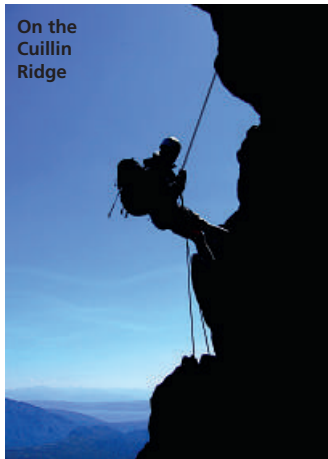


ClubSpot

The Orion Mountaineering Club



By Scott Valentine All photos: Orion MC



On the Cuillin Ridge

The Orion Mountaineering Club is based around the Glasgow area although we range far and wide on our travels and have members scattered across Scotland and beyond.

We may be far from the oldest club in Scotland but the origins of what was eventually to become the Orion MC are rather vague and even unknown to some of the current membership.

The forerunner to the Orion was the now defunct Clachaig MC. The Clachaig had been formed in 1983 by a bunch of climbers who were mainly from the west of Glasgow and frequented Dumbarton Rock and local public houses in equal measure! Fast forward to the mid 1990s and due to internal club politics a sizeable number of members left to form a new club.

The split resulted in a new club with no name. Serious consideration was given to this and it was thought that seeing as we had previously been named after a well known Glen Coe gully, what would be better than a famous Ben Nevis face? So in January 1996 the Orion MC was born.

The club continued to meet every Thursday in the Victoria Bar down the Bridgegate, in the east end of Glasgow city centre. It was here that we took great delight in being served by our dour faced publican who knew us well and was all bark, but no bite! Sadly, the demise of the Vicky meant that last year we were forced to change the venue of our weekly gatherings to The State Bar, across the city centre in Holland Street.

The size of the club has always been rather small in terms of numbers of active members – around 30, with members ages spanning from mid 20's to mid 50's. This

Orion Club meet to a bothy



suits us fine as it promotes a welcoming feel and seems to eliminate the cliques and falling-outs that some members had experienced in other clubs. The result is that we are basically a bunch of mates with a shared interest in the hills and climbing.

In the past we had always seen ourselves as an informal group, so much so that to the outsider we may have appeared completely unorganised! Committees and constitutions existed in name only – the only issue we ever had was where to go that coming weekend? However, with the need for a club web site and other necessary adaptations to modern lifestyles this has changed slightly in recent years.

Traditionally most club activity is ad hoc... "what do you want to do this weekend?" ... With folk heading out to a wide a variety of things.

Hill walking is something which the majority of the club participate in, and of course as with most hill goes everyone seems to be bagging these days: Munros, Corbetts, Grahams, Marilyn's and even

trig points, nothing is safe from being included in a tick list! Whatever the season, Orionites can be found out there in pursuit of their next tick. The club has many Munroists and boasts that not one of them has registered their completion with the SMC!

Rock climbing grades within the club span from the easy up to about E1 and members can be found climbing on mountain crags, sea cliffs and local outcrops. We don't organise formal instruction but midweek there may be someone on hand to take out beginners to Auchinstarry or Neilston quarries and especially down to the Glasgow Climbing Wall at Ibrox.

There are a number of members who enjoy the experience of spindrift penetrating their clothing as they cling to a mountain face while the wind tries to drag them off. This of course refers to Scottish snow and ice climbing! Visit the Ben or wherever the routes are 'in' and you may find some of our members.

Another winter pursuit which seems to once again have become more popular



Glen Shiel earlier this year

within the club is ski touring. The recent good winters have encouraged some of the membership to look out their skins and take to the high plateaus.

Official weekend club meets are organised throughout the winter and are usually held in club huts. These tend to be hugely enjoyable weekends, not just from a climbing or walking point of view, but are also very sociable with most of us toasting a grand day on the hill with a few drinks. There is also a good chance of being able to show off your vocal talents to the accompaniment of one of the club guitarists, usually Jules, who also provides a huge folder of song sheets just in case you forget the lyrics!

There are also a few official meets organised in the summer which involve camping and can be anywhere, although Skye is always a favourite. In addition, recently there has been the introduction of an annual cycle meet.

To quote the title of a famous book, "Mountain Days, Bothy Nights" are a favourite pastime for a core section of the club. Many a Friday night has involved high tailing it out of Glasgow, followed by a long wet walk in the dark to some remote bothy. What a feeling it is when you first catch sight of the bothy through the gloom and know that soon you will be sitting round a cheery fire, clothes steaming and drink in hand!

High mountain camps are another club speciality,

especially at both the summer and winter solstices. The winter ones in particular are legendary, with tales of camping on mountain summits in appalling conditions.

As for trips abroad, it is surprising for such a small club how far members will travel in pursuit of climbing, mountaineering and trekking. Club members have visited the Alps, the Dolomites, the Pyrenees, Canada, Corsica, New Zealand, the USA, Greenland and Norway, to name but a few destinations.

The most comfortable event of the year is the annual Club Dinner. These are usually held in a Highland hotel. The only exception to this was two years ago when the annual dinner was held in a farm barn which only had three walls! It was a bitterly cold night with snow falling for much of the evening. Fortunately several bonfires and plenty of bottles on the tables ensured that we all kept warm and enjoyed what was the best club dinner in years.

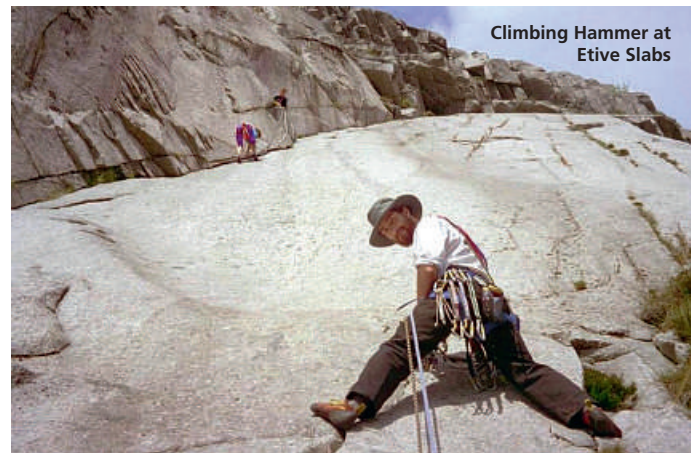
So if you are interested in getting out there and are looking for a club, why not try out the Orion. We pride ourselves on being a very friendly bunch and welcome new members of all abilities and experience.

If you want more information go to our website. Here you will find email contact details and get a real idea what we are about. Check out the Gallery for photos and the Forum for trip and meet reports in particular.

www.orionmc.org.uk



Sunshine Gully on Beinn Udlaidh



Climbing Hammer at Etive Slabs



On the summit of Mont Blanc

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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.