

# ClubSpot

## The Glasgow Hillwalking and Mountaineering Club

By Jacqueline Ferguson, on behalf of GHMC

All photos: John Bell / GHMC



### Introduction

It typically starts with a love of the outdoors and goes from there. It may start with a few like minded friends deciding to 'form a club'. It can sometimes falter or even fall apart only to be resurrected a few years later. It hopefully goes from strength to strength as great experiences (some scary!) are shared, friendships are formed and lifetimes of hill walking and mountaineering are embarked upon. This club spot focuses on a club whose reason for being is no different to any other. The one thing that is different is its age!

### Brief History (literally!)

The last two Club Spots have featured clubs with 87 and 30 years of membership to celebrate and be proud of. This Club Spot features a club with only seven years of history! The Glasgow Hillwalking and Mountaineering Club may be in it's infancy but it is striving to grow up into a thriving and active club. With around 70 members currently the club started its life as GRUFF (Glasgow Ramblers' Under Forty First Footers) in 2003, and then, in 2009, it affiliated to the MCoFS. With this affiliation it was also decided to rename the club GHMC (The Glasgow Hillwalking and Mountaineering Club). There has been some debate about the reason for the name change and, whilst some would struggle to admit it, perhaps the most likely one is that some of the founding members were no longer under forty!

### The very early years

Like any infant the club it tested 'its toes in the water' of hill walking and mountaineering over the early years. Many great friendships were formed, many tracks were walked, many Munros bagged and many pints were drank. Often the



walk organiser could not use a compass (really irresponsible we know but just a child!) and walking activities slowed or stopped completely as the clocks changed.

Gear was purchased just before the walk in outdoor shops and some members realised they only really wanted to be fair weather walkers. Post-walk discussions on particularly wet days revolved around finding other hobbies that didn't involve braving the Scottish weather!

### Some memorable 'incidents'!

On one occasion a few members decided to base themselves at Glen Shiel over a long weekend in March, and set off on the first day to walk the 'Five Sisters'. This group was caught in a snow storm, over already slushy snow and was very poorly equipped for the conditions. The group watched in horror as two members of a party alongside them slipped and fell down the south face of Sgurr na Ciste Duibhe.

No one was badly hurt but the GHMC party were seen to turn various shades of grey that day and only one Munro was bagged as the warm Cluanie Inn beckoned. From that day some of the party went on to winter skills training and some realised that winter hill walking was never going to be for them!

On another occasion one club member thought they were climbing Ben Ledi. When another member pointed out that, having climbed Ben Ledi a few years earlier, this hill did not look familiar there was much embarrassment all round! The member who was 'not on Ben Ledi but thought he was', signed up for a navigation training course and now has his Mountain Leader qualification, much to everyone's relief!

Like all clubs we have our funny stories to tell. Sandwiches have been forgotten and whip-rounds organised, leaving the person who had forgotten their lunch with much more than everyone else. Some members are perhaps less interested in the walking than we would hope; when asked if he would be going on the walk one member has been known to regularly ask the question, "Are there any girls going?"! We are delighted to say that he is still a member but has stopped asking the question.

Another of our members is always very prepared for the outdoors and the size of his rucksack often suggests a Fisherfield expedition instead of one Corbett being climbed! "You can never have enough water," he explained once. "This is Scotland!" we replied.

As well as walking, the club has regular pub nights, meals,



weekends away and the odd theatre trip. Unfortunately we have been known to 'lose' members on pub crawls. The answer to that is "at least it wasn't out on the hills!"

**Coming of Age**

Like all youngsters the club started off with little experience and lots of enthusiasm. The enthusiasm and passion for hill walking has never really waned but the members are recognising that experience, skills and training go a long way to making hill walking and mountaineering even more enjoyable pastimes! The club's committee all understand how important it is not to get completely caught up in formalities, committees and officialdom but they also firmly support and believe in the club's objective, which is: "to promote the enjoyment of hill walking and mountaineering, and to encourage members to develop the skills and expertise associated with these activities."

This has seen the club facilitating several training days in 2010. These have been with professional mountaineering instructors, Euan Whittaker and Martin Holland. Basic winter skills, navigation and scrambling have all been enjoyed. This has 'fired up' some members and they are now looking to further training and also have, or are planning to, share their knowledge with other members by organising walks.

The club's Training Officer, John Bell, would like the club to support even more members in gaining the necessary skills to be self-reliant, confident hill walkers and mountaineers.

Sometimes members will decide the new activity is not for them, others will want more. Either way, the emphasis is on trying new things, meeting fellow members, having fun, challenging yourself and gaining new skills.

In addition to training days the club has had a few firsts in 2010. These included taster sessions in climbing in September and early August saw the club embark on its first Hut weekend at Lagangarbh Cottage in Glen Coe. Some of the party walked Buachaille

Etive Mor on a glorious day and the others enjoyed the Aonach Eagach. All returned safely and much banter was shared over beer in the sunshine along with some very friendly resident mice!

**Hopes for the future**

The club is young, its members are young (ish) and we don't quite have any Munroists yet (although several of us are working on it!). Whether it is a six-mile low-level walk on a well-marked path, a historical nature trail, a Munro to bag, a crag to climb or the post-'outdoor activity' banter over a pint that motivates its members, the club hopes to grow and expand its programme. In doing so we hope our members form life-long friendships and have fantastic experiences.

We hope to have something for everyone and to have active (in the outdoors) and interactive (with the running of the club) members who feel they truly belong to the club. Like all clubs we do want to grow our membership but so often people feel that they have outgrown a club and move on to a 'higher level'. With this in mind GHMC very much hopes that its program allows our individual members to 'grow' as hill walkers and mountaineers within GHMC.

We also plan to develop and encourage much greater environmental awareness and participation in related activities. This may take the form of organising regular volunteering days with organisations such as the John Muir Trust. We are also currently seeking to learn more about minimal impact mountaineering. The possibilities are endless.

We have lots to learn and mistakes will be made along the way but we are not scared! Bring it on! Who knows, perhaps we will be writing an article for MCoFS in thirty years time. That would be a proud moment indeed! Happy and safe hill walking and mountaineering to one and all!

To find out more please feel free to contact us via our website: [www.glasgowhmc.org.uk](http://www.glasgowhmc.org.uk)

