
262	Roger J. C. Robb	1981 2003	2004
		2000	
3152	Roger Gregory	2003 2004	
1801	Lindsay Boyd	1997 2002	2004
		2000	
		2002	
118	Diane Standring	1973	2004
3136	Richard Speirs	2004 2004 2002	
1317	Leigh Sayers	1994	
		2003	
568	Charles L. Scott	1987	
		2004	

As ever, people who wish to register a Completion or an Amendment, or make any necessary correction to the List, should send a letter with a stamped addressed envelope to me at:

Greenhowe Farmhouse, Banchory Devenick, Aberdeenshire, AB12 5YJ.

If you wish a certificate (for either a Munro or Corbett completion), please make sure you enclose an A4 sae. If a certificate isn't required, and an e-mail

address is given on a received letter, I can speed up return of information, by e-mailing back.

Have a great day on the hill.

David Kirk

Clerk of the List.

Iain Robertson reports: The Munro Society enters its fourth year with a healthy membership which appears to have stabilised around the 120 mark. The year's two official events were the Annual Meeting at the University of Stirling and the Annual Dinner at Blair Atholl. The Stirling meeting saw the public launch of Mountain Quality Indicators (MQIs). Official representatives from groups – SMC, John Muir Trust, Scottish National Heritage and the National Trust for Scotland gave a positive welcome to the concept.

The next and challenging stage will be to extend the database of scrutinised Munros to the point where it will be possible to monitor alterations in their physical and ecological state and so determine their well-being or otherwise. In the evening the annual Munro Lecture was given by the irrepressible Jim Curran, who demonstrated that life is still good for the "middle-aged mountaineer".

The dinner at Blair Atholl was held concurrently with an exhibition of mountain paintings and photographs in the Banvie Room at Blair Castle. This lasted for 10 days and preceded and succeeded the dinner. The Banvie Room is at the exit from the Castle and has to be traversed by all visitors. In addition to the pictures, the case was set out for an extension of the boundaries of the Cairngorm National Park to include Highland Perthshire. This is a matter of considerable importance to the community in Blair Atholl and the Munro Society, which shares this view, was concerned to show common cause with the local people. Speaker at the dinner was Ian Smith, depute editor of *High* magazine, who eloquently demonstrated that the fascination of mountains is a multi-faceted passion with infinite scope for individuality.

As part of the effort to extend the Society's archive, video interviews have been arranged with some of the older Munroists, not necessarily members of the Society. The first properly edited interview is due to be screened at the 2005 Annual Meeting at Birnam. This is with Jim Cosgrove (Munroist 56) from Kirriemuir and now in his 90s. Further interviews will be screened when they have been edited. The Society's archivist is very keen to receive material dealing with Munros or Munroists and the archive is lodged in the A. K. Bell Library, Perth, where it is available for study by interested parties. The Archivist may be contacted at Glasgow University Library, Hillhead Street, Glasgow, G12 8QE.

All other communications should be addressed to: Eleanore Hunter, Secretary, 12 Randolph Court, Stirling, FK8 2AL.

Easter Meet 2005. Photo: Dick Allen.

It's a dog's life – Teallach on the Mamores. Photo: Dave 'Heavy' Whalley.





IN MEMORIAM

MALCOLM STIRTON SMITH j1954

Mac Smith died in Aberdeen on December 22, 2004 aged 83, a remarkable Aberdonian and Cairngorms character. As my wife, Jenny, said before his funeral: ‘There will never be another Mac. He was a man of many parts.’

Tom Weir and I went ski-touring with him on a few days at Luibeg in 1949-52, and I came to know him well after returning from Baffin Island to Aberdeen, when we shared the top storey of 10 The Chanonry from autumn 1953 to spring 1955. Many a topic we discussed in our North-east Scots tongue – mountaineering, polar regions, philosophy, religion, geomorphology, entomology, books on Scottish hills, and their authors.

In *The Scotsman*, I wrote: “Mac Smith will long be remembered as a remarkable Aberdonian and Cairngorms character. He had a breadth of interests more typical of the 1800s than the 1900s. Joiner, naturalist, entomologist, conservationist, photographer, humanist, bibliophile, jazz enthusiast, Bass connoisseur, argumentative debater, competent all-round mountaineer and ski-mountaineer alone or in company, Nature Conservancy warden who became the Warden of St Kilda and made an annotated collection of its invertebrates, writer of articles in the *Etchachan Club Journal*, and author of the best climbers’ guide ever produced in Scotland.”

After war service as a gunner, he became a joiner in the shipyard of Hall, Russell and Co. A keen entomologist, he went on field trips with the Northern Naturalists’ Club, and he and a few workmates began to climb on Sundays, travelling by bus on Saturday afternoons and walking far to camp or bothy. A good observer, Mac was the main explorer, reconnoitring on almost every weekend and developing unrivalled knowledge of every cliff on the Aberdeen side of the Cairngorms. His special favourites were the corries of Beinn a’ Bhuird, Ben Macdui and Braeriach, but as an all-rounder he also appreciated the glens. In short summer trips he and friends went farther afield to climb in Skye, Dauphine, Chamonix, and twice at Cogne.

Mac enthused his friends, and as a keen second gave encouragement and information on the route ahead. Sometimes he could be grumpy, quelling incipient bombast with a few effective words and a scornful look. I recall an evening meeting of Etchachan Club members at an Aberdeen café when Sandy Tewnon pontificated at length to five of us. When Sandy paused to draw breath, Mac said: “You’re welcome to your opinions, Sandy,” neatly ending the tedious homily without causing offence. To most folk, however, Mac was retiring, even shy, and eschewed any fuss made on his behalf.

Our flat drew many evening visits from climber friends. Tom Patey often slept on a camp-bed in my room, after discussions about climbing, interspersed with tea and listening to Mac’s records of traditional jazz. I bought a US army jeep for £100, and Tom often persuaded Mac and me to come to Ellon and join him on his home sea-cliffs of Longhaven. On the first trip, Tom took on his rope two Ellon girls who had been his schoolmates. After they were up, I asked Mac if he wished to go first, but he waved me into the lead with a confident: “I’ll field ye!” While I climbed and then brought him up, there came a stream of comments about the rock, the route ahead, and the standard of each move, a Mac characteristic. There followed many trips to the Cairngorms and coast. The jeep often carried six of us with rucksacks, reaching a top speed of 35 mph as it roared up Deeside, but smashing through snowdrifts that stopped cars or buses.

Mac Smith.

Philip ‘Bish’ McAra. Photo: Alan Scott.

Mac was not fast on rock or when walking and skiing, but had staunch staying-power. I recall a phone call late on the night of April 12, 1954, from George Roberts, then Aberdeen co-ordinator of mountain rescue, who was gathering local climbers for a rescue and asked Mac and I to come. Two members of Moray Mountaineering Club had fallen at Chokestone Gully in the Garbh Choire on April 11, one suffered compound fractures to both legs, and his mostly unscathed companion raised the alarm. Mac and I drove to Derry Lodge where we met George with a few Aberdeen climbers, and we set off in darkness. In the Lairig Ghru we met the RAF Mountain Rescue Team coming from Speyside, and then walked up Garbh Choire in falling snow to where Alan Balch lay in a sleeping bag, beside a doctor who had given him pain-killing drugs. After sledging him down snowdrifts, we carried the 15-stone casualty for seven rough wet miles to Derry at 5 p.m. Despite little sleep, Mac was still fresh and in no hurry to return to Aberdeen. For an hour we strolled in the pinewood as wood-pigeons cooed and mistle thrushes sang, a contrast from our long struggle earlier in the day.

Since 1951, Mac had been writing notes for a possible climbers' guide to the Cairngorms, and under Patey's influence this idea began to take shape. On November 28, 1953, Tom Weir gave a lecture to the Cairngorm Club. Next morning, I drove up Deeside with him, Patey, Mike Taylor and Bill Brooker, and we climbed Eagle Ridge. On the way back to Aberdeen, Weir brimmed with enthusiasm about a guide. He would ask the SMC to authorise the work, with Patey, Mac and Taylor as editors and others helping. The SMC agreed. Proposed by Weir, these three and I became members and attended the 1954 dinner in Edinburgh. Though a member for more than 20 years, Mac avoided later meetings, being generally averse to big gatherings.

Later, he became guide author, helped by Patey, Taylor and others. It was typical of Mac's modesty that he referred to himself as 'The Editor'. He generously acknowledged: "Without the aid of T. W. Patey, the Editor's constant associate in the venture from 1954 to 1956, this guide could not have been written."

The SMC published the guide in 1961 and 1962, two little red books with drawings of cliffs. Mac's work had been a labour of love, assessing every phrase and editing repeatedly.

Previously, most mountaineers thought Scotland had good climbs only in the West. Mac demolished this notion, describing many fine routes on scores of tall granite crags beyond remote glens in the UK's snowiest hill-range. Nowadays, it is taken for granted that the Cairngorms are nationally important for climbing on rock, snow and ice. Also, his guide was the first to use winter grades, after Aberdeen climbers found summer grades inadequate for classifying winter routes. Winter grading is now general.

Around 1960, Mac became a Nature Conservancy warden. In *The Highlands and Islands*, F. Fraser Darling and J. Morton Boyd portrayed him as 'The Warden of St Kilda' on Plate XX, and referred to Smith (1963), *A collection of invertebrates from St. Kilda between 1961 and 1963*. He contributed a few articles to the *Etchachan Club Journal*: - A 'lang' lauf (Anonymous 1954), *The blues and the ballad* (1955), and *What's in a name?* (1996), the last one reprinted in the *SMCJ* of 1998.

His notable style extended to everyday letters. In December, 2001, he sent me one in which he recalled Tom Patey and "those glorious moments of hilarity at the Chanonry when, climbing the stairs, I heard gales of laughter coming from you. Mystified, I entered your room to find you sitting on a chair, convulsed in non-stop laughter at Tom kneeling in the buff, frantically searching through his vest, pants, shirt and trousers stretched out on the floor for the flea he had picked up on the bus".

New editions of the guide give more routes, but Mac's guide stands out for elegance and good observation. The recent edition praises it as a 'masterpiece'. Such it will remain.

Adam Watson.

IN THE late Fifties Mac's hill companions were Kenny Winram, George Davidson, Bertie Duguid and Gordon Leslie. Most hill folk at that time reached Braemar on the Strachan's bus which left Aberdeen at 3.15 on Saturday afternoon. Very few people at that time had the five-day week. First port of call would be the Bruachdrine for High Tea and then across the road to the Fife Arms.

By closing time (9.30) Mac's table was covered in empty Bass bottles. Their evenings in the Fife were spent discussing just about everything – entomology, religion, politics, their favourite places in Scotland and the Alps. They could also talk for hours about the merits of bottled Bass. The Fife barmen knew better than to go farther than just taking the top off for them, because they all had their own special way of pouring. I have watched fascinated by Bass-pouring demonstrations. Put the bottle neck right to the bottom of the glass and pour very slowly, one of the gang would say. "Na! Na!", said Mac, "pour it slowly on to where your thumb is holding the glass."

I think the stuff was terrified to come out of the bottle in case it appeared cloudy. If someone poured a cloudy Bass there were hoots of derision and uncomplimentary remarks on his pouring method. Of course, the unfortunate recipient, in order to save honour, marched up to the bar and demanded another – telling the barman his beer was off.

If truth be told, I think they drank it so fast the beer didn't have enough time on the shelf to settle.

By the late-Fifties Mac had virtually stopped rockclimbing but spent a lot of time in the Cairngorm corries looking for beetles and sometimes walking up to Coire Etchachan or Sputan Dearg with Davie Reid and myself pointing out what he thought would make a good route. He seemed to know just about every nook and cranny in the whole Cairngorms. He imparted his knowledge to us young ones in a quiet, modest fashion as was his manner.

I think at this time he was probably a bit jaded with rockclimbing after having spent recent years chasing Patey around the cliffs in order to produce his excellent guide books. He was starting to enjoy his long, solitary days looking for, and recording, the beasties of the Cairngorms.

One Saturday, early in 1959, I met Mac on the 3.15 bus and we spent the three hours chatting about the hills – home and abroad. He told me all about his favourite place in the Alps – Cogne in the Gran Paradiso area, and also of the trips to Chamonix with Tom Patey, Mike Taylor, Sticker Thom and Freddie Malcolm. You should get yourself out there, he said. So that July, Reid and I hitched to Chamonix during our Trades Fortnight holiday managing to spend three days gazing at the Aiguilles before hitting the road back.

After I got back I met Mac at Luibeg and told him I had been to Chamonix. He thought that was great, but later on that weekend he sort of gave me a row when he found out that I had never been to Skye. Sometimes you just could not win with Mac.

He certainly did not suffer fools gladly. Mac could be quite abrupt with someone who questioned his gradings of the Cairngorms climbs.

Once, I innocently became the recipient of one of his withering looks – of which he was a master – when I said that Braeriach Direct should be graded harder than V.

Diff. There's nothing wrong with the grading, he said, and his look implied that there was something wrong with my climbing.

However, soon after, I was speaking to Dick Barclay, who along with Ronnie Sellers and Mac, had made the first ascent of Braeriach Direct.

I told Dick that I had asked Mac about the grading and said: "Mac must have found it very easy."

Incredulously Dick replied: "When we took Mac up the crux the rope was so tight we could have plucked it like a fiddle string!"

Needless to say I never again mentioned the climb to Mac.

When Mac joined the Nature Conservancy his various postings meant he lost touch with some of his Aberdeen friends and it was not until he became the warden at the Sands of Forvie, Newburgh – just north of Aberdeen that he came back into the fold.

He took an intense interest in what the Aberdeen climbers were doing and was constantly amazed at the quality of slide shows at the Etchachan Club's winter meets which he eagerly attended up until a year before his death. On numerous occasions he spoke of his admiration for enthusiasts like Greg Strange, Simon Richardson and Andy Nisbet.

A few years ago after one of the slide shows at the Blue Lampie, Mac and I were invited round to a nearby climbers' flat for an extra, late drink. There we met Graeme Livingstone (The Brat) who was fascinated by Mac's tales of St. Kilda etc., and was moved to say: "He is a sharp cookie."

He certainly was.

Derek Pyper.

UNLIKE Adam and Derek I was never fortunate enough to spend any time with Mac in the hills. I was part of the next generation of North-east climbers who came along in the 1960s. To us, Mac was already a legend, immortalised in the writing of Tom Patey and author of our two-volume red bible. Like the copy of Alexander's District Guide which Mac carried with him throughout the war, his Climbers' Guide Book was our inspiration. We were so pathetically smitten by the Cairngorms that we sometimes played a game in the bothy at night which involved identifying a climb from lines read out of the guide. "An inch by inch struggle throughout" will be familiar to local climbers, being the apt description of the first ascent of The Dagger on Creagan a' Choire Etchachan.

In the 1970s, during the anarchic period of the Etchachan Club, I got to know Mac a little better as he, Sandy Russell, Kenny Winram and Bill Brooker regularly formed the old guard at the monthly meetings held in the University rooms. By this time, Mac had completed his stint at Tentsmuir Point and was working at Forvie Reserve at Newburgh.

After retirement, Mac was retained on contract by the Nature Conservancy to survey the broadleaved woodland of the North-east region. This resulted in many Sites of Special Scientific Interest being added to the list. He said of this three-year period: "Heaven, I was in heaven and no longing for the hills."

In the 1980s I started work on a history of climbing in the Cairngorms, which, incidentally, should have been written by Mac himself. Naturally, he was one of the first people I visited, although visited was not quite the right word. He was living in a flat at the foot of Craigie Loanings and in all the 10 years or so he helped me with the book I was never once permitted to cross the threshold of that smoke-stained doorway. I soon found that the quickest way to contact him was to drop a note through his letter box, return home, then wait for him to phone from his nearest call

box. Goodness knows what he had in that flat? Initially, he was cagey about the grand project as he called it, but when he realised I wasn't doing a Micky Spillane he became very enthusiastic. As each chapter was completed, he read through the text, ostensibly to check for historical accuracy, but he could not resist marking it like an old English teacher. It came back with more red ink on it than original text. As you can imagine, we often had much debate over fairly trivial matters. It was his help and encouragement that kept me going.

Three years ago Mac moved into his sister's house, and last summer, after he had a spell in hospital we had a fine evening, looking at slides and photos, and talking about the hills and the war. He even played some of his favourite jazz pieces, including *Squareface*. During his recent session in Aberdeen Royal Infirmary in November, I saw him several times. On my last visit I took a current issue of a glossy climbing magazine which contained an article on four classic Scottish winter climbs, including Route Major on Carn Etchachan which Mac had climbed with Tom Patey nearly 50 years ago. Mac had been pretty miserable in hospital, but this time his spirit was high as he was going home the next day and looking forward to taking a short walk. In less than three weeks his heart finally gave out.

Greg Strange.

PHILIP 'BISH' McARA j1987

ON JANUARY 29, 2005 the club lost one of its most individual of members with the passing of Bish McARA.

Bish took to the hills from an early age initially through hill walking but, while still at school, turning to climbing. In typically unregulated fashion he explored with school friends the esoteric pleasures to be had in climbing and developing Neilston quarry. Attendance at Strathclyde University brought new friends and, with the acquisition of a motorbike, the rock climbing accelerator was opened up full. After University the group of friends from there became subsumed into the Rannoch Mountaineering Club.

Bish's interests were wide and varied. So diverse were they that it was not until Bish was hospitalised following a serious car accident in January 2003 that separate groups of friends came to realise that there were in fact parallel universes of interests and friends in which Bish alone was the common factor. Walking, skiing, snow boarding, mountain biking, motor cycling, car driving, even caving (admittedly limited generally to Stoney Middleton in post pub sessions). All means of getting to, getting up, getting down or even getting under the hills were strictly on limits. In addition there was his interest in model building, paragliding and music. His grand passion, however, was climbing and this you had to understand in order to begin to understand Bish at all, assuming you could ever understand him in the first place – he was unremittingly lateral.

Bish's life and thinking were undertaken at escape velocity, it was a rare event not to encounter a unique Bish insight or tangent on anything. It could be hard to follow at times but always worth the effort, as the perspective offered breathed life back into a world often turned a little flat. As he once famously described the conclusion to a glorious day on the Ben. "It was fantastic man, fantastic, on a flat day you can see America."

Once you had recovered from Bish's slightly kaleidoscopic view of things you encountered a warm, endearingly old-fashioned and highly engaging personality.

His hospitality was limitless. Stopping by at his house was likely to turn into the offer of a Bish crafted curry, a few beers and an overnight stay. He struggled with the idea that there should be some regulation to the size of a group of people he should be with, not least because Bish enjoyed a good story. He was a raconteur blessed with both a unique delivery and a wealth of material from across the face of the planet on which he could draw with only the slightest provocation.

His adventures, for such they were, took him to the Alps, Greece, Spain, Italy, Germany, America and Antarctica. A climbing guidebook for Bish was as a red rag to a bull. He found it difficult to bridle his enthusiasm for climbing and the expression of that enthusiasm. Limb-flaying off-widths that would see the McAra temperature to near fever pitch. Many a leader lost in contemplation of a teetering, delicate crux has had their reverie of stone interrupted by the arrival of Bish at the crag in a lather of anticipation, "beef it man, beef it", "wrok man, wrok", etc.

Absence of someone to climb with, whether that be due to bad weather, (others not always sharing the full extent of his passion to climb whenever physically possible) geography or whatever, defined for Bish the rationale behind soloing. It was rare for a good day to pass and for him not to be out there. The stories of Bish adventures are legion.

What might not have been apparent to some was the Edwardian edge to the man. He loved the Clyde, Millport in particular, and the glory days of the steamers (boats, not the Rannoch). He crafted exquisite steam models of the vessels of yesteryear often based on nothing other than a photograph. These he built with the utmost care encompassing radio controls and home made copper boilers (pressure tested in the bath of course). His vocabulary and manners, once you stripped away the contemporary overlay, could be quite old-fashioned. Expressions such as "Please pass on my regards to..." were common parlance. A piano enjoyed pride of place in the house. He was what might best be termed an enthusiastic piano player. This reflected his interest in music which spanned from classical through 70s glam rock and punk rock, 80s new wave, all the way through to Zombie trance.

He was also fiercely proud of being a member of the SMC. The club lapel badge used to adorn the fur helmet for many years. He enjoyed the traditions and the history underlying the club.

Bish died in Glencoe doing what he loved most, being in the hills. He leaves behind his wife, Rhona and his girls, Rhiannon and Meghan, and all the rest of us.

I remember when rock was young...

John Dunn.

This obituary arrived too late for inclusion in last year's Journal.

WILLIAM B. YOUNG. j.1953

I FIRST met Bill in January 1952 when each of us was stranded in Crianlarich Youth Hostel during the weekend of the great gale that destroyed the Stranraer-Larne Ferry with great loss of life. One of us convinced the other (I'm not sure which was which) that conditions were just right to do Y-Gully on Cruach Ardrain. Yes, conditions were just right for the climb but we paid for it when we stuck our heads out the top of the gully. Realising we would have to crawl off the summit, one of us, almost certainly Bill, he was streets ahead of me in lateral thinking, had the brilliant idea of climbing back down the gully! So began a friendship that lasted just more than half-a-century.

If ever a person can be described as having served an apprenticeship in hillwalking it has to be Bill. The journeyman in Bill's case was his uncle. Long before he was interested in joining a club, and starting while still a schoolboy, Bill was being introduced to the hills of Scotland by his uncle, a lover of the hills in his own right and a hillwalker of unquestioned ability. Together they covered the length and breadth of Scotland with their hillwalking so that when we teamed up together

Bill was by far the more experienced of the two. Neither of us had much experience in rockclimbing or in winter climbing but, as was the custom in these days, we taught ourselves by setting ourselves targets every time we went into the hills, the next target always being that little bit harder than the previous one. This way of learning, of course, can have unexpected consequences! For a time, we had a reputation for being benighted. On one winter occasion we had to rope down in the dark from Crowberry Gully junction after failing to exit the left fork and finding that the bus had gone on without us (though two members had stayed behind 'just in case'); on another we spent the night out on the Eastern Traverse of Tower Ridge, and on another we finished a winter ascent of Observatory Ridge in the dark, finding when we got back to the CIC Hut that our 'friends' had commandeered our sleeping bags for their greater comfort. Bill took great pleasure in recovering our bags. One could get away with that in these days for there were few mountain rescue teams ready to charge off if one was only a few hours overdue.

We had three trips to the Alps – two in Chamonix and one in the Bregaglia. I would have needed Bill to list the various climbs we did during these seasons for my memory serves me ill. However, two incidents stand out in my memory. The first was possibly a case where vaulting ambition might have led us beyond our competence. We wanted to climb the Grand Couloir of the Aiguille Verte – why we wanted to do that I cannot remember but it may have had something to do with the magic 4000m! Preparing for our trip the night before, we heard that there had been an accident in the Couloir – a party of aspirant guides had come under sustained stone-fall and there had been fatalities. The bodies were brought down and laid out for the night under the sloping slab covering the old Couvercle Hut. When we saw these bundles we looked at each other – words were not needed. We never did climb the Verte. The second occurred at the end of one of our trips to Chamonix. With two days left we decided to walk up Mont Blanc. After spending the night at the Tete Rousse Hut we went by the Aiguille du Gouter and the Dome du Gouter to the summit. The weather was turning bad with visibility down to a few hundred yards when we reached the Vallot Hut on the way down. When we were brewing up we were approached by an elderly English couple who asked if we would share the cost of a guide to get us all down the mountain, for one of the other two occupants of the Hut was none other than the famous French guide, Lionel Terray. It was not going to be cheap. With the traditions of the Club pressing on our shoulders we nobly responded that we wanted to finish the descent under our own steam, but a more compelling reason was that at that stage in our holiday we hardly had two francs to rub together. For years afterwards we conjectured as to what might have happened had that situation presented itself at the beginning of the holiday when we had some money in our pockets. It would have been quite a tale to have told our club-mates – we climbed with Lionel Terray.

Bill was probably never happier than when he was in the hills but this emotional characteristic was never very obvious. I never heard him say: "I love the hills" for that was not his style. I never heard him make expression of inner feelings about the beauty of the mountains or of the challenge they posed or suggest that the hills had in any way moved him. In this respect – expressing his own emotions – he was a

very private person, though in all other respects he could fight his corner with passion and conviction. But as one got to know Bill on the hill, one could detect chinks in that reserve regarding his personal feelings about the hills. When a person walks the hills in all weathers, when his enthusiasm shows no signs of diminishing, when he treats every hill regardless of its altitude with respect, when he seeks to capture every nuance of shade or colour on camera, then one is entitled to assume that he has an enduring love for the hills. That was Bill. He had little time for the character development model as applied to mountain craft and blamed the education system for distorting the sport. I, being a member of the educational establishment, was often the recipient of Bill's trenchant criticisms. He was condemnatory of those books that set out to describe how to get up every hill in Scotland for it was the unknown or the unexpected that he most relished. A hillwalker *par excellence* he took little interest in Munro bashing – I doubt if he himself knew how many he had climbed.

Bill would not have described himself as a rockclimber or as a snow and ice climber but he would have been satisfied and pleased to be described as a mountaineer. One becomes a mountaineer as a result of time spent on the hill in all weathers on rock and ice and snow, exercising judgment between caution and risk. It is not simply an outlet for athletic activity but a genuine craft as well as a genuine enthusiasm, making an infinite variety of demands of strength, endurance, nerve, will and temperament on the participant. Those of us who knew Bill will recognise that as an apt description of the man. Mountaineering was a way of life. It was a total experience – best pursued from a tent or a snow hole or a cave or a mountain hut. I cannot recall, nor could I imagine, Bill on a climbing trip based in a hotel.

A recent memory of Bill will always stay with me. It happened during the Centenary Yacht Meet. We landed at Loch Scavaig heading for Sgurr na Stri. Bill chose to stroll up the path to Loch Coruisk. It was a glorious day, brilliant sunshine and no wind. As I went up the hill I could look back and see Bill as he made his leisurely way up to Coruisk. He stopped here and he looked there and occasionally stopped for longer spells to take what I presumed were photographs. He was in the heart of the mountains again and the Cuillins at that. Having known Bill for more than 50 years I knew exactly what was in his mind.

DMC.

HARRY TILLY j.1940

The death occurred last February of (Tobias) Harry Tilly, aged 96. He had been a member of the Scottish Mountaineering Club since 1940, and was the elder brother of Charles Tilly, also an SMC member from 1945 until his death in April 1992.

Harry Tilly was a solicitor in practice in Hartlepool, Co. Durham, joining his family firm called Temperley, Tilly and Hayward, when his grandfather and father were the senior partners. They both died in 1931-32, so that as soon as Harry qualified as a solicitor, he became the senior partner in the firm, until his retirement in 1971. His brother, Charles, also became a partner when he qualified. The firm still continues under the name of Tilly, Bailey and Irvine, and two of Charles's sons are now members of the firm.

In his younger years, Harry was a keen mountaineer, climbing in the Lake District, Scotland and the Alps. During the Second World War, he was in the RAF and was posted to serve in India. In between combat operations, his mountaineering experience was used in helping aircrew who were suffering from battle fatigue, to recuperate by leading them on expeditions in the Himalayas. After demobilisation he returned to the family law practice.

In 1952 he was part of a small expedition to the Himalayas, and was short-listed for the 1953 Everest expedition under John Hunt. He declined that opportunity modestly saying that he did not think his climbing skill was of the standard that would be required if the expedition was to be successful.

On his retirement, he and his wife, Diana, whom he had married in 1955, moved to live in Southern Tuscany, where he developed a great love of Italy and its art and architecture. He 'retired' entirely from mountain climbing, though he always loved walking in the country. In 1987 they moved back to live in Sussex until his wife died in 1996. Harry then returned to live in his hometown of Hartlepool where he remained fit, active and cheerful until his sudden death.

He never took a very active part in the SMC though he attended some New Year and Easter meets in the early 1950s.

E. G. B.

JOHN SMITH

AT FIRST, I couldn't believe it. John Smith, builder of the Naismith Hut, killed in a car accident on the Ullapool Road. Here was a man who had done a header off the Naismith roof, managed a repeat off the Lagangarbh Barn roof, and lived to tell the tale. What a man – indestructible – or so I thought.

I remember, during a site visit, saying to him that he really needed someone to help put on the crinkly iron roof, but merely received a smile and a shrug of the shoulders. John was like that – an individual in all things and redoubtable with it. At the time, I admitted to a personal interest in his welfare as I was supposed to be the 'safety officer' for the site works, having signed a new-fangled bureaucratic form to prove it. I don't suppose John gave a docken for that bit of paper.

John had his priorities in good order and often took time off during the week for various Highland activities; one site visit was adjusted to much later in the day so that he could come down from a bird watch at Handa Island. Site meetings were enjoyable affairs – relaxed and affable – and soon I was able to extend the length of time between visits knowing that everything was in good hands. There were times when I fussed about building details, particularly those concerning the roof and mentioned the matter several times, only to receive smiling and somewhat evasive replies. I really didn't need to bother – the finished roof more than came up to my expectations.

John completed the Lagangarbh Barn roof in nine days. This was a remarkable time given the indifferent weather conditions and a gale somewhere in the middle of the work. He did the job single-handedly, apart from a little portering of materials by members of the huts sub committee at the beginning and end of the contract.

Next time you are in the Naismith, look at the staircase and appreciate the craftsmanship. That part of the building is a memorial in itself. John cared more about quality than reward – and not many in the building industry can say that today.

John Smith, Master Builder, the club is indebted to you and I feel privileged to have known and worked with you.

Douglas Niven.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE CLUB

The following new members have been admitted and welcomed to the Club 2004-2005.

JOHN T. H. ALLEN (65), Retired school-teacher, Killin.

MARK ATKINS (44), IT Engineer, Kemnay.

ALASDAIR BUCHANAN (23), Trainee Mountain Guide, Edinburgh.

DAVID BUCHANAN (56), Software Consultant, Edinburgh.

MICHAEL CARROLL (41), RAF Mountain Rescue, Leuchars.

RICHARD JEWELL (30), IT System Support Specialist, Lennoxtown.

JONATHAN I JONES (33), Mountaineering Instructor, Aviemore.

ROBERT McMURRAY (24), Trainee Solicitor, Kirkcaldy.

HENRY T. M. METHOLD (43), Mountaineering Instructor, Fort William.

DAVID J. WEBB (51), Professor of Medicine, Edinburgh.

The One-Hundred-and-Fifteenth AGM and Dinner

ONCE again we returned north. The suitably antiquated, but recently refurbished, Victorian pile that is the Ben Wyvis Hotel within the appropriately Victorian setting of the village of Strathpeffer was the venue. The afternoon sessions quickly propelled us out of our reverie of nostalgia into the 21st century with excellent presentations from Rob Milne on (some of) the seven highest summits prior to his attempt on the seventh of the seven in the 2005 season, and a riveting talk, slides and video session from Scott Muir on Dry Tooling Technique. This was a revelation to most of us and a few grey heads were scratched amid murmurings of "what next" around the room, but the presentations were superb and clear evidence that the Club encompasses all variants across the spectrum of climbing from the traditional to the ultra modern.

The AGM was its usual mixture of the bland and the controversial, but finished commendably quickly in just over an hour. The charging of professional guides for use of huts, wind farms and the proposal to erect a statue of Norman Collie adjacent to the Sligachan Hotel were among the more controversial issues discussed, in the finest traditions of the Club, inconclusively. The tragic death in a road accident of John Smith who carried out the work on the Naismith Hut and Lagangarbh barn was noted.

The splendid banqueting hall of the Ben Wyvis did justice to our large gathering and the quality of the meal was up to standard both in quality and quantity. President, Peter MacDonald, conducted the proceedings with appropriate gravitas and charm in equal measure. In addition to welcoming our new members and presenting the W. H. Murray prize to Robin Campbell (entitling him to a free dinner), he especially welcomed Eric Langmuir and John Mallinson the first ascensionists of Spartan Slab on the 50th anniversary of the first route on Etive Slabs.

Our guests from kindred clubs were welcomed and subjected to gentle character assassination from Ronnie Robb in inimitable Aberdonian style. They were Moira Broadhead from the LSCC, Scott Smith of the JMCS, Gary Wardrop of the Cairngorm Club and Clive Rowland representing the Fell and Rock. Our principle guest was Denis Gray who gave a characteristically humorous address recalling the halcyon days of a few decades past, particularly the exploits of Tom Patey, Bob Grieve and yes – Robin Campbell. The club song received its customary

lusty rendition, redolent with emotion as usual and ably led by Curly Ross with Robin Campbell accompanying. Curly also treated us to a few other favourites, and other musical entertainment on the pipes was provided by Iain MacLeod. The new President, Colin Stead, was invested with the Club Regalia followed by the usual crack extending into the wee sma' oors.

A fine weekend was rounded off on the Sunday for most of us with some fresh air in fairly typical early December weather, the new President leading a small, but select, team to the summit of Bienn Laith Mhor Fannaich.

Next year's dinner location has been left to the discretion of the committee and no doubt the traditions of the Club will be upheld regardless of the venue.

Bill McKerrow.

Easter Meet 2005 – Dundonnell

EASTER was early this year but our hopes for snow on the mountains went unfulfilled. The meet was held at Dundonnell Hotel with a cool easterly wind and a mixture of cloudy and sunny days. Light-hearted banter surrounded the photographic competition, which was won by John Hay on condition that he shared the prize of a bottle of malt with the members!

Members climbed Beinn Dearg, An Teallach, Meall Gorm and An Coileachan, Mealla' Chrasgaidh, Sgurr nan Clach Geala and Sgurr nan Each, Beinn Dearg Mor, Ghobhlach, Cull Mhor, Sgurr Breac and A' Chailleach, Sail Mhor, Sgurr Fiona and Bidean Ghlais Thuill. On his way home Rob Milne, in training for Everest, climbed the three Corbetts Beinn Dearg Bheag, Beinn Dearg Mor and Beinn a' Chaisgein Mor, plus the Graham Beinn a' Chaisgein Bheag from Gruinard. Dave Broadhead and Des Rubens climbed several routes on Raven and Loch Tollaidh crags.

Those present: President Colin Stead, Robin Campbell, Brian Fleming, Peter MacDonald, Malcolm Slessor and guest Jane King, Iain Smart, Dick Allen and guests Chris (President of the Wayfarers' Club) and Pauline Kenny, Paul Brian and guest David Stone, Dave Broadhead, Robin Chalmers, Mike Fleming, John Hay, Colwyn Jones and Ann MacDonald, Bill McKerrow, Rob Milne, Roger Robb, and Des Rubens.

Dick Allen.

JMCS REPORTS

Glasgow Section: Although the JMCS Glasgow section has seen only a small increase in numbers to 111, the popularity of club meets has continued to grow. Tuesday and Thursday training sessions at the Ibrox climbing wall and fortnightly Thursday night pub meets remain popular. The weekend meets in Scotland and England have also been well attended.

Despite the lean winter, members made the most of the good conditions when they occurred and ascents were made of *Smith's Gully* on Creagh Meagaidh, *Point Five* and others. Last summer the wet weather restricted most to hill walking, mountain biking, or lowland crags. Memorable ascents included the *Diabeg Pillar*, *Burning Desire* at Ardmail, *Hamish Teddies* at Craig A Barns, and other quality cragging at Sheigra and Reiff.

A number of club members travelled abroad. Brian and Heike visited Costa Blanca at Christmas, Lofoten (Norway) in June, the High Sierra of California in August, and Fontainebleau at Easter and again in October. Fontainebleau also

proved popular with other club members, given the availability of cheap flights from Glasgow and more reliable conditions than Dumbarton Rock!

Richard Jewell and Jo Thurlow visited Rätikon in July for two weeks (East Switzerland bordering on Austria). They report a fantastic area for Alpine sport climbing (routes from 80m. to 800m.), all on superb limestone with some bolting. They completed quite a few routes between V and VIII (F7a) on Kirchlispitzen and Sulzfluh including the classic Galdriel (400m., VIII) on the Kirchlispitzen. A good walking area too – very quiet. They recommend the Pardutzhütte as a base for any interested climber (check out <http://www.kcr-online.ch> if you have a dictionary).

Matthew Dent and Richard Jewell visited Lundy for a week in August, describing “a trad. Heaven – a must for any lover of coastal adventure climbing. We completed around 20 routes from HVS to E4 including *Citheron* (E4) – one of the best routes of its grade I’ve ever climbed, and a repeat of the classic *Controlled Burning* (E3) – three weeks before it was reclaimed by the sea”.

The Club president Ann MacDonald had a busy year when she and Colwyn Jones (Hon. President) went ski-mountaineering in late April 2004, and skied both up and down the isolated 4000m. peak in Italy, the Gran Paradiso, in fantastic powder snow. A day later they went up to the Panossiere Hut and ascended the Tournelon Blanc (3707m.). Next day the group ascended the Combin de Corbassiere (3715m.) and the Petit Combin (3672m.). An attempt on the Grand Combin was aborted because of poor conditions (i.e. there was no ski track to follow).

Last July, Ann MacDonald and Colwyn Jones plus two SMC members flew via Iceland to Constable Point in Greenland. They used a chartered helicopter to get into the mountains of Liverpool Land on the East Greenland coast. From the camp on the glacier they all successfully climbed Tvillingerne (1447m.), the highest peak in the range, plus another adjacent peak of similar height. However, poor weather with heavy rain and poor visibility prevented them from leaving camp on many days and the remainder of the good weather was used to walk to the Inuit settlement of Scoresbysund (Ittoqatoormiut). The rock of the southern part of the range was very poor quality for climbing and many of the scree slopes over the passes were very unstable due to global warming melting the glaciers. The actual glacier travel presented few objective dangers at that time of year. Owing to the heavy rain the flight back to Iceland on August 7, was delayed.

Last November, after coming 52nd in the Karrimor International Mountain Marathon, Colwyn Jones and Ann MacDonald flew to Malaga in Spain for some winter rock at El Chorro. It was a splendid, if intimidating, venue and the pair succeeded in climbing each day on the vertical limestone. Weather was good. David MacDonald and Neil Marshall also visited Spain for autumn sport climbing.

New Zealand was visited by three club members last year. Jeremy and Dee Morris spent a year there, occasionally working but mostly travelling and exploring the walking and climbing opportunities, and learning to ski. Sport climbing venues were visited in both the North and South Islands, and accessible alpine rock and ice were enjoyed at the Remarkables ski field. Paul and Jenny Hammond also visited the country in December, enjoying the walking and hot springs.

Officials elected: *Hon. President*, Ann MacDonald; *Hon. Vice-President*, Scott Stewart; *President*, Claire Gilchrist; *Vice-President*, Vicky Stewart; *Secretary*,

Jeremy Morris, Flat 0/2, 13 Wilton Drive, Glasgow G20 6RW; *Meets Secretary*, Iain Sneddon; *Newsletter Editor*, Dave Eaton; *New Members Secretary*, Jo Thurlow; *Treasurer*, Richard Jewell; *Coruisk Hut Bookings*, John Fenemore, 7 Campsie Road, Lindsayfield, East Kilbride, G75 9GE; *Coruisk Hut Maintenance*, Alex Haddow; *Committee Members*, Paul Hammond, Matt Munro, John Porter.

Jeremy Morris.

Perth Mountaineering Club (JMCS Perth Section)

Last year marked the 75th anniversary of the Perth Mountaineering Club, and saw another thriving programme of meets and a membership active both at home on club meets and independently farther afield.

The majority of the year's 14 weekend meets were well attended. A particular success was the annual dinner meet held at the Loch Maree Hotel in November 2003. The hotel offered a very reasonable deal on accommodation, so all 37 attendees treated themselves to some unaccustomed creature comforts. The highlight for many was a boat trip across the Loch on the Sunday, landing at poetically named Funeral Point to climb Beinn Lair and Beinn Airigh Charr.

There were two meets to Skye during the year. The first to Coruisk in May and then later to the Glen Brittle Memorial Hut in September. Those attending the former definitely had the best of the weather, with many superb climbs and scrambles undertaken from the less visited side of the Cuillins.

Several members enjoyed spending the Easter weekend at the Naithsmith Hut at Elphin. The superior quality of the accommodation offered by the SMC was much appreciated. Despite mediocre weather, a two-car shuffle enabled a fine long traverse of remote Beinn Leoid to be made.

The summer camping meets were all particularly well attended. The first was the June backpacking meet to the Fisherfield area. Several members demonstrated great resilience by notching up an impressive number of new Munros and Corbetts despite poor weather. The river crossings also became an adventure in their own right.

The Club hosted the joint meet for the JMCS with the July camping meet to Achinaird Sands at Achiltibuie. Several members of the Glasgow JMCS were able to join us for a weekend of mixed weather, but one when dry spells lasted long enough for some rock climbing to take place.

The Club's now traditional family meet took place at Gairloch Sands in August. It was a season of torrential downpours – the results of which closed the A9, forcing lengthy detours on some participants. However, there was wall-to-wall sunshine on the Saturday when three members completed a fine traverse of An Teallach in near-perfect conditions, rounded off with a dip in the burn on the way down.

Meanwhile, younger attendees and 'parents-on-duty' had a most enjoyable day on the beach – also basking in shallow waters. All in all, the only 'fly in the ointment' seemed to be the rather ferocious midges.

October brought a new departure with a meet to Low House on Coniston. Those attending very much enjoyed exploring the more compact Lake District hills and discovering the local crags.

Two members, Irene MacGregor and Phillip Taylor completed their Munros during the year, and Chris Bond completed his round of the Corbetts.

The joint meeting of the Perthshire Society of Natural Science and the Mountaineering Club was as usual held in January, and Dave Hewitt was invited as

a guest of the Club to speak on the subject of the first 100 Munroists. It was interesting that several of them were sitting in the audience.

Officials elected: *President*, Mike Aldridge; *Vice-President*, Irene MacGregor; *Secretary*, Sue Barrie, Glensaugh Lodge, Laurencekirk, Aberdeenshire, AB30 1HB 01561 340673; *Treasurer*, Pam Dutton; *Newsletter Editor*, Des Bassett; *Meets Convener*, Beverly Robertson; *Committee Members*, Phillip Taylor, Ray Lee, Willie Jeffrey and Chris Hine.

Edinburgh Section: Membership is currently 87, including eight aspirant and nine associate members. Rock climbing, winter climbing and hill walking are the main activities, with ski-mountaineering and mountain biking also popular.

The section holds midweek meets at the Heriot-Watt climbing wall during winter and various crags around Edinburgh in summer. Traprain and Aberdour are the most popular outdoor venues, but there are also visits to crags farther afield such as Dunkeld, Kyles and Berry Hill in Northumberland. The wet weather alternative is the Ratho Adventure Centre. Members also gather at Alien Rock on a Monday night.

The highpoint of the summer 2004 weekend meets was a visit to the Glasgow Section's Coruisk Memorial Hut on Skye in June. Inclement weather did not stop a mass ascent of the classic Dubhs ridge. Other well-attended meets were held at Raw Head Hut in Langdale and Salving House in Borrowdale.

The winter meets began with hill walking at Muir of Inverey cottage near Braemar in early January. Wild weather stopped the planned climbing on Lochnagar but presented an opportunity to try out a Rustchblock Stability Test on the snow. Poor weather similarly blighted our next meet at The Smiddy.

By the middle of February the weather had improved to give great climbing conditions for meets at Blackrock Cottage in Glen Coe and the Ling Hut in Torridon. Teams were out on Glover's Chimney, Emerald Gully and March Hare's Gully among others. Unfortunately, the arrival of southerly winds and mild weather meant winter conditions rapidly disappeared, and the Easter meet at the CIC Hut saw disappointing conditions. The consolation was a visit to the most reliable ice in Scotland at the Ice Factor.

Members have visited a number of different areas abroad. Hot rock continues to be popular, with visits to France and Spain.

Members continue to visit the Alps in winter for ice climbing and skiing, taking advantage of the direct flights from Edinburgh to Geneva, and were active in the regular alpine venues of Chamonix and Zermatt during summer. Outside of Europe two members visited Argentina to climb Aconcagua and another spent a month in summer on a climbing expedition to Kyrgyzstan.

The Annual Dinner took place at the Kenmore Hotel. An excellent meal was followed by a memorable speech from MC of S President and SMC member John Mackenzie.

John's speech highlighted the ups and downs of a climbing career with a particular focus on unintended adventures. It was quite a departure from the more usual catalogue of impressive ascents but none the worse for that. Much laughter and applause showed the audience greatly appreciated his contribution to a successful evening.

The section's huts continue to be popular with both members and other clubs. The traditional Hogmanay at the Smiddy was well-attended this year. Committee members are still being kept busy with deliberations regarding the future of Jock's Spot cottage.

The Joint Eastern Section SMC/JMCS slide nights have continued to be interesting events with speakers on a wide-range of subjects associated with climbing and mountaineering. The slide nights take place at 7.30pm on the second Tuesday of the month from October to March. This year the venue has shifted to the South Side Community Centre at 117 Nicolson Street.

Andy Nisbet started the slide nights off with an interesting lecture on *Mostly winter climbing in mostly the North-West Highlands*. Other speakers have included Neil Boyd on the North Face of the Eiger and Des Rubens on the Anglo-Scottish Vilcanota Expedition to Peru.

The slide nights also have a social aspect, with dinner beforehand at the New Bell Inn Restaurant. Thanks go to Des Rubens for all his efforts in organising these evenings.

Officials elected: *Hon. President*, John Fowler; *Hon. Vice-President*, Euan Scott; *President*, Brian Finlayson; *Vice-President*, Patrick Winter (also Meets Secretary); *Treasurer*, Bryan Rynne; *Secretary*, Neil Cuthbert, 25 Plewlands Gardens, Edinburgh (secretary@edinburghjmcs.org.uk); *Web Master*, Davy Virdee; *Smiddy Custodian*, Helen Forde, 30 Reid Terrace, Edinburgh; *Jock Spot's Custodian*, Ali Borthwick, 2 Aytoun Grove, Dunfermline. *Ordinary Members* – Susan Marvell, Stewart Bauchop.

London Section: Last year was another active and varied year for the club.

Membership is steady at about 40 and attendance at meets is variable as usual, with anything between three and twenty members present. Our program of monthly weekend meets follows a traditional pattern starting at our club cottage in Bethesda in January and moving North to Scotland for the winter months.

The January 'Presidents meet' was well attended and members managed most activities ranging from rock climbing in the sunshine at Hollyhead to winter scrambling and mountain biking. This diversification appears to be a trend, with members taking advantage of the conditions to choose between a variety of mountain sports including skiing, biking, walking, climbing and sailing.

Meets are scattered throughout the UK (as are our members) and we had successful meets at Bethesda, our club cottage; Glencoe Youth Hostel; Bosherton, Pembroke; Orpheus Caving club hut, Derbyshire; camping in Buttermere with the kids and climbing in Borrowdale.

The varied meets were well attended except the washout that was Scotland in March.

Highlights included some exceptional weather this year – sunny rock climbing in January (Hollyhead mountain), great Scottish ice conditions in February and a hurricane in June on Idwal slabs.

We hosted a group of 12 from a walking club at the Co-op who were subjected to Idwal slabs in the pouring rain – and said they enjoyed it!

We had members in the Bregaglia Alps and a sailing trip around Rum and Knoydart that included white-out conditions on Ladhar Bheinn in May. We can also report that the approach descent to Gogarath is as treacherous as ever and although we had members giving demonstrations at E2 we also had a member

demonstrating the 'lob' from the path – 'big Steve' Senior took a 30ft. free-fall onto the steep bracken with little more than a stiff neck – rather dampening enthusiasm in our new members. We can recommend the Orpheus caving club for both their hospitality and convivial hut in Derbyshire. We intend to visit again and take them up on their offer of sub-terranean adventures.

Our cottage in Bethesda is improving slowly and steadily thanks to the dedicated efforts of a few handy members and this year we have a marvellous new shower room which is a great improvement and a major asset for mixed groups or kids. Speaking of kids, two meets this year were 'family' orientated – camping in Buttermere and a party at our cottage – both went well with mixed conditions and boundless enthusiasm from the youngsters. Good prospects for increasing membership in 10 years.

Our Annual Meeting was held in Llanberis in November and was well attended. Biking and scrambling being the order of the grim day and the evening's proceedings electing most of the same officers.

Officials elected: President, John Firmin; Treasurer, David Hughes; Secretary, Chris Bashforth; Hut Custodian, Rod Kleckham; meets responsibility shared among the committee.

Our web-site has been off-line this year as we re-vamp it and look for an alternative host and 'webmaster' – an update will be provided as soon as we can confirm the new details.

Chris Bashforth.

SMC AND JMCS ABROAD

Antarctica – Vinson Massif, January 2004

Rob Milne reports: Antarctica is all cold, except when the sun shines and it shines all the time in January and so, my great adventure mountain climbing in Antarctica was more balmy than barmy.

Thirty motivated climbers and guide gathered in Punta Arenas, Chile just after New Year. All had the seven summits in mind. I had joined an Alpine Ascents group of 17 for an ascent of Vinson Massif (16, 067ft.), the highest mountain on the continent of Antarctica. Most of the clients had limited mountaineering experience, but this was meant to be an easy and fun trip.

After the usual few days of delay waiting for good enough weather to fly, we were on our way. Our feet rested on jet fuel barrels down the middle of the giant Russian cargo plane as we tried to sleep. Just before landing we all dressed in our cold weather gear, expecting –25°C temps when we got off the plane. Anticipation was only tempered by our fear of the cold when the plane finally slid to a stop on the 11-mile long bare ice runway. We need not have feared, since the fog rolled in as we landed and it was only just below freezing. By the time we had walked the 1km to the Patriot Hills camp, most of us were overheating. Welcome to balmy Antarctica.

The next morning, or should I say after we had some sleep in our sunny tents, the fog had lifted and we were flown to Vinson base camp in two Twin Otters. I had run into Di Gilbert at Patriot Hills where she was working as a camp manager. Di lives in Aviemore, so it was a real surprise to meet a virtual neighbour at the bottom of the world. She told me that Heather Morning, a member of the current SMC committee was the base camp manager at Vinson.

Heather met us as we jumped off the plane and I gave her a big hello hug. Obviously not recognising me, she hugged me back. Then I told her who I was and we shared another welcome hug between two SMC committee members at the bottom of the world. We landed in brilliant, sunny weather. Tents went up with bare hands and the evening finished with a few glasses of wine on Heather's 'sun porch' watching the midnight sun work its way around the sky.

Next morning the work started as we hauled sleds five miles up the wide flat glacier to Camp 1. Even with partial fog it was roasting hot on the glacier. I was down to minimal thermal underwear and didn't wear gloves. My biggest worry was getting fried by the hole in the ozone layer! Balmy Antarctica. Loads dumped, snow walls were built and we sauntered back down the glacier in thick fog. The midnight sun blazed as we feasted in our 'Posh House', a parachute like cover over a pit we had dug in the snow to make a great dining and socialising tent.

The next few days were spent carrying loads to the next camp, then moving to the next camp. We were soon above the glacier fog and into bright hot sunshine. The views just got better and better as we ascended to 12,000ft. I was still roasting on the glaciers and had hardly worn gloves for four days. Either Antarctica is balmy, or my hands have become used to the cold after 20+ Scottish winters.

Heather had been stuck at base camp the whole season, watching all the others make the top. Finally, she got permission to take a few days off and try for the summit. Before we carried to high camp, she skied up to join our group for dinner. She was going to share my tent, but when she heard about my legendary snoring, opted to sleep in the Posh House instead.

Although our groups were in rope teams, Heather was moving unroped on her skis. She walked just in front of me from Camp 1 to the High Camp and so two committee members passed a sunny day in Antarctica talking about Scottish climbing and comparing the headwall to the Goat Track. Although Di had reported it as much the same, we felt the headwall was much longer and steeper. But still pretty tame by Scottish standards.

By summit day we had been on the go for five straight days. But the weather was perfect and rather than risk losing this window, we pushed for the summit. Heather skied off early while we were getting roped up and disappeared up the glacier for the top. Our three rope teams moved at a comfortable pace. The wide glacier at 14,000ft. was like a sun oven and we were all roasting. Balmy Antarctica. For once I wore my gloves, I thought my hands were getting too much sun!

We were just over two-thirds of the way up when Heather came skiing down. "Rob, there is a nice Scottish like ridge to the top," she enthused. She had easily ticked the top in great weather and was zipping back down to camp. As far as we knew she was the first woman to climb the mountain moving independently and the first to ski down. 1000ft. below the summit and various members were starting to feel the effects of 15,000ft where the spin of the earth made it feel more like 16,000. We dropped ski poles and worked up a steep snow slope. Halfway up, I became the first member of the team to punch a leg into a crevasse! My axe had plunged through and as I stepped back my leg went in to the hip. No matter, I widened the whole for the others to see and kept going.

The summit ridge was great. A few steps of Grade I/II with a great view, big

drops and no wind. Seemingly without effort, we were all standing at the top of the bottom of the world and, in spite of a slight breeze, I still didn't need my down jacket. Lots of photos for sponsors meant we had to queue to stand at the highest point. Although it was a straightforward descent, it was a 12-hour day and everyone felt pretty tired. Elated we feasted into the wee hours. (There is no night, remember).

After a rest day, it was time to move back to Base Camp. I and a few others were keen to climb a second peak, so a group of four of us set off for Mount Shinn, the third highest peak in Antarctica. We had to pay a price for this, we still had to descend to base camp the same day. This meant a 2000m. descent from the summit to base camp.

The four of us cruised the snow fields of Shinn, corkscrewing around to the opposite side. We were rewarded with great views of unclimbed faces on Tyree, the second highest peak. Superb challenges for future generations. The peak is rarely ascended, so no one was sure where to go. Vern Tejas, the head guide said we went up a ridge on the opposite side. But once we got round there, we found wide mixed faces, but no ridge. So we went further round. Still no ridge. So we went farther round. Finally, we decided to just climb the mixed face. At Grade II, we had a great time with the feeling of going where no man had gone before. We called the new route the 'Fakawe', as in 'Where the Fakawe'. The weather held and we had great views of Vinson, Tyree and the ice cap. Getting two peaks done feels so much better than one.

The descent from high camp was just hard work. The ones that didn't climb Shinn were ready to bolt for home and had headed off quickly. Whatever they left we had to carry, making for heavy but not unfair loads. Long before we got down, they had arrived and been picked up by the Twin Otters. But it was pleasant to arrive to a relatively empty camp. Thick fog had rolled in as we descended so, while having dinner in Heather's base camp radio tent, we discussed whether we would be stuck there for weeks.

Next 'morning' was still foggy so over a French toast breakfast we again discussed whether we would be here for many more weeks. It was looking like we might pay a high price for getting a second summit. But I had done my fifth of the seven summits.

But then the fog cleared, the sun blazed and Heather reported: "They are in the air!" A mad rush to pack camp before the planes arrived, stripped to thermal underwear in the intense sun. Balmy Antarctica.

Back at Patriot Hills, it was cold and windy. We needed only a 12-hour good weather window to get back home. The others were still wanting to bolt for home. I was happy to explore the local hills. By the third day of waiting some were getting desperate. Satellite phones were in constant use. One guy was busy rearranging meetings. I learned to make an igloo. One was worried about getting home for a birthday party. I played cricket on the ice with the British lady who had set the record for the fastest solo to the south pole (42 days!). And I found the stash of frozen wine in the big snow cave. We tried an all night dancing party with Heather and I trying (and totally failing) to teach the others the Gay Gordons. It got hot in the eating tent from all the dancing, so the Congo line out the door and across the ice seemed a good idea at first. Luckily, we all got back into the tent before we got cold again.

Finally, the wind dropped, the plane arrived and we were headed home! And my most stark memories are of 24-hour sunshine and balmy Antarctica.

Russia – Elbrus 2005

ROB MILNE reports: Looking back, it was silly to get stressed at the exceedingly long delay getting our visas checked on entry to Moscow, we still had to wait for our two backpacks. Little did I know at the time that we would have to wait days days for them! We had an enjoyable night exploring Red Square and watching the vibrant night life, assuming we would have our back packs the next morning.

Two days later, my 20-year-old son, Alex, and our Russian minder, Igor, undertook our first acclimisation walk – by riding up a chairlift. Mt. Cheget (3410m.) gave great views of Elbrus and the Baksan valley as well as a chance to stretch our legs. In spite of promises that our backpacks would arrive soon, there was still no sign of them. Luckily most of our gear for the ascent was in our two duffels. It was time for the move up the mountain, so we rented back packs, sleeping bags and crampons from a local shop, everything else we had or could make do without.

The next disaster was that the first stage of the cable car was not working. So we had to walk for more than an hour to the start of the second stage. What us, soft? Luckily the second stage was working fine and we were soon on the snow. But again, a problem, the final stage of the chairlift to Garabashi Station (3750m.) was not working. A quick tenner to the snowcat driver and we had a most enjoyable ride almost to the site of our first camp.

It was only midday and camp was set, so we took a short walk up to the burned out Priyut 11 Hut for more acclimisation. Distances were very short and we were feeling good. We had to resist the urge to go up quickly, after all we were above 4000m. on our first day.

Day two on the mountain dawned clear and sunny. More time was spent looking at all the fantastic peaks across the Caucasus then looking at our peak. The move to high camp was easy and by midday we had flogged up the snow cat tracks and had camp set at the edge of the lava flow (4500m.). For the next stage of acclimatisation, that afternoon we walked up to the Pastukhov Rocks (4700m.), virtually the same height as Mt. Blanc with far less effort. For Alex, it was his first time on real ice wearing crampons. Easy walking, but not a place to trip. Luckily he learned fast! We watched the long lines of guided groups going up and down like snail lines doing their acclimatisation. Early the next morning, we heard the snow cats bringing the American groups back up. They had already walked that far once, so why not ride the second time?

Dawn of the third day and it was already summit time. We avoided the worst of the cold by starting when the sun rose. It was clear that we were fit enough to go quickly and didn't need a 3am start. I always find it a lot easier to avoid the cold starts.

Soon we were up to the Pastukhov Rocks. The part above is probably the crux of the ascent – a thousand foot steep snow slope – featureless and boring. We were each in our own private hell, pacing slowly uphill and breathing hard. Igor fell farther and farther behind, but Alex and I were feeling good. We rested on a sunny rock and waited for Igor. Our fitness from climbing three Corbetts before going to Russia was paying off nicely.

A short traverse and we were in the saddle between the two summits. The wind was light, it was sunny and warm, so Igor opted to sleep while Alex and I went to the top. The final steep slope can be very dangerous if icy. At 18,000ft. it is not a

place to trip on your crampons. Luckily, there was enough snow to make walking secure and we moved up well. I knew I was now close to the sixth of the '7 summits', so I turned up the pace on the final slopes. Thoughts of Everest and dealing with higher altitude filled my head as I pushed my pacing and breathing.

The summit (5642m., 18,620ft.) was almost an anti-climax. Summits are always great however! We had to wait our turn to take photos on top and people were getting tired of waiting for us to finish all our photos. A sure sign of a popular mountain. It clouded in on the descent. The long slope above the Pastukhov Rocks was nerve-racking. A slip could mean a death slide, and one couldn't see how far was left to go. Eventually, we reached the rocks and the easier slopes for a well-earned nap at the tent.

Next morning dawned bright and clear again. Great views of fantastic Alpine peaks. I kept thinking what a shame that we came only for a week and missed some great climbing opportunities. Ah well, chairlift was working and soon it was beer and vodka time. As for our backpacks, we got them at the Moscow airport just an hour before we flew home.

India

Brian Davison reports on Miyar Nala 2004: A four strong party from England and Scotland (Graham Little, Jim Lowther, Brian Davison and Kevin Kelly) visited the Miyar valley in India during May 2004.

The area offers large granite walls in a mountain setting. Various parties have been to the area since the first visit by an Italian team in 1992. Most teams have established base camp at the snout of the Miyar glacier and climbed in the adjacent valleys. Previous trips have given a variety of names to the side glaciers which already have local names. We journeyed further up the Miyar Glacier to the junction with the Jangpar Glacier which was explored and found to offer some impressive mountain big wall potential.

May was found to be too early to attempt technical rock climbing as ledges held much snow from an unseasonably late fall (the heaviest for 25 years!) which was melting and flowing down the rock walls.

Two snow routes were climbed. A ruc-sac dropped after the completion of the difficult climbing forced a retreat short of the summit of one peak. Three rock routes were climbed on slabs and spires nearer base camp:

Christina Peak, 5420m (GL, JL 14 May) by south face at PD.

South face of Pt5960m, (BD, KK) retreat from 5800m after dropping a ruc-sac.

Lammerguson Spike 5350m (GL, JL 22May) Alpine D.

First Ascent of two 600m+ rock routes at UIAA VI on slabs above Khai Got on east side of Miyar Nala (BD, KK).

Many of the currently available maps of the Miyar Nala and the glacier area are generally small scale and often of poor quality. The sketch maps produced by the Slovenian and Italian expeditions while useful are often not very topographically accurate. Some of the heights claimed for peaks climbed are exaggerated.

The outline map of the Jangpar Glacier is more accurate although peak heights are only accurate to +/- 70m.

There is also mounting confusion over the names of the glaciers that lie to the east of the Miyar Nala/Glacier. Dali Got below the snout of Miyar Glacier has been the site of several expedition base camps and as such is a useful reference point. The following names have been used, the favoured versions (which are often local names) are given first followed by alternatives.

Glaciers linking to the Miyar Glacier:

Jangpar Glacier (no alternatives) – the final glacier to join the Miyar Glacier (about 6km above Dali Got at its snout).

Glaciers not linking to the Miyar Glacier:

Dali Glacier (Spaghetti Glacier, Thunder Glacier) – Lies directly above Dali Got.

Chhudong Glacier (Tawa Glacier) – Lies just over 1km down the valley from Dali Got.

Takdung Glacier (Nameless Glacier) – Lies 4km down the valley from Dali Got

Greenland

Southern Kangerdlugssuaq Expedition 2003

BRIAN DAVISON reports: From July 23 to August 15, eight British climbers visited the mountains on the south side of the Kangerdlugssuaq fjord. Base camp was at approximately 1700m. in the snow basin at the head of the Nordre Parallelgletscher and Sondre Parallelgletscher.

This was reached using a ski equipped Twin Otter chartered from Iceland. From this base camp a number of sledge trips were undertaken into the mountains in the area. Members of the expedition made a total of 35 probable first ascents of unclimbed peaks during the three weeks in Greenland. Weather was generally very good for the first two weeks with more unsettled weather occurring during the third week.

Paul Walker of Tangent Expeditions organised freighting of equipment and food as well as accommodation in Iceland. As part of this deal we were offered a rifle which we did not take and pulk sledges, but more importantly a satellite phone. VHF radio, emergency beacon and flares were also included. Paul was extremely helpful and also supplied us with aerial photographs of the area, a useful addition to the maps.

There have been two previous expeditions to the south side of the Kangerdlugssuaq fjord at 68° 30' North on the east coast of Greenland. The first in 1990, led by Stan Wooley, was flown in using a ski equipped Twin Otter which landed at a higher elevation, farther inland and closer to the ice cap. The group then divided into two teams which both undertook impressive and independent ski and sledding trips bagging many of the highest spot marked peaks in the area. Realising the potential of the area and the prospect of good granite, Phil Bartlett, a member of the 1990 trip, led an expedition in 1998 which landed on the glacier to the north of Redekammen. Members of the expedition climbed that mountain and several to the north west toward the Kangerdlugssuaq fjord.

Personnel: Brian Davison (SMC), Pete Nelson, Graham Robinson, David Wilkinson (SMC), William Church, Pete Brooks, Clive Dandridge, Michael Pettipher.

Bill Wallace reports: In April this year, myself, Dick Allen and Peter MacDonald visited the mountains north of Tasiilaq (until recently called Angmagssalik) in East Greenland. We were accompanied by John Howell, Helen Phillips and Ian White, three friends from previous ski-mountaineering exploits.

To take account of the possible effects of global warming and, hopefully, ensure good powder snow, the group left for Greenland on April 3 – three weeks earlier than previously.

Our food had been sent off more than three weeks in advance and its arrival had been confirmed by the carriers. The airport staff, however, assured us that it had not arrived! Fortunately, we were able to purchase some replacement food at the small local supermarket at Kap Dan and were generously given some freeze-dried meals which were up to four years out-of-date.

In good weather the following day we helicoptered to the Tasiilaq Mountain Hut which is well appointed and accommodates up to 12 in a very dramatic position, with many rock peaks which would provide excellent rock climbing in summer. From the hut we dragged sledges to the Karale Glacier. No ski activity was possible for the next two days due to mist and flat lighting, but thereafter, we had four days of excellent weather and climbed several peaks.

The good weather continued next day when we returned to the hut. The following morning a blizzard and very poor visibility delayed our start. We did, however, have to set out as we had only three days in which to reach Kummiut on Angmagssalik Fiord and rendezvous with the helicopter. Continuing poor visibility and avoiding a 200ft. ice dam restricted our progress to 10km.

Our tents were battered that night by strong gusts and heavy, wet snow and the following night by a prolonged gale and heavy rain. Despite this we reached Kummiut on schedule. The bad weather grounded the helicopter and so the journey to the airstrip at Kulusuk was completed by the soggy six on a small fishing boat at a considerable saving in cost.

Although this year, unlike three years ago, we did reach the Karale Glacier, the weather is unpredictable and extra time must be allowed for.

South America

The Anglo-Scottish Vilcanota Expedition 2004

DES RUBENS reports: This expedition to Peru was highly successful, despite the elderly nature of the participants. We were 50% Scottish and 50% English although all SMC members. Myself, Steve Kennedy and Dave Wilkinson flew from Edinburgh to Newark (New York) on July 9. Here we met Geoff Cohen, presently domiciled in Washington DC. Newark is a good place to buy whisky so having met the expedition's needs, we boarded a direct flight to Lima. A brief bivvy in a secluded corner of the airport and early next morning we were flying east to the ancient Inca capital of Cusco. Here we were met by our agent, Angelina, and whiskied – sorry whisked – off to a small hotel.

The Vilcanota is a relatively small range situated about 60 miles from Cusco. A minibus journey of several hours over an execrable road took us, along with our cook and assistant, Domingo and Quintino, to the village of Tinquí. The following day, nine horses appeared. A day-and-a-half of beautiful walking took us to base camp (4600m), an idyllic grass cropped bowl, surrounded by fine peaks. We were surprised to find a large Slovenian team *in situ*. However, they were leaving shortly,

although not before we had shared a precious bottle of our Glenlivet. To the west of base camp were the Colque Cruz range and its attendants, our main area of interest; west and south were the Cayangate group, while more directly south were the Jatunhuma group.

Most of the peaks in the Colque Cruz range had initially been climbed from the far side. It was easy to see why. From our forays, we could see that the far from seductive steep faces of the main peaks were further defended by heavily contorted glaciers. Unsurprisingly, there was no shortage of new ground.

After several days of acclimatising forays, we set off for the main objective, the unclimbed south face of Colque Cruz 1, (6102m), the highest peak in the area. This approach required some route-finding and an unpleasant glacier. Once across this dry glacier, we made good progress up an ice corridor between Ichu Ananta, an outlier of Colque Cruz 1 and the main glacier which descends from the Colque Cruz peaks, (numbered 1 to 6). Before long we were forced onto this glacier where we encountered deep snow, which the Slovenians had warned us about. We put up our bivvy tents and set off early next morning up the crevassed glacier towards the south face. The snow varied between calf and waist deep, with several steep 'bottomless' sections. Eventually, after several hours of struggle we encountered better snow on avalanche debris below the Colque Cruz 1 face.

Although the face appeared technically within our capabilities, the vast depth of snow adhering to it made an attempt out of the question. Although initially disappointed, the fine unclimbed peak of Ichu Ananta (5720m) was close by. This gave a worthy consolation prize. The aspect of its slope gave much better going, and a few hundred feet of ascent from the col between it and Colque Cruz gained a fine ridge with a honeycombed arête, swings of the axes on good ice and some delicate rock traverses. We gained the summit at about 4 pm.

For our next forays, opinions as to objectives diverged and we split amicably into two pairs. Geoff and Dave made a first ascent of Ninaparaco, (5930m) a 'top' of Jatunhuma 1, but a very worthy objective in its own right. The ascent of the north face of the mountain involved rock pitches up to severe, Grade 3 ice and careful route finding to gain the summit from the face without have to traverse a difficult ridge. Moreover the route was exposed to some serac danger.

Steve and I made the first ascent of the Scottish Spur, a fine ridge descending towards base camp from the eastern part of the Colque Cruz range. The crux of the ridge involved two pitches with bad snow and steep ice, about Scottish 5. Unfortunately, having overcome the difficult section to reach easy ground, the snow continued to be very bad and prevented us from reaching the watershed. However, some fine technical climbing had been achieved.

We rejoined after four days absence and enjoyed some idling. Finally, Steve and I enjoyed a wonderful day on a minor peak of the Cayangate, with magnificent views of the Colque Cruz range.

After a night of drinking in Tinquí with the arrieros (horsemen) and the kitchen lads, we returned to Scottish soil on August 8, having enjoyed an excellent trip in every respect.

Further details appear in an article in *The Scottish Mountaineer*, June edition of this year.

Acknowledgements to the Mountaineering Council of Scotland, the Mount Everest Foundation and the BMC for financial support.

I make a few tentative observations, based on this single visit.

Ridges are difficult. Faces of suitable aspect may be better alternatives.

Snow does not consolidate readily.

The weather was generally excellent, but there had been unseasonable heavy snow before we arrived.

The use of an agent was most helpful and recommended.

Some trekking was being done in the area, particularly round Ausangate, the highest peak in the area which dominated our approach march.

Cusco is a wonderful city and a good place to spend some time acclimatising.

Theft is still a problem, although most Peruvians are friendly.

Any members interested in further information are welcome to contact me.

The Alps

PETER MACDONALD reports: Miles Watson and I had a week in the Valais Alps in September 2004. Our first two nights were spent at the Dix Hut from which we traversed Mont Blanc de Cheilon, climbing the East Ridge from the Col de la Serpentine and descending by the *voie normale*.

The next day we moved to Zermatt and up to the Rothorn Hut, from which we climbed the beautiful Ober Gabelhorn via the Wellenkuppe, returning the same way.

After that the weather deteriorated, so we drove round to the Val d'Anniviers and found accommodation in the picturesque village of Grimentz, where we spent the last day exploring the Glacier de Moiry.

An enjoyable trip, with only a few people in the huts and fewer on the mountains at that time of year.





REVIEWS

The Villain – The Life Of Don Whillans: Jim Perrin. (Hutchison, 2005, hardback, 320pp, ISBN 0-0917-9438-2. 18.99.)

To undertake the writing of any biography is a considerable and all-consuming challenge: to have any chance of success the author must live, breathe, eat and sleep the very soul of his subject but still retain an objective detachment. This remorseless requirement needs to be sustained in unrelenting, assiduous research, hunting through a miscellany of paper, journals, books and the mythology of hearsay, lost in a maze of dead-ends, mercilessly stripping fact from fable.

Then comes the creative process – the hardest part – seeking the inspiration to craft the galaxy of elusive words tumbling around in the mind into the expressive, enduring prose that captures both the essence of the subject and the reader's imagination. The scale of this task of distillation and interpretation leaps from Alpine to Himalayan proportions when the subject is none other than the legendary Don 'The Villain' Whillans. It is a lonely, balancing act upon a taut high-wire, the invention forever constrained, just like that of a portrait painter. In the void beneath, should you lose concentration, there is a spider's web masquerading as a safety net. This trap has many silky threads; inaccuracies, irrelevancies, a lack of balance, poor presentation and, in particular, a self-indulgent intrusion by the writer's own persona, much in the way of an over-zealous referee in an otherwise free-flowing football match.

Jim Perrin manages to tread this narrow line with skill, sensitivity and honesty. He passes no meddling judgments upon the actions of his subject although he must have been sorely tempted at times, but more of this later. Jim was originally commissioned for this biography shortly after Whillans's death in August 1985 and, a few years on, he wrote an article *Opening Up The Whillans Box*¹ in which he described this task of sorting through the stacks of press-cuttings, taped interviews, written recollections and – handled "with a shiver of excitement" – Don's diaries and correspondence. Production of the book, it seemed, was imminent ... but it didn't happen.

The reason given by Jim for this delay in publication of nearly two decades is that "certain scruples led me to the conclusion that it should not be published during the lifetime of Audrey Whillans, Don's widow, who was a good-natured, long-suffering woman of whom I became very fond".

Despite her wish that the story be told "warts and all" Jim has stood by his principles although, surely, she must have harboured suspicions given her husband's history of crude philandering. Jim has tackled this potentially touchy topic with integrity: he demonstrates quite clearly that Whillans was a "sexual opportunist" and that there were marital infidelities (and I suspect that there was a lot more that Jim could have divulged) but manages to avoid any kind of salacious scandal-mongering. Audrey comes over as a forbearing and tolerant wife, and the public airing of the instances of her ill-use by Whillans would surely have deeply hurt the feelings of a proud woman.

If this biography has any weakness, it is in the sense of a missed opportunity, with Audrey's death, to probe more deeply into her relationship with Don. Since, when he was provoked or in a drunken rage, Don seems to have lived by the maxim "if you've got a problem, hit it" it would have been significant to know if she had ever suffered any physical abuse and felt intimidated by him or whether

Steve Kennedy above Base Camp. Colque Cruz 1 (6102m), highest peak in the Cordillera Vilca Norte, behind. Photo: Des Rubens.

Geoff Cohen and Steve Kennedy on reconnaissance. Photo: Des Rubens.

he managed to curb this side of his temperament. So, while the most significant of his climbing partnerships eventually foundered, Audrey managed to stay the course and I wonder how?

This is not a book of gloss, in any sense, nor need it be - there are no colour photos of breathtaking mountain scenes, for example, or a shiny jacket cover. Most of the (black and white) photos are from the Audrey Whillans's collection and, I assume, previously unpublished. There are some early climbing snapshots - for example, of Whillans in 1951 repeating the Joe Brown classic of Elder Crack, Curbar Edge, the rope hanging directly from his waist with no protection. Close study of the photo of Don's last rock climb, and Bill Peascod's last moments, Great Slab on Cloggy in 1985, shows that he still tied the rope directly round his waist while Peascod wears the famous Whillans Harness (from which the royalties had become a mainstay of Don's income). There is a misprint in the caption for Brown's Eliminate, Froggatt Edge, giving it a technical grade of 5G and, on p.176, SMC stalwarts might raise an eyebrow at the list of "so-called 'Senior Clubs'." I think a photo showing the routes on Clogwyn Du'r Arddu, the arena for much of the exploratory activities described in the text, would have been beneficial. There is an illustration, too, of the perils of quotation, for on p.297 Leo Dickinson awards Mark Spitz an extra Olympic swimming gold medal.

Jim Perrin is a climber and the author of several books - and winner of the Boardman/Tasker prize for his biography of John Menlove Edwards. Although he may have his critics², should you doubt his ability to capture atmosphere then could you better this description of camping in a dreich Glenbrittle?

"A necessary and traditional part of every mountaineer's apprenticeship, it comprises wet clothes for a fortnight, swirling mist, slippery basalt where you expected frictional gabbro, topographical confusion, searing drops, anxious descents, endless clammy hours spent swatting midges and avoiding contact with the tent fabric as you gaze out at the waves soughing in from a grey sea on to the grey shingle of a Hebridean beach"

The book opens high on the South Face of Annapurna with Don Whillans and Dougal Haston, who was later to consider his partner the best mountaineer in the world, poised for their 1970 summit bid.

"The intensity of expectation from both without and within that is operating on these two men is extraordinary." And Perrin justifiably identifies this as a pivotal moment in their lives. While Haston was to go on to film-star status after his success on the S.W. Face of Everest in 1975, for Whillans "from Annapurna's summit, it only remained to go down" and it is this strange reversal and the nature of the enigma that was Don Whillans that makes the story such compelling reading. Ironically, it was Haston who was to close the door finally on Whillans's Everest ambitions and thus was he elevated to what most of us perceived to be "outlaw status", a role for which "he was available, and he was formidable, with his piercing blue eyes and forearms like hams, and he had been rejected, and he was funny and cutting and disrespectful, and the B-team, which in effect is all of us, began rather to pamper him and court him and love him".

Don Whillans was born, in 1933, into the Adelphi district of Salford, an area of filthy, narrow streets and his formative years were those of any alley-kid - scrambling and playing by the dirty river Irwell (known as the Inkwell), smashing milk bottles with catapults and, especially important for a physically small boy, fighting - and so the stubborn, self-reliant, and tough character developed. The

author treats his subject with an understanding surely instilled by the same mean slums of Greater Manchester and a similar route to the liberating hill-country of the Derbyshire Peak District which Don took, often on his own, in his early teens.

The chapters describing Whillans's progression from novice rock-climber to 'Rock and Ice' supremo, with their nostalgic overtones of a more adventurous, unregulated time – was it really that long ago? – are full of atmosphere. I particularly like the aptness of the comparison between the Whillans character and the gritstone of his native northern crags. Jim Perrin imparts a sense of objective regard, not just for Whillans, but for Brown and all the other climbers involved in the surge of standards at the time; for example, the inclusion of John Streetly's tense account of the first ascent of Red Slab on Cloggy – "Even to this day perhaps the boldest lead relative to contemporary standards of difficulty ever made on a British cliff" – will make you reach for your chalk-bag, if you would use one.

With respect to Scotland, there's a fresh view of the Whillans relationship with the Creagh Dhu, especially John Cunningham and the gamesmanship between them, and the circumstances (again!) of the first ascents of Sassenach and Centurion. Although the Rock and Ice may have ruffled some Scottish feathers (including those of an eagle in Glencoe with a catapult) the balance was certainly redressed when Don, referring to one of the hardest and most dangerous climbs of his career, a very icy South Pillar of the Marmolata di Penia, said that "it came nearest to the real hard Scottish winter climbs", and they climbed it without axes or crampons. Lithe and powerful, Whillans was to become a widely respected and highly accomplished alpinist who "learnt to assess risk with an unerring instinct" and Perrin gives an intelligent re-appraisal of some past misconceptions.

For example, the well-documented rescue of Brian Nally on the North Face of the Eiger, where Don's mountain 'savvy' enabled them to cut out the reverse of the Hinterstoisser Traverse, has tended to portray Nally in an unfavourable, incompetent light but Jim generously argues that he "deserves not only sympathy...but also far more credit than he has ever been given".

The West Face of the Blaitière, the Walker Spur³, the Central Pillar of Freney on Mont Blanc, the West face of the Petit Dru, the Bonatti Route on the SW. Pillar of the Dru, the Cassin Route on the North-East Face of the Piz Badile, all either first or early ascents accomplished in his 20s with various companions – and many more. Then on to South America, the Himalayas and Chomolungma (Everest⁴).

It was "a wholehearted commitment to mountaineering" which seemed to be heading for the stars but, in the end, foundered. Despite the appeal of his gruff sense of humour and his many strengths, did the dogmatic and inflexible attitudes which he could scarcely hide, and something as simple as domestic laziness on expeditions⁵, alienate his companions and prevent him achieving the public status that he craved? Jim Perrin presents the case that, despite his impressive mountaineering legacy, the Whillans approach was "focused more nearly on reward than delight ... and in that lies his individual tragedy, if we wish to see it as such".

Finally, from 'The Whillans Box' article: "I don't think the climbing world knows why it so revered Whillans, but for me it glimmers into definition in an image where the harshness, the reductive pragmatism, exploitive isolation, strength, kindness and presiding sense of justice combine... I've ended up liking him in spite of myself."

If you don't like the use of footnotes in this review then you won't like the book, for there's more than one instance where they take up most of the page, and this is acknowledged in the Preface. However, it does allow Jim to add some personal comments and extra information. I don't find it intrusive and how else would you learn about the murder of Slim Sorrell, Joe Brown's early climbing partner, for example?

Jim admits that the book was extremely difficult for him to write, made especially distressing in the final months of its completion by the death of his son⁶, to whom the book is dedicated. It is a fine memorial.

¹ For the uninitiated, the Whillans Box was a sturdy frame-tent first conceived by Don and Vic Bray on the Towers of Paine expedition to Patagonia in 1962. Relatively easy to erect on steep faces "it was to prove very useful on all the major British Himalayan expeditions of the 1970s". It not only provided hut-like shelter but the roof was supposed to act as a solar trap to melt snow during the day. However, in the context of the book, it was also a container the size of a small cabin-trunk, formerly the property of Don Whillans, housing all the material upon which Perrin based his work. The veiled reference to Pandora's Box should also be borne in mind. Incidentally, I am adopting, here, the Perrin rationale for footnoting "to contextualise without interrupting narrative flow".

² Jim, high on a cocktail of drugs, once soloed Cheddar Gorge's 'Coronation Street' and then had the temerity to write about it. This, along with stories of wild partying (especially with Al Harris), his association with the anarchic climbing scene in Wales in the late 1960s and beyond, and his forthright political views, have provided ammunition for his detractors, judging by the barbed side-swipe 'Jimlove Menwords' which I have seen used.

³ Incidentally, on the pages of this Journal (2002, No.193, p.9) C. Bonington is erroneously credited with having been in the party in 1959. It was in 1962 that he and Ian Clough climbed both the Walker Spur and the Eiger North Face. The latter ascent infuriating Whillans who perceived it as a betrayal.

⁴ I suppose that all Whillans fans know about the famous retort to Felix Kuen on the fraught S. W. Face of Everest expedition led by K. Herrligkoffer, first related by Mike Thompson in 'Out With The Boys Again'. Jim Perrin doubts the veracity of the story because there was no football World Cup in 1972. However, this witticism is just too good to be relegated to the sin-bin and, in its favour, the fact is that West Germany dumped England (3-1 on aggregate) from the European Championships in the Spring of that year.

⁵ On the Torre Egger expedition of 1973/74, Whillans, struggling to complete the carry between camps, surprised his companions by deciding to stock his intermediate camp from a higher one downwards...

⁶ Will Perrin who took his own life at the age of 24. Ed Douglas wrote an obituary for the 'Guardian' newspaper (which can be viewed at www.guardian.co.uk/obituaries).

In the Ghost Country: Peter Hillary and John Elder (Mainstream Publishing, 2004, 341pp, six b/w photographs, £15.99, ISBN 1 84018 835 9).

In 1998 Peter Hillary set out to ski to the South Pole with two companions. Relationships rapidly disintegrated to the point where the three men barely spoke to each other, and he retreated inside his own head, keeping imagined (or perhaps real) company with people and places from his past – his ghosts. Many were friends who had died in the mountains, including tragically his mother and sister.

The expedition was an ambitious project, but essentially misconceived in terms of purpose and execution, and dogged by too many problems. The book too is ambitious but suffers from similar shortcomings, of concept, content and execution. *In the Ghost Country* is a collaboration between Hillary and Elder, an Australian journalist. Hillary's first person contribution is indented in fragments of varying length into Elder's third person descriptive text, which

forms the bulk of the narrative. And here lies an immediate problem. Books written by two authors are usually a professional writer's account of events experienced by a (presumably less articulate) adventurer. But this book tries to deal not just with events, but with memories, feelings, visions and imaginings. Elder has to get inside Hillary's head, and perhaps the latter's experience has passed through too many filters by the time the reader is confronted by Elder's words on the page. In the end it is Elder's book, rather than Hillary's.

Are Hillary's 'ghosts' visions, hallucinations, or just memories, even daydreams? There are references to Shackleton's 'fourth man' but the reader is left guessing, and doubting. Despite the often traumatic nature of his experiences, Hillary's 'ghosts' come across as random wanderings across the landscape of his mind, largely anecdotal, with little insight beyond the recollections themselves. One is left with the feeling that he has never really come to terms with his experiences, and at one point he very honestly admits that he is unable to express feelings – rather a drawback in dealing with this type of subject matter.

The account of the trip is interleaved with extensive commentary on Scott and Shackleton, restating the notion of their era of the heroism and nobility of great deeds of exploration and adventure. This contrasts with the reality of a thoroughly miserable, gruelling and even cynical experience. The compromises resulting from patronage and sponsorship are evident, and the notion of unsupported polar exploration is contradicted by the availability of resupply and rescue. Personal relationships are at the heart of good expedition writing, but the animosities between the three adventurers leave a sour taste, and the suspicion that the author's own perspective can never be impartial. Hillary's own character must have been shaped by the tragedies he has known, but the reader is left with little more understanding of him, than the fact that he has experienced these tragedies. The shadow of a famous father looms large, but is just that, a shadow. The relationship between polar travel and mountain climbing is touched on often, but hardly explored. These are all potentially fascinating questions, but the raw material provided by Hillary's ghosts is never really exploited.

The text is liberally sprinkled with quotations and epigraphs from Homer, Sartre, T. S. Eliot and Tennyson, providing a veneer of erudition which sits uncomfortably with Hillary and Elder's own contrasting styles. The former's is anecdotal, at times almost prosaic given the disturbing and painful experiences he is trying to address. Elder's writing jumps from unimaginative journalism to overlong streams of consciousness stuffed with repetitive concepts and peculiar metaphors. In truth, much of the content is depressing, as the reader contends with the brutal hardships of the journey, the traumatic events of Hillary's past, the lack of positive human relationships, the awkward style or the growing realisation that the entire concept (book and expedition) fails to fulfil its potential. There were simply not enough positive redeeming features to counterbalance the grinding misery and resolve the emotional pain, and perhaps it was on account of this that I was extremely relieved when the expedition finally reached the south pole and I reached the final page.

Adam Kassyk.

Mountains of the Mind – A History of a Fascination: Robert MacFarlane, (Granta Books, paperback, 306pp, 8.99.)

O the mind, mind has mountains...

Gerard Manly Hopkins. c.1880

In this unique book Robert MacFarlane presents us with mountains both as physical/ geological construct and, as the title would suggest, the mental construct of modern man.

His very persuasive standpoint being, that mountains and our attitudes towards them owe as much to mindscape as they do to landscape.

MacFarlane cleverly blends the two in a progression from 16th century 'terra incognita' and a 'There be Dragons' mentality, through the 'sublime' mountain worship of Shelley, Ruskin *et al*, to the scientific endeavors still linked with mountaineering at the beginning of the 20th century, arriving finally at the noble pursuit of mountain climbing and the consequent courting of danger as a laudable end in itself. And all this, running in parallel with the acknowledgement of 'Deep Time' inherent in the ongoing decoding of geological encryption.

His description of landscape and geological forces in what he calls 'The Great Stone Book' is fascinating and is achieved in such a way that it is both simple and at times poetic in its rendering of information more normally associated with the technically prosaic.

He is eclectic in his literary references with quotes ranging from Petrarch to Simpson - Joe and all points in between, sampling freely from poetry, prose, diary and letter. He also draws heavily on the artistic endeavors of many across the ages and it is in this department that the book displays what is, for this reviewer, its only weakness, poor quality photographic reproduction.

Mountains Of The Mind could be said to be truly, and indeed literally, visionary in its conception and MacFarlane has succeeded in telling a wonderful tale of the evolution of the mountain world in the consciousness of modern man.

C. J. Orr.

Life and Limb – A True Story of Tragedy and Survival Against the Odds:- Jamie Andrew. (Portrait, hardback, 306pp, ISBN 0-7499-5007-2. £17.99).

The majority of Journal readers will be well aware of the plight in which the two Jamies found themselves, clinging to hope in desperate circumstances on the North Face of Les Droites in January 1999, after a successful winter ascent. An epic of enormous proportions ensued that tragically was not to have the ending we all would have wished. This compelling and dramatic account by Jamie Andrew of the personal battle to survive and deal with the aftermath of the tragedy is gripping stuff. I found it difficult to put down and this for me is a rare occurrence.

Jamie recounts climbing the route with Jamie Fisher in worsening conditions to the point where retreat became impossible. The close bond between the two clearly comes across as they shared the icy Breche for five days and nights in freak, horrendous weather, praying to be rescued and reunited with friends and family. Through the thoughts of his girl friend, Anna, Jamie gives a moving account of the emotions of those anxiously waiting for word of their safe return from the security of the Chamonix valley.

There are many heroic efforts in the book that inspire and leave the reader in awe. What the two Jamie's went through is beyond comprehension. The rescue

itself was nothing short of audacious and committing. The desperate emotional position Anna and both climbers parents found themselves in when they waited for word of who had survived and who had perished is powerful. The high drama on the mountain is replaced with the struggle to survive severe frost bite and resultant surgery in the internationally renowned Chamonix hospital. The coming to terms with the loss of a close friend and the nightmare of becoming a quadruple amputee. The subsequent journey of recovery and determination to overcome the seemingly impossible has to be read.

Jamie's writing is very personal and honest and not short of humour. It is peppered with amusing moments that perhaps acted as a coping mechanism in the darkest of hours. The long, lonely days and nights on the Breche des Droites are punctuated with trips back in time to memorable outings to the Lakes, Cuillins and Cairngorms in much more pleasant and enjoyable circumstances.

Jamie's achievements following the accident are remarkable and include getting back up the Ben and climbing and skiing in the Alps. He also possesses the strength of character and motivation to run the London Marathon for charity in under six hours. Running a marathon is tough enough with all four limbs fully functioning, never mind covering the 26.2 miles on carbon fibre prosthetic legs. Since the publication of this book Jamie has made an ascent of Kilimanjaro and he and Anna have become proud parents.

When pushed to write this review, it was done so with some reluctance, not because of a lack of willingness, but because of a worry that I wouldn't do it justice. Talent with the pen has never been considered a personal strength, however, I can read. I found this a most enthralling and inspirational book and one that I would very much recommend to others.

Niall Ritchie.

The Joy Of Climbing: Terry Gifford, (Whittles Publishing, 2004, paperback 192pp, ISBN 190-444-5063, 15.00)

Being editor of a climbing journal, the resounding clunk heralding the arrival of a review book tends to lose its excitement after five years. And it is a very rare occasion indeed that the first skim through the pages results in the newspaper being cast aside and the rest of the morning spent captivated by the volume on offer. *The Joy of Climbing* by Terry Gifford is one such book.

Much of climbing literature suffers from the fact that it tends to be formulaic and quite frankly boring. The intricate moves and wrinkles of a rock face are only of abiding interest in themselves as lists in a guidebook and it is only when one places them in the context of landscape and perhaps more importantly mindscape that they can truly captivate and inspire. Terry Gifford achieves this admirably in what could arguably be called a new genre in the literature of climbing.

His use of language in evoking place and emotion is of the first order and I include his poetry in this. I accept that many people on seeing any verse form immediately turn the page but even the uninitiated will not fail to get something from his works.

This is a book full of humour, of history, companionship, life, death and joy, written by a man at ease with himself, with his climbing life and with the craft to convey the real joy of climbing to his readers.

C. J. Orr.

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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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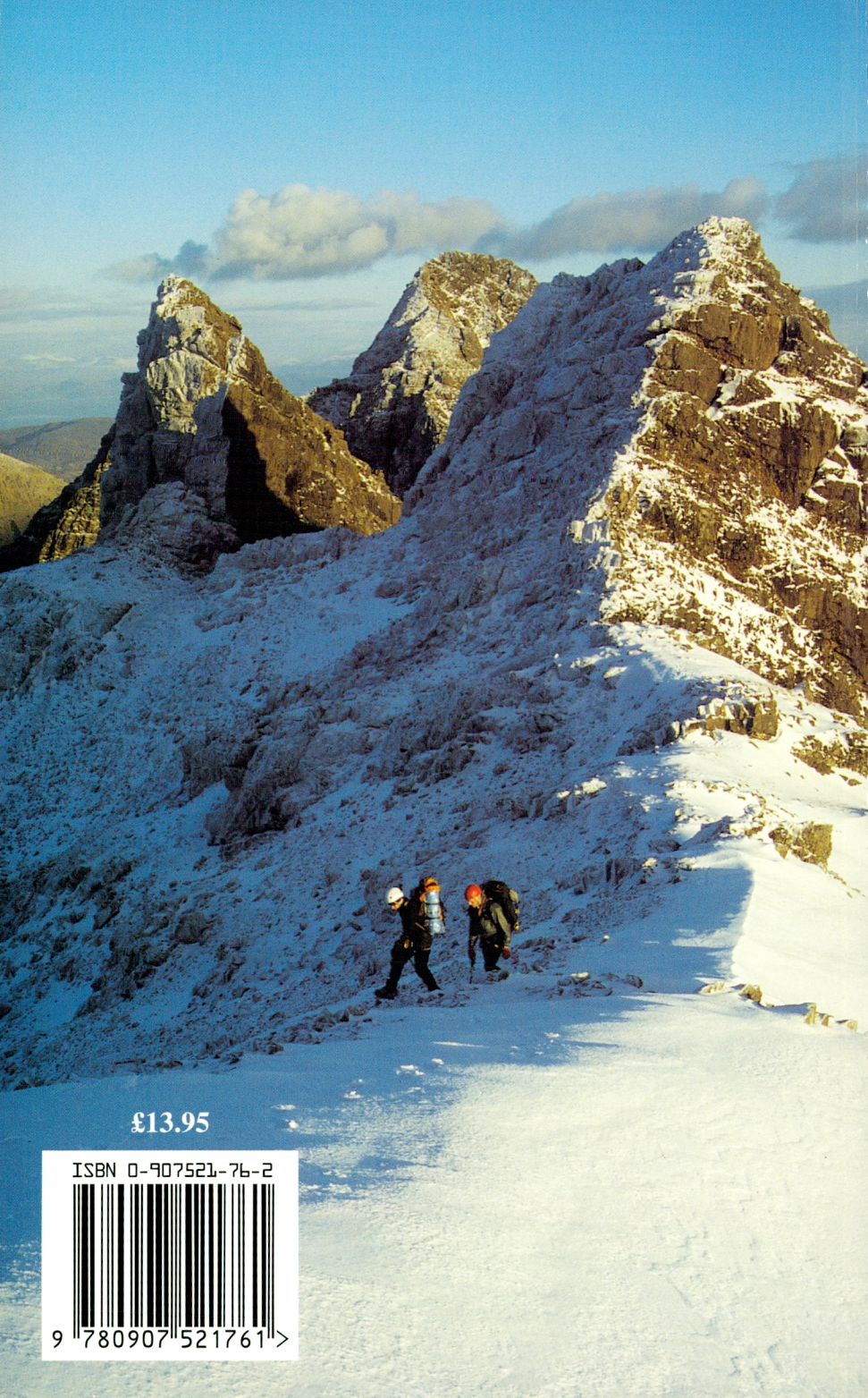
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