



# ClubSpot

## The Carn Dearg 60 Years on the Scottish Hills

By Iain Dow (President)

All photos: Carn Dearg Club

The Carn Dearg Mountaineering Club celebrates its 60th anniversary in 2009. The CDMC originated from the wave of enthusiasm for the outdoor life which ex-servicemen and others brought home with them after the Second World War. Groups of hill and rock enthusiasts could be found most weekends throughout the year in Glen Clova, staying in the Glen Doll Youth Hostel, or dossing in bothies and howffs. Mostly young and hard-up, they cycled, hitch-hiked, or used the local bus services into the nearest glens where they whetted their appetite for the hills on the Braes of Angus. As there was no bus service on a Sunday, for some the return home often meant a walk back to Forfar or Kirriemuir.

One Sunday at Glas-allt Shiel, on the way back from a day on Lochnagar, six of these 'regular' weekenders realised the only feasible way to get further afield was to organise and run buses regularly for themselves. Hoping to interest others and gain their support, a meeting was held in the Rover Den at Forfar on 15th June 1949, where it was decided to form a mountaineering club.

The name "Carn Dearg" was adopted on account of the association with Glen Clova and the founder members' affinity with the rock climbs of the Red Craigs. Carn Dearg translated from Gaelic is "Red Hill".



Catering for a basically young and impecunious membership, it was decided a free and easy atmosphere should prevail, instead of the perceived formality of older established clubs (no further comment!).

Membership would be open to both sexes, the annual subscription was to be five shillings, and an attempt would be made to run buses every month as cheaply as possible. At a subsequent meeting it was decided the Club's first foray would be

through the Lairig Ghru. This well-attended meet was followed by others. Members flowed in, and the club prospered.

A Committee was elected at the first AGM, and Davie Glen was invited to be honorary president, in recognition of the encouragement he had given to so many club members. He was to hold the post for several years. Later, as there were so many members outwith the original Forfar area, district committees

**Top: On the Summit of Ben Macdui, 2007**

**Above left: Davie Glen, founding President of the Carn Dearg Mountaineering Club**

**Above: First CDMC meet prepares for departure from Forfar**





**Happy birthday, Carn Dearg, 60 years old and still going strong**

*Eventually one arrived, who had climbed out solo, to inform us that two had got stuck at the crux (the cave). Frank Anderson and myself were part of the party that went up to get them out. By the time we reached them and got them out, it was pitch black and raining heavily. We descended Great Gully with the aid of a cycle headlamp. On reaching the river we just waded across, as we were saturated anyway. When we eventually reached Crieff, on the way home, we decided to have a coffee in the milk bar that used to be in The Square. A Crieff senior citizen, on spotting this motley crew observed sympathetically "Aye lads, that's a hellava day ye're getting for your tattie gaitherin".*

were set up in both Brechin and Dundee.

However, with so many young members, conscription took a steady toll, and many had to leave for National Service. Of those who served with the RAF, some joined the Mountain Rescue Units, and gained considerable climbing experience from which other club members benefited on their return to civilian life.

In January 1950 the Club applied for membership of the ASCC (Association of Scottish Climbing Clubs – forerunner of the Mountaineering Council of Scotland), and was admitted in February the same year. One report from the September meet that year comes from founding member Dave Murray:

*The meet was to Glen Coe and the weather was inclement to say the least. We had put on our dry clothes and were waiting for a party on Raven's Gully on the Buachaille to return.*

In these early days a group of club members saved a converted ambulance from the scrap heap. Affectionately named "The Buggy" it served in fits and starts for a year, which included a successful holiday in Skye and the Western Highlands. Soon after this it was written off as a total loss, having crashed in the Trossachs. Fortunately, there were no serious injuries.

The Club travelled around Scotland hill walking, Munro bagging, rock climbing and winter climbing. Possibly the first rock climb recorded in the

SMC journals by anyone from the Carn Dearg was Lord's Gully on An Teallach. Fred Old and Donald Robertson gave it this name as it ended at Lord Berkeley's Seat. Later other club members such as Doug Lang, Neil Quinn and Graeme Hunter put up new summer and winter routes.

There was much socialising on and off the Meets, and many lifelong partnerships began on Carn Dearg events. Off the hill there were other activities for members such as slide shows, talks, and for a while in the 60s they could meet on Wednesday evenings in Dundee's Dudhope Castle, for table tennis and a natter before adjourning to the pub.

The annual social was very popular and eventually became the Annual Dinner and Dance. Away from meet weekends, the monthly Saturday evening dances at Clova Village Hall were quite lively. They became even livelier when the hotel bar closed and a throng would cross the Brandy Burn by the log bridge, and squeeze into the already crowded hall where walking boots were left at the door. After a full day on the hill, a walk down to the glen to the Clova Hotel, a dance, and then the three-mile walk back to the Club hut at



Top left: Seana Bhraigh

Top right: On Cairn Gorm

Above middle: Setting off from Clova for Lochnagar, sunrise 1949

Above: The Buggy in all its glory

Braedownie was the norm for a Saturday night.

Nowadays, The Carn Dearg Mountaineering Club has members across Scotland and the UK. Members participate in many outdoor activities including hill walking, rock climbing, winter climbing, ski touring, sea kayaking and mountain biking. The club runs regular monthly day and weekend trips to some of Scotland's most spectacular mountain areas.

Travel to meet venues is now normally by car sharing, however some weekends consist of a "walk through" where a minibus is utilised. Accommodation for weekend meets is normally within mountaineering club huts or independent bunkhouses. During the summer some weekend meets will be either based at campsites or will require wild camping, although some hardy souls even prefer to camp in the winter.

The club also has its own hut – located in its 'home glen' of Glen Clova – that has served it and many other clubs well over the years. The present hut was built in 1965 through the hard toil of club members. However after all these years of service, the hut is now in need of replacement and over the last two years, the club has been getting to grips with planning the design of a new hut and finding ways of financing the project. The club estimate that they will need £60,000



to complete the project and through various fundraising initiatives, club members have managed to raise more than £12,000 already.

The club currently has approximately 80 members of all ages and experience. From this a core of keen members are usually present on most meets. The club's home town is Dundee but members are now spread across Scotland and England. Most weekend meets will include members from the Edinburgh, Glasgow, Fife and Dundee areas.

Activities are informally organised with small groups doing different things on the meets. There are no set activities; members and guests will decide themselves what they wish to do, but club officials will be able to give advice on suitable routes and will always ensure that inexperienced members and guests have at least one experienced member within their group.

The meets are lighthearted and friendly and the club

characters always ensure there's never a dull moment whatever the weather. There are weekend meets every month throughout the year, and day meets run from February to November. Check out the club website at [www.carndearg.org](http://www.carndearg.org) for details of the remaining meets for 2009.

The Carn Dearg's happy-go-lucky attitude which took its founder members hitching all over Scotland on the cheap, may have passed with the advent of affordable motoring and two-car families. The ex-government surplus gear has now been replaced with Gore-Tex, but the original principles of easy membership and freedom from restrictions are largely still adhered to.

It offers members not only the freedom of the Scottish hills, but also the camaraderie and companionship (not to mention the banter), which keeps the members coming back for more and new prospective members keen to join.

Top: On Jock's Road at Davie's Bourach

Above left: Lochnagar, 1957

Above middle: Dave Murray and Rab Inglis, Cioch, 1950

Above: Ben Avon, 1996

### Carn Dearg new club hut

Any suggestions, advice or financial donations to the project will be gratefully received. More information regarding the new hut project can be found at [www.carndearg.org](http://www.carndearg.org) or by phoning 01721 720846.



### Club Spot

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