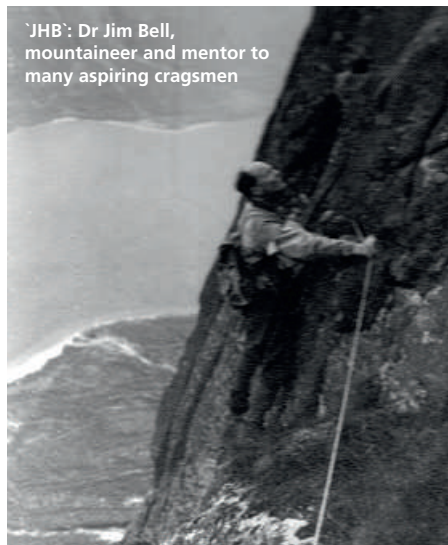




ClubSpot

The Grampian Club 1927 to the Future

By Alf Barnard (President) and Adrian Zealand



'JHB': Dr Jim Bell, mountaineer and mentor to many aspiring cragsmen



Lochnagar Day Meet 2009

History

It all began in the Mathers Hotel in Dundee one January evening: a small group of like-minded people came together in response to an invitation from one Robert Ower in the local press, to discuss the formation of a local mountaineering club. This was not to be a hill walking club – but one encompassing all the disciplines of walking, climbing and mountaineering. His call to arms was in the spirit of a new enthusiasm for the great outdoors in the Brave New World of the post-WW1 era.

From the successful response the Grampian Club was born, the name reflecting the eponymous hills which would cradle its early activities. A first official spring meet was fixed for Ben Lawers in April 1927, preceded by 'a preliminary canter' on Mayar, Glen Doll. This then was the first mountain to be climbed, on 27 March 1927, the first milestone in what was to be a distinguished history.

Ben Lawers and its satellites in April turned out to be a stormy baptism – blizzards and deep snowfall – but a rewarding experience with windows to other distant regions as the storm cleared. Glimpses of Arran and Jura, Nevis and the Cairngorms beckoned to future objectives. By the close of the season the Club could report that its 36 members had enjoyed a successful first year of activity, and the planned programme of 10 monthly meets the following year was to set a pattern for the next 80.

These formative years were a steep learning curve. With no other local body of expertise for advice on hill-craft skills or

equipment, founder members had to learn for themselves from first principles: Scottish hill weather conditions, party organisation, clothing, food and equipment. Raincoats, brogues, cloth caps, walking sticks and canvas haversacks were soon replaced by breeches, nailed boots, leather helmets, Bergen rucksacks, axes like alpenstocks and hemp ropes in the winter.

In the 1930s the legendary Eric Maxwell, stalwart hill-goer, crags person and champion of mountain training joined the club. He was to be librarian for 40 years and president from 1936-39. Winter indoor meets were added to the calendar and became a popular mixture of social event and information exchange. The versatile Eric completed the first recorded second round of Munros and Tops, and perhaps more significantly started a list of Munroists, becoming the Keeper of the List, the forerunner of the record kept by the SMC.

When peace time came after WW2, it brought with it a massive upsurge in membership – topping 100 – as hill-goers sought to redeem the wasted years. The regular events programme was re-established and an annual bulletin appeared. As GC's main publication it has enjoyed a continuous run since 1954. Rock climbing became more popular and a post war burst of activity saw many winter first ascents around the corries of the Angus Glens. The redoubtable Dr J H B Bell, an early GC member and Honorary President 1951-1975, wrote his influential book 'A Progress in Mountaineering', to assist mere mortals! Dr Bell was a prolific first ascensionist: his





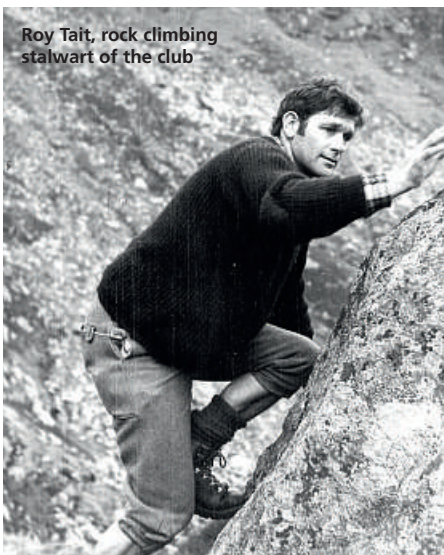
An early winter climbing group - yes, women were admitted from the start!



50th Anniversary Meet to Mayar, March 1977 with founder member Jack Forrest, seated



Eric Maxwell: mover, shaker and originator of the Munroists' List, belays on Spearhead Arête, Beinn Narnain



Roy Tait, rock climbing stalwart of the club

many climbs including Eagle Ridge on dark Lochnagar, and the Orion route The Long Climb on Ben Nevis.

The idea of getting a Club hut was mooted: this eventually materialised as a lease on a former roadman's cottage in Glen Etive. It rejoiced in the glorious name of 'Inbhirfhaolain' and in an even more glorious setting amidst two great mountain groups – Glen Coe and Etive/Blackmount – with magnificent views of the 'Herdsmen' and Ben Starav. Restored and improved, it was officially opened in 1962 as the Club's own climbing base, and became available also to other mountaineering and outdoor clubs. This remains a great place to stay outwith the midge season, and is famous for its fresh water fetched from the burn, and the composting toilet with the best view of a loo in Scotland (green GC)!

Later Years

Within the last few decades membership has risen to over 200 and GC has developed more diverse activities. Members' own exploits have expanded from the occasional foray to the Alps, Norway or Greenland to worldwide. Several can now claim ascents of the highest peak of several Continents, strenuous Himalayan treks, or a handful of the Alpine 4000s among their achievements.

The original core activities remain the heart and soul, catering for a wide range of interests and abilities, and these continue to attract a healthy following. The monthly day meets are by bus, enabling traverses over popular routes and ridges that would otherwise only be possible with two vehicles – and enhancing our green credentials. Participants are grouped into small parties according to route preference, gaining knowledge and experience under different leaders. New Club members are encouraged to develop hill-craft skills and are offered professional training opportunities. Favoured places include Lawers, Crianlarich, Glen Coe and the Cairngorms. Often the meets finish with a meal (and a beer or two) in a local hostelry. Day meets are complemented

by weekend meets held on public holiday weekends in April, May and October. They are usually based in budget hostels and bunkhouses in the West Highlands or Islands, or further afield such as the Lakes or Snowdonia. This year's venues are Torridon, Moidart, Arran and the Outer Hebrides. These events are very informal, convivial and open up new areas that members might not otherwise think of visiting. New members are always most welcome to share these experiences.

The rock climbing Group: the 'Cragrats', meets weekly at local outdoor venues in the summer – Glen Clova, Dunkeld, Arbroath amongst others – and at the Dundee climbing wall, Avertical World, in the winter.

New developments have appeared – mainly ad hoc activities organised by the membership itself – such as the Overseas Holiday Meet to a walking/climbing resort overseas. The previous three years saw visits to the Julian Alps in Slovenia, the Pyrenees and the Picos de Europa in Spain. These are very enjoyable weeks centred on climbing during the day and socialising in the evening. Members have also enjoyed an annual 'Mary Doune' boat trip based in Knoydart, visiting many inaccessible west coast locations and Hebridean islands.

In its wider remit, GC has contributed considerably to the outdoor community, and its expertise and influence have benefitted other clubs, societies and organisations in and outside Scotland. It was a founder member of the MCoFS, and with growing activity in the hills, it played a major role in mountain rescue, including help with setting up and running the Tayside MR Team. In a more sociable role the club has become a stout competitor at the annual Tayside Mountain Mind Quiz, its members' knowledge of hill-matters often gaining the Club the ice-axe trophy and the associated penalty of having to arrange the next year's event! GC members have played key roles in the establishment and running of the now internationally recognised Dundee Mountain Film Festival, which was originally set up



Overseas Meet 2009: Picos de Europa

to commemorate late member Roy Tait, tragically killed on Lochnagar in 1981. Some of the funds raised were used to build a new footbridge at Bachnagairn, Glen Clova, to mark the life of this great climber.

The Future

Cherished parts of the mountain scene are threatening to change, not always for the better, in an increasingly exploited landscape. GC will continue to be responsive to issues concerning mountain access, threats to the rights of hill-users, and to problems regarding rural land management. Its properties – the jewels in its crown – will continue to develop in response to changing needs. Also, through its membership, GC will continue to impart the original spirit of enthusiasm and encouragement – together with good companionship and camaraderie – on which it was founded.

Come and join us – meet the members at our monthly Indoor Meeting, held from September to May on the first Thursday of the month at Discovery Point Dundee. For more details of GC events and services check our website: www.grampianclub.org

ClubSpot
 Does your club have a story to tell? Use this feature in Scottish Mountaineer's Members News section to highlight your club activities, history, achievements or forthcoming events. Simply send details to the Editor, Kevin Howett.

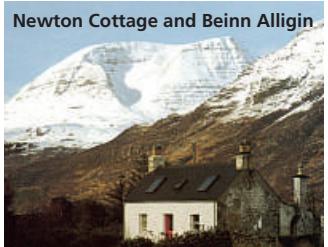


Roy Tait Memorial Bridge, Bachnagairn, Clova



Peter Pan Direct, Beinn Udlaidh

Properties
 The Club eventually bought the Club hut 'Inbhirfhaolain', and in 1989 also acquired a cottage in Torridon for the exclusive use of its members – ideal both for climbing groups and for family holidays. It is situated within walking distance of the Torridon giants and the Achnashellach group, and like Inbhirfhaolain, benefits from adjoining a superlative National Trust for Scotland area. Unlike the hut the Club cottage has hot showers but both have wood burning stoves and they have hosted wonderful Corbett and Munro completion parties! Who needs a timeshare when one can get this as part of your membership?



Newton Cottage and Beinn Alligin