

# THE SCOTTISH MOUNTAINEERING CLUB JOURNAL

EDITED BY J. H. B. BELL



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THE SCOTTISH MOUNTAINEERING CLUB  
SYNOD HALL, CASTLE TERRACE, EDINBURGH, 1

*Agents:* EDINBURGH, Douglas & Foulis; GLASGOW, Wm. Porteous & Co.

## EDITORIAL NOTES.

**In Memoriam.** As will be seen from the contents of this number the Club has lost an unusual number of valued members during recent months.

It is with deep regret that we have to announce, in addition, the deaths of Sir George Adam Smith and Mr G. A. Solly. The former was one of our original members. Mr Solly was a distinguished mountaineer and an ex-President.

Sufficient time has not been available for the compilation of adequate "In Memoriam" notices. These will appear in our next issue.

**The S.M.C. and the War.** It is intended in our November issue to revise the list of members of the Club serving with H.M. Forces. We therefore appeal to all concerned to notify the Hon. Secretary as to any changes, so that the information may be accurate and up to date.

**Library and Club Room.** The Club acknowledges with thanks the following gifts to the Library and Slide Collection:—

From Mrs Robert Corry, a set of *Journals*, except for Vols. 1 and 2.

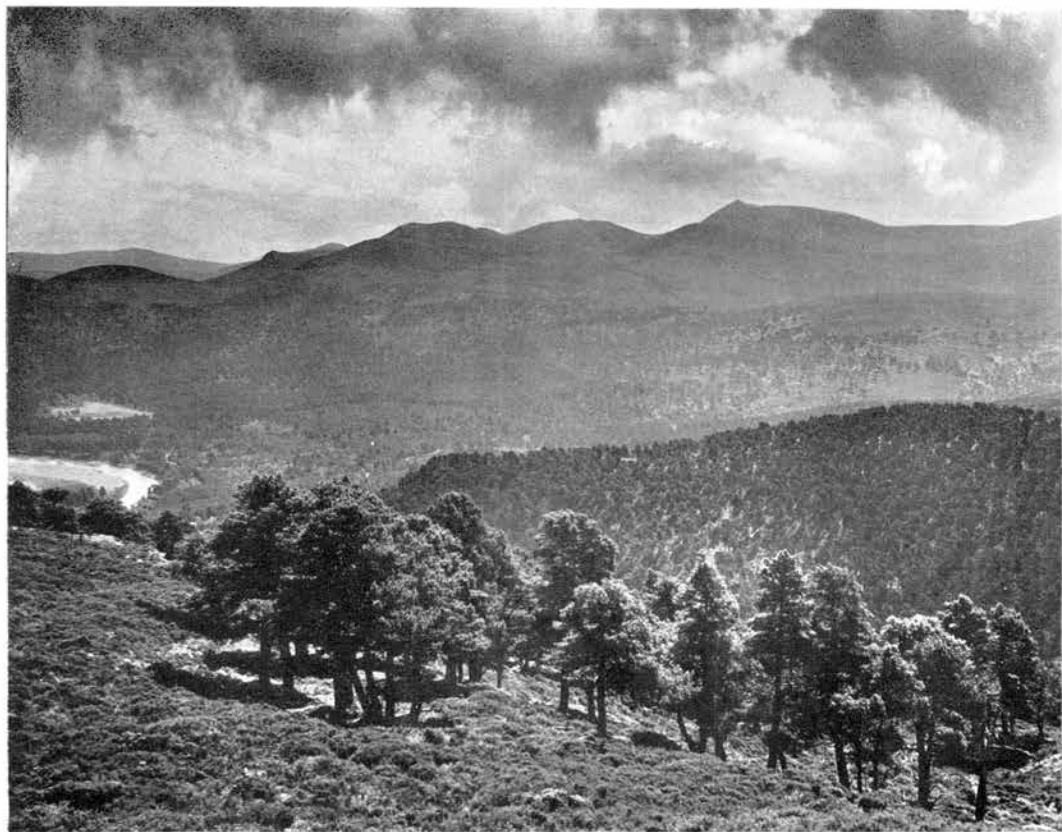
From the family of the late Mr Gilbert Thomson, a set of valuable slides.

From Mr G. R. Donald, a number of books.

**The November Number.** All Notices for the November Number should be sent to the Hon. Editor, Dr J. H. B. BELL, THE KNOWE, CLACKMANNAN, as soon as possible, and not later than 15th September 1942.

**We regret** to have to announce that, owing to an official order, we may be compelled to reduce either the size or the frequency of issue of the *Journal* in future, but it is not possible to decide this matter at present. Any changes will be duly notified.

**Spare Climbing Rope for War Purposes.** Ropes in good condition are useful for Commandos, but worn ropes have other uses. We have just received an appeal inviting climbers to send any available spare rope to Mr H. G. Judd, Controller of Salvage, Ministry of Supply, Celanese House, Hanover Square, London, W.1.



*July 1935*

PINE FOREST—BALLOCHBUIE AND LOCHNAGAR  
The northerly form of the Caledonian Forest.

*R. M. Adam*

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## THE LAST DAY ON BUACHAILLE.

By W. H. Murray.

TOWARDS the end of January 1941 I received orders to join the Middle East Forces. The occasion called for one long, last climb on Buachaille Etive. I had already made seventy-nine ascents by divers routes, and had long since been convinced that Buachaille was the most pleasing of Scottish mountains. R. G. Donaldson cut his work at Cambridge and came north to climb with me. We selected Crowberry Gully as the best winter climb in Glencoe, one that would give us all that we bargained for and more. In this hope we were to find ourselves confirmed. It is not usual for Crowberry Gully to yield so early in the season.

We arrived at Coupal Bridge at 9 A.M. on 1st February. The Buachaille was sheeted in new snow, and a dull gleam of ice came from the lower crags. As we plodded over the snow-clogged heather the sun rose clear over the Moor of Rannoch. A flock of large, soft clouds hovered overhead, but were fast disappearing before we reached the stony ground of the lower slopes. The walls and slabs of Buachaille, towering high in front, were muffled in cloaks of snow that dazzled our eyes where the sun-rays struck. The vast structure bore a striking resemblance to a great palace of ice, like some stupendous fortress of the Wizard of Oz. The sparkling diamond of the summit cut deep into a royal-blue sky.

We moved slowly uphill and were delayed from time to time by minor ice-defences. It was probably after 11 A.M. before we traversed into the lower reaches of Crowberry Gully. The gully started invitingly. The angle was low and the slope wide. We were still in sunshine, and a bend in the gully hid the verticalities above. But a climber is never satisfied with snow, any more than a farmer is with weather. An inch or two of new snow lay on old hard snow, and the top layer kept slipping on the lower. We floundered inelegantly, trying not to waste valuable time by cutting steps so early in the day, until at last exasperation overcame ingrained laziness. We are unsophisticated enough to find that step-cutting is good fun. But one grows impatient when every minute counts.

An easy pitch and a long stretch of concave snow led to the first bend. From there we could see the whole climb as a deep cleft, nearly 1,000 feet high, splitting the wide expanse of snow-smothered cliffs and severing the North Buttress on its right from the Crowberry Ridge on its left. Between these huge buttresses the gully soared, tier upon tier, to the delicate curve of a far-away snow-ridge, where wisps of cloud sailed lazily across the blue sky.

The gully quickly steepened to the first shallow cave. From here to the end Crowberry Gully rises in a glorious crescendo of difficulty, each pitch in turn being noticeably harder than the preceding one. The crux and final Cave pitch share the honours in severity. This mounting difficulty has disadvantages. It does tune one up for the final onslaught, but if either the crux or the last pitch is unclimbable, one is defeated late in the day with all the gully to climb down again. I have never seen any belays for roping down. From now on each of us led alternate pitches, Donaldson starting off. The first three pitches involved the same combination of snow and glazed slabs; each was separated from the others by one or two hundred feet of hard snow surfaced with new snow, every step having to be cut with the adze; each ran true to form, the long groove of pitch two and

the overhang of pitch three being each more difficult than its predecessor. None involved exposure, but all consumed much time and energy. It was 3.30 P.M. before we reached Thin Crack Chimney. Here we paused and considered.

In front lay three big pitches. Three hours of daylight remained, if one counted the late twilight. Yet both the crux and the final Cave pitch might take one and a half hours each for the leader alone. This excluded Thin Crack Chimney, a very hard 30 feet when the chimney was blocked with snow as it was to-day. We decided that unless we were over the crux by 4.30 P.M. we must turn back.

We lost no time. In thirty minutes the Thin Crack was behind us and we drew to a standstill in Crowberry Junction. At this crux in the climb Crowberry Gully branches. The left fork is a narrow chimney shooting up to Crowberry Tower Gap; it has not been climbed. The right fork, beginning as a broad belt of slabs which have never been climbed in summer, rushes up to the climax of the Cave pitch and debouches on the open brow of the mountain, 150 feet below the cairn. Between these two forks lies an unclimbed buttress. Amidst this welter of unclimbed rock the summer route winds its tortuous way. It is not difficult, but in winter has never proved possible. Then one relies on a good coat of ice over the slabs of the right fork. To-day there was no ice on the slabs. Their only coating was a heavy dusting of powder snow. We had, after all, come too early in the season to find ice in sufficient quantity. Such was the situation confronting us.

I reflected with pleasure that this was Donaldson's turn to lead, but I tried the slabs myself out of curiosity. They were impossible. From past experience of Crowberry Junction I thought that our only hope of finding a route was in forcing a way up the angle between the Central Buttress and right fork. For such a hazardous task some simple rope mechanics was essential. To this end I repaired to a snowy stance about 20 feet up the left fork. The chimney was arched hereabouts by a great

chock-stone, over which I threw an end of rope to which Donaldson tied himself. If Donaldson came off during the first 15 feet he would not fall, but would merely suffer a harmless if sensational swing across the gully. In face of this improvised gallows Donaldson remained as unperturbed as a condemned aristocrat. If the rock was climbable at all he would get up. He made 10 feet of progress, after which not all his amazing ingenuity could get him higher. We both came down to the Junction and changed places on the rope.

I vainly tried to force the passage where Donaldson had failed, but could find no holds. The rope came down at too acute an angle to provide an upward pull, but I thought it possible to readjust the rope so that a more direct pull might be possible. Meanwhile my arms and wrists ached with hanging on to minute holds, and I prepared to climb down. At this instant a small powder-snow avalanche, discharged from the North Buttress at a great height above, came trundling down the gully, poured over my head, and swamped the rocks around. The small holds by which I had ascended were obliterated, and, try as I would, I could not find them again with my feet. The handhold was too sketchy to allow of leaning out to prospect. I realised quickly that I should be bound to come off, and warned Donaldson accordingly. Nevertheless, I climbed down a few feet before the rock and I parted company. I swung across the gully, feeling like a cross-breed between a parachutist and a hooked salmon. A few seconds later I came to rest on the gully bed. The time was 4.40 P.M.

By earlier agreement we should now have turned in our tracks and made haste to get down. We still agreed that the game was almost up—but not quite. The sterility of pessimism had not yet descended upon us, whilst the fertility of optimism suggested, first, an attempt at the summer route, and second, readjustment of the rope over the chock-stone so as to afford a more direct pull on the corner route. Recollection of the difficulties below fortified us in these decisions. I set to work on the summer route by traversing “back and foot” to the chock-stone,



BUACHAILLE ETIVE MOR

*J. Rennie*

The Crowberry Gully is directly below the summit, with the Crowberry Ridge on the left. The upper part of the climb takes the right-hand snowy branch of the Y and finishes near the top of the North Buttress.



but I failed to start the traverse across the buttress. The rock was slabby, iced, and drowned in powder snow. However, I improved the position of the rope running over the chock-stone, crawled back to Donaldson and confessed that I was too muscle-weary to try the corner route meantime.

Once again Donaldson stepped into the breach. For a time I could not see what was happening, and a long period of suspense followed. Like myself, Donaldson is not communicative on a climb. Twice I was enjoined to hold the rope tight, from which I gathered that Donaldson was luxuriating in more than moral support. The rope moved no more than a few inches in twenty minutes. Then gradually, still inch by inch, the rope snaked—upwards! I could hardly contain myself. The tempo of rope movement steadily quickened, often going out a foot at a time, until a hundred feet had scuttered over the snow-encrusted chock-stone. A faint call of "Come on!" floated down to me. To all future climbers belayed after sunset to a pillar of ice in the right fork of Crowberry Gully I guarantee that these simple words "Come on!" will stir their spirits like a magic spell.

I rejoined Donaldson at 5.30 P.M. A little more cutting, a little more kicking of steps, and we arrived below the final Cave pitch. We were appalled. Having come so far and toiled so hard, we were in no mood for spectacular severities. But this cave, arching 40 feet overhead and thrusting out a projecting tooth of rock, looked both severe and intimidating. Our natural reactions after the crux, combined with a grey twilight, emphasised the disheartening verticality of the icy rock. It looked impregnable. Donaldson settled down in his frost-lined cave and gave me a belay, while I used the fading daylight to search out a weak spot on the right-hand wall, where a regular coat of thin black ice lay on the rock like a heavy varnish. It is unlikely that I could have made a start at all but for two lucky chances. At a height of 4 feet and again at 10 feet a small clump of frozen snow adhered to the *verglas*. Each occurred where there was no other vestige of hold. Either might break

away without warning, but each was sufficiently low down for the risk to be taken safely. When put to the test both clumps held, and did not break until later.

After reaching the second clump I could at first see no way of getting higher. The ice was still too thin to use, save as a last resort. The protruding bones of rock were glazed and badly spaced. For a moment or two I leant my back against the tusklike overhang and allowed my gaze to wander downwards. I gained rest and lasting memories at the same time. Crowberry Gully plunged down beneath my feet like a deathly white cataract, and far below disappeared in a sea of darkness which slowly and surely was seeping up the gully like a flowing tide. The ice-clad walls and snow-banked ledges of the North Buttress had long ceased to sparkle and looked unspeakably bleak. There is no gloomier sight than frost-bound cliffs at dusk. After sunset, grimness is their keynote and an aura of hostility pervades the surrounding atmosphere.

Donaldson, by this time, was inquiring anxiously about technicalities ahead, to which I replied with the usual non-committal noises. I managed to move up a foot; then, unexpectedly, another foot. The ice became slightly thicker. There followed forty-five minutes of continuous cutting—a race with failing light. The angle was too high, and therefore balance too delicate, to permit any weight behind these axe-blows. I had to peck away, using one hand from the wrist, in an effort to fashion holds, where brittle ice and rock-bulges, which kept occurring at the wrong places, would allow. This was truly one of those pitches that betray the climber, while he is but half-way up, into a vicious declaration that never again will he set foot on iced rocks, and into a solemn oath, when he is up, that never in all his life will he forsake them. And so it turned out. I reached the top with aching muscles and a joyful heart. I had to cut some distance up hard snow before I could find sufficient depth for an axe-belay. The extra cutting sent down rivulets of chips that covered all the holds so hardly won. It was becoming too dark to see the rock detail.

Donaldson's position was an unenviable one. I shouted down, "I'm up!" and "Come on!" Donaldson, frozen stiff with his long wait and uncertain in mind about our prospects, welcomed the news with delighted liveliness; and that, with a tight rope and his own boundless skill, carried him up the pitch within fifteen minutes. He gave a splendid exhibition of resolute climbing.

Our only anxiety now was the state of the snow in the last stretch of gully—powdery stuff that lay on old granular snow at a fairly high angle. We continued to move one at a time from axe-belays. A small, awkward pitch of 10 feet caused trouble; beyond that all was plain plodding to the snow-ridge where the gully ended.

We stepped on to the open mountain-side at 7.15 P.M. and came face to face with a cloud-racked, starry sky. The ring of low crags under the summit, the ground beneath our feet, and all the rocks around us were deeply buried in masses of fog crystals. Not true darkness but a strange twilight pervaded these highest slopes of Buachaille. I sensed an unusual quality in the air. The mountain seemed to tremble on the verge of a revelation. The feeling that some great secret was almost within my grasp stayed with me until we reached the cairn, when it passed away. Donaldson and I spent a precious half-hour on top. The moon shone fitfully through ragged brown clouds.

*Note.*—Members of the Club and other Scottish Mountaineers recognise the great part played by Mr W. H. Murray in the organisation of the J.M.C.S., and his keenness as a mountaineer. They will not be surprised to hear that his climbing has continued in other surroundings whenever an opportunity has presented itself. He has accordingly ascended Table Mountain, made a new route up an unclimbed arête of the Great Pyramid, and also a daring but unsuccessful assault on the Sphinx. The chin was the main obstacle, and it seemed to him to be a dubious act to use pitons on the rocks of a friendly state.

## SOME NOTES ON THE FOREST HISTORY OF THE HIGHLANDS.

By Dr G. K. Fraser.

THE character of the vegetation which is found in any region is controlled by the conditions under which it develops and continues to exist. Of these controlling conditions the chief may be grouped under the headings of:—

The climate of the region and of its surroundings.

The character of its surface (for example, its topography).

Its animal population.

Its contacts with other regions.

To these we may add one other control which tends to become more potent as time goes on, namely, man, who interferes not only with the vegetation itself but also, in so far as he can, modifies directly and indirectly those other factors which in turn affect the vegetation.

None of these controlling factors is quite static—not even the mountains—although the surface of the land as a whole is probably the least liable to considerable change of all the factors which influence the growth of living things. Again, too, none of these factors works independently of the others. Topography is affected by climate as well as is climate by topography, the soil by the vegetation as well as the vegetation by the soil, and so on.

Over the wider regions of the solid surface of the globe, however, the predominating formative influence is climate, which, although stable enough in the relatively short periods of an ordinary human life, does change to a considerable degree from millennium to millennium. This seems to be specially true of those cooler latitudes in which the seasonal changes in temperature are greater, *i.e.*, the temperate zones. In this part of the world the most remarkable of these climatic changes in later

geological times was a fall in temperature such that the accumulation of snow and ice which we now associate with arctic regions spread southwards into this country as far as the Thames-Severn valley and so wiped out the vegetation of the whole region to the north of that line, if not over Britain as a whole. This climatic phase is called the Ice Age or Glacial Epoch.

The final gradual melting away of this ice cover, to leave the surface of the land pretty much as it now is, took place some ten to fifteen thousand years ago. So it can be said that the history of our present Highland vegetation began at that time. Since that time climatic change has not been regular but has fluctuated first in one direction and then in another—changes to which reference will be made later, for they have had a great deal to do with the history of our forests since the Ice Age.

It is unnecessary to labour the importance of the topography or lie of the land in relation to vegetation, especially to mountaineers, who must be familiar with the effects of altitude on the ground herbage from every excursion which they make. It may be mentioned, however, that one of the chief results which derives from mountainous topography is that man himself is less liable to interfere with the vegetation than he is in more accessible regions. This is especially true with regard to primitive peoples at early stages of civilisation. In mountains, agricultural and industrial development tend to be slower and less extensive than in the plains, so that the natural vegetation of the mountains is subject to human interference to a lesser degree and at later times than is that of the more rapidly exploited lowlands. Their heaths are not ploughed up nor their forests hewn down until land and fuel hunger become acute in the neighbouring lowlands.

The importance of contact with other regions is well illustrated from our own forests. One of the major geographical events taking place since the Ice Age was the severance of England from the Continent by the formation of the Straits of Dover. This event took place,

or at least became effective in forming a barrier to the migration of plants from the Continent, some 4,000 years ago. No trees which had not reached north-western Europe by that time have been able to come across to Britain. For example, the spruces and silver firs which are important elements in western European forests are not native to Britain; so with the larch and the chestnut. The beech is so local in its natural distribution in the south of England that it is quite possible it was brought in by human agency. It was introduced into Scotland from England quite recently. It is likely, therefore, that if contact between England and the Continent had been maintained for a few centuries longer our Grampian forests might have had quite a different aspect—they might have been in reality the dark forests which timorous southern travellers on their borders have described them to be.

As a result of this separation from Europe our native trees are few in number, the only native coniferous tree of any size being the Scots pine.

With these natural processes of change in vegetation man interferes directly, as by felling the forest and ploughing the ground, and indirectly, as by pasturing his destructive flocks and herds, by introducing, preserving, and harbouring game and pests. There can be no doubt, as we shall see, that the area of ground covered by forest has been much reduced, both intentionally and unintentionally, by the shepherd and the gamekeeper, but it is not certain that the effects of these have not been much exaggerated, at least as an explanation of our poverty of forest at the present time.

From these notes it will be apparent that the history of forests is bound up with the history of the land surface, of the climate, and of the human population of the region and of its surroundings.

Of this history most has taken place before historic times in the human sense. But even in historic times the written words are scanty and not too dependable, for most of the record was made long after the events took place. Descriptions were made by men who had to

depend on travellers' tales. Although very little has been written about our Highland forests, much has been made by later writers of the little so written. We have written evidence for the last 2,000 years out of a total of some 12,000, for the first reference to the forests of North Britain is contained in Roman writings of a few decades before the present era. Even then the accounts are more than likely to be of the nature of hearsay than carefully ascertained facts.

The interpretation of the written word, too, is at this distance beset by pitfalls, as, for example, the change in meaning of the Latin word *fagus*, meaning chestnut to the Roman, but now used by the botanist to mean beech. Hence arose the controversy as to whether beech is native to England, since the Roman writer said that *fagus* was not. One of the most troublesome of these linguistic pitfalls lies in the word "forest" itself. This originally meant, more or less, the "wide open spaces," without any reference to trees whatever. In the mouths of the Norman hunters it came to mean a regional unit devoted to the chase, again without special reference to woods; indeed, too much woodland, as distinct from open parkland with scattered trees, is a disadvantage in hunting. This forest or chase included within its boundaries not only woodlands and waste but also farms and villages. If any of these were over-abundant it was the duty of the forester to adopt remedial measures. This is what is meant by the conqueror "laying waste" large areas in order to establish forests. The English had turned the woods into farms; the Normans turned many of the farms and villages into waste in which trees had to be protected in order to provide sufficient cover. It is unlikely that this kind of change took place in the Highlands to any considerable extent. But with the feudalisation of the Scottish estates and the spread of English as the official language, the word "forest" was adopted in the same sense. Thus, in the south, the names Ettrick Forest or the Forest of Glenartney do not necessarily indicate woodland of any dense type any more than does the Forest of Harris in which there are (or were until

recently) no trees at all. This distinction between wood and forest is at times clearly marked by Bishop Leslie; writing in the sixteenth century, who speaks regularly of "dense woods and fair forests," with or without terms like "schawes" (shaws=copses) in addition. A forest was a great unit consisting of meadows, heath, shaws, woods, rivers, and mountains. Undoubtedly the terms are not always used consistently, especially by romantic writers such as Boece, who have no hesitation in transposing the terms wood and forest so long as in so doing they perpetuate the classical traditions and glorify their country. On the other hand, John of Fordun, who is a sober narrator of what he saw, says that "along the foot of these mountains (*i.e.*, the Grampians) are vast woods, full of stags and roedeer," etc.—quite a different picture from that of the romantics who made Torwood, Callander, extend as the Caledonian Forest from Stirling to Atholl and Badenoch.

At least the word "forest" cannot be used as an indication of the presence of dense woods over the greater part of such an area. This is recognised by most modern writers on the subject; but, unfortunately, most of these allow their minds to be strongly influenced by the subconscious suggestions implied in the modern use of the term.

A second source of error arising from the use of words as evidence lies in the practice of using place-names as proof of the existence of forest. The Gaelic name Darach (Dara, Darroch, etc.), meaning oak, may be used as an example. One's first reaction to it is that it indicates the presence of oakwood at the place in the name of which it occurs. For example, Craigendarroch (Ballater) obviously means the rocky hill of the oaks or oakwood. There is no apparent reason why this direct interpretation should be at fault. There is at the present time apparently spontaneous (more or less natural) oakwood on the lower slopes of the hill, and the site and soil are such that one is not surprised to find oakwood there; tradition has it that, if anything, the oakwood is now less extensive than it formerly was. Should the wooded land of old have been



similar to what it is at present, the name Craigendarroch (hill of the oakwood) would be quite satisfactory, distinguishing this hill from other rocky hills on which oak is not found.

On the other hand, the name Clashindarroch (near Huntly), meaning the gap of the oaks and apparently referring to the rather narrow glen in which the lodge is now built, cannot be so simply interpreted. There is no direct evidence that oakwood ever occurred there. If oak did grow, the probability is that they were few in number and were as frequent in the neighbouring glens, so that the name would have no distinguishing value. It is traditionally asserted that the hills on the other side of Huntly were covered with oakwood, and in addition to vegetational evidence in support of this tradition we have the fact that oak charcoal has been found well below the surface of the undisturbed soil on one of those hills. Oakwoods were, therefore, very likely quite common at one time in the neighbourhood, but the name Clashindarroch may have been quite as readily applied to the glen because a few oak trees persisted there when they had disappeared from the surroundings as because an oakwood was there. No ruling can be given. Similarly, although it may be true that Glen Derry was the glen of oaks, it cannot be reasonably concluded that an oakwood occurred there and not only one or two ancient oak trees which served to distinguish this glen from the possibly oakless glens of upper Deeside. Stated briefly, then, place-names derived from the names of trees are no evidence of the general occurrence of woods of that tree in the neighbourhood, and may be the reverse.

On the same level is traditional evidence. This usually suffers from want of exactness either as regards area or as regards time. We have met traditions of forest at times and places where none existed—a fact known from contemporary authoritative writing. All this kind of evidence is useful as interesting verification of what may be concluded from more exact investigation, and in special cases may be in itself quite conclusive; for example, the want of Gaelic names for either beech or

lime is fairly conclusive proof that neither is native to the ancient Gaelic-speaking parts of the country.

Apart from such written and traditional evidence on the character of our forests during past centuries, of recent years a scientific method of investigation has been developed, by means of which the story of the past can be built up from the region itself. This is called the science of Pollen Statistics. Just as the history of the development of living creatures on the earth in general has been deduced from the study of fossils embedded in rocks, so the post-glacial history of the vegetation may be found in vegetable matter preserved in post-glacial deposits—in the sand and mud in the floors of lakes and such-like, but especially in peat. Just as coal is a fossil record of earlier vegetation, so is peat a record of the post-glacial history of the vegetation of the ground on which peat occurs. In both instances, however, it is obvious that the record applies only to special conditions, since we find peat only on certain sites, such as hill-tops and wet slopes, on badly drained places near sluggish streams, and in hollows such as silted-up lochs. The plant remains of which peat is formed are not representative of the vegetation as a whole, though they may be useful as indications of what the general vegetation was like.

It is well known that peat tends to preserve any material embedded in it, so that such objects as fallen trees or animal bodies, when once overgrown by peat, are prevented from rotting away for very long periods. It will be readily understood that small grains of dust or the like falling on peat ground tend to be washed down into the surface peat and to be preserved in it so long as the peat-forming herbage continues to grow. Of the dust falling on peat deposits under natural conditions we are here concerned in particular with the pollen grains of trees. Most of our woodland trees are wind-pollinated, that is to say, the pollen is carried from one flower (chiefly flowers of the catkin type) to others by wind. For this hit-and-miss method of fertilisation it is obvious that enormous numbers of pollen grains must be produced, otherwise the chances of dust falling on the female flower

are very slight. Wind-pollinated plants, such as trees and grasses, spread their pollen grains over the whole countryside where they occur, including any peat deposits which may exist in that countryside. As a rule, tree-pollen grains are in themselves resistant to decay, and when embedded in peat they may last for thousands of years with little sign of injury. We have here, then, a means of assessing the nature of the forest vegetation which occurred in the neighbourhood of any peat deposit, and so obtaining a continuous record of the kind of forest found in any region in which peat has been forming. The period covered depends, of course, on the length of time over which peat has been growing, and in most districts peat formation of one kind or another began to take place in early post-glacial times.

If consecutive samples of peat are taken from the bottom to the top of a peat bank and the relative proportions of the various kinds of tree-pollen grains are determined for each sample, then we obtain a record of the forest history of the neighbouring ground. Of course, samples must be taken at very short intervals, since a few inches of peat may represent many years of growth, many years of pollen showers. Naturally the results obtained from this kind of analysis have to be examined with care. For example, many peat mosses contain stumps of trees, and where these are, the pollen will show an abnormally high percentage of their pollen. But with reasonable numbers of these pollen analyses we are enabled to reject such abnormal circumstances.

Unfortunately, the material for this purpose, of which so much is available in Scotland, has not yet been made use of to any noteworthy degree. Only a few records have been made. But a wide field of interesting work is open for those interested in it. Most of the information we do have regarding Scottish forest history is due to the Swedish investigator Erdtman, for it was in Sweden, notably by Professor von Post, that this method of study was developed. Much more is known of the forest history of the south and east of England as a result of the investigations of Dr Godwin of Cambridge and his

collaborators. The following notes have been compiled chiefly from the results obtained by these workers.

Before leaving the general principles upon which forest history can be established it should be mentioned that the dates given for pre-historic times are based on what is known as the Swedish time scale. This is established by Professor De Geer of Stockholm on the study of certain annually deposited clays called Varves, which enable the number of years to be counted from the present time back to a fixed date which is conveniently considered to be the beginning of post-glacial time. Since these clays also contain pollen grains, the year scale can be correlated with the pollen history. For example, the first woodland of post-glacial time, consisting of scrubby birch, developed in Sweden some 10,500 years B.C. But although this time scale is used here, it is certain that our actual dates, in the earlier times at least, are somewhat later than those of the corresponding phase in south Sweden.

For some thousands of years after the maximum southerly extension of the ice sheet the climate naturally remained so extreme that trees could not grow, the vegetation consisting mainly of arctic plants which obtained a footing near the edge of the retreating ice-field. The major features of this vegetation are represented at the present time by the dry tundras of Northern Europe and the wastes of Iceland. In time, small shrubs like the heaths, the dwarf willows, and the dwarf birch, forming vegetation like what is now in this country found chiefly on our hill-tops, spread over this tundra, forming a vanguard for the first real tree—the birch. While this stage developed on the lower and moderate elevations it is most likely that the main Grampian mass remained snow-covered for the greater part of the year, with great glaciers filling the valleys and spreading out into the flatter ground, where, under the influence of their melt-waters, some peat began to form.

The general picture we can form at this stage, in which the climate was becoming relatively warmer, is of quite modern-looking meadows in the south of Britain with

scattered birch trees and even woodlands, which may have approached quite near the swampy marshes of the ice-masses of the mountain region.

About 9000-7000 years B.C. the improvement in the climate was such that real forests of birch developed, in which pine was becoming increasingly abundant on the lower ground, though probably not forming close pine forest. These forests or woodland probably did not reach into the Grampian region, although scrub of birch, willows, and the like might be common enough in the valleys. Of this stage we have not found much record in our Scottish peats, since peat was not forming to any great extent at this time.

From about 7000 years B.C. onward a marked improvement in the climate took place. In all probability the ice mass melted away to a few patches not much greater in size than those which are found at the present time in sheltered corries and north faces. This change was accompanied by a most remarkable change in the vegetation. The open pine and birch woods were invaded by a dense growth of hazel, which in time spread over the whole country beyond the bounds of pine into the Western Isles, where pine trees were not at all abundant, although birch seems to have been plentiful. This remarkable development of hazel scrub took place over the whole of north-western Europe. The reasons for this are not well understood, although various surmises are made. The warm, bright, and dry climate which prevailed is the major ecological reason. The pine and birch did not disappear, in fact it is more likely that they increased in quantity, but as compared with the hazel they were quite subordinate numerically. The period of the great hazel development is called Boreal times and centred round some 5000 years B.C.

In turn oak appeared, and in England became the dominant tree. In Scotland, and especially in the hill country, although oak did not displace pine to the same degree as in England, it seems likely that it was more abundant then than it has been since. Certainly oak spread into the Highland glens and well up the hill

slopes, while pine occupied all the poorer and more exposed sites, spreading over the hills to elevations it does not now reach, while birch and hazel were quite abundant. Close grown pine forests of this period are found below peat up to elevations of 3,000 feet and down to sea-level, in fact to below the present level of the sea. This seems to have been the golden age of forest in Scotland. It is worth noting that all talk as to destruction of forest by men, sheep, or heather-burning, based on the peat-covered forests of this period, is futile, since much has happened since that time to change the forest types and to hinder their regeneration, and with these changes man had most likely nothing to do. The climate has changed and the soil with it. Man with his domestic animals was then and for a long time later of no account as compared with natural factors such as the climate and the wild fauna. Since that time the soil has had much of its substance washed from the surface, and on the hills the rich humus of the hazel woods has been replaced by the sour raw humus of heath and moor plants. The hills may be the same, but the soil and climate are not, hence the presence of Boreal forest stumps in peat is no evidence either that man destroyed the forests or that he can easily replace them if he should try.

No doubt, in favoured places, remnants of these forests of oak and pine persisted, but the evidence of the peat banks themselves and of pollen analysis indicates that never since has forest dominated the Highlands as it did then. About 2000 years B.C. the climate had worsened. Although still warm enough, it was wet and dull. It was probably distinctly cooler than at the best of the Boreal time, but it did not become very cold. This is called the Atlantic period. The pine, like the oak, requires plenty of sunshine, and neither can stand up to long periods of waterlogging and dull weather. With the wet, foggy weather and the accompanying development of marsh and wet meadow they gradually disappeared in front of a newcomer, the alder, which is well suited to these conditions. It is unlikely that the alder formed very great pure forests, but it occupied the moderately wet ground



*April 1931*

ANCIENT SCOTS PINE FOREST—GLEN CANNICH  
Once buried in peat, now laid bare by erosion. About 1,800 feet above sea level.

*R. M. Adam*



LOOKING UP GLEN DERRY

*James Duncan*

From near the footbridge a mile and a half north of Derry Lodge. The scattered remains of the Highland forests along the streams or climbing up the hills in sheltered corners.



which covered most of the country, while pine and oak were confined to drier sites—the pine on the hills and the oak on the richer soils of the foothills and Lowlands. In the south, *i.e.*, in England, both birch and pine were largely displaced by alder, but in the north birch and alder together seem to have formed the bulk of the woodlands. As a result of the change in climate, marsh and peat-forming plants obtained a great advantage, and it was at this period that our great peat mosses began to form more rapidly, cutting off by their growth great areas which formerly had carried forest, and burying the remains of these forests as the peat spread from the wet centres of formation towards the less wet slopes; that is to say, as it spread from wet saddles down the hill-sides or as it filled up the pools and spread over the level ground.

It was at this time, according to Swedish post-glacial geologists, that the Straits of Dover became an effective barrier to the further invasion of trees from the Continent to Britain.

About 500 B.C. a shorter spell of bright and dry weather occurred. The evidence for this is not quite so marked in Scotland as it is in England, but it is likely that the oak and pine may have recovered some lost ground in the Highlands and the elm became more abundant, though perhaps confined as at present to stream ravines and river banks; so with the ash. At this time it seems likely that the kind of tree mixture found on the lower ground in Scotland was not much different from the present day semi-natural woods, while in the Highlands the chief difference would lie in the greater abundance of oak in these sub-Boreal times.

At the time of the Roman invasion and the beginning of the Christian era the weather had again become cooler and wetter. In this sub-Atlantic phase, peat formation, which had slowed down in the drier period, now proceeded more rapidly again; and, apart from the effects of human exploitation, it has continued to the present time, with alternations of greater or lesser activity as minor changes in the climate took place.

With regard to the history of our forests in historic times, much greater accuracy might be expected than is to be obtained from the generalisations of pollen statistics, but we must not expect too much. Natural objects become history only when their presence or absence makes them abnormally troublesome. We have, therefore, little direct information as to the woodlands of the Highlands until they became objects of interest to southern industrialists at the time when their own supplies were becoming inadequate and the Highland resources were becoming accessible. We have, therefore, to depend in general on hints and half-reliable statements until the seventeenth century, although we can arrive at some conclusions from the forest history of the lower lands. It is hoped that these facts may be taken as an excuse for the somewhat rambling nature of what follows.

Pollen statistics show that in broad outline the character of the forest vegetation of Scotland remained fairly static from Atlantic times, say, 2000 B.C., up to 300 years ago. So far it has not been found possible to reach any definite conclusion as to how its distribution has altered during that time, although it is possible that the forests which developed during the warmer period which covers the rise of the Roman Empire may have continued to occupy the greater part of the better ground—the drier Lowlands and the lower Highland valley slopes—well into early historic times. This is in accordance with the Roman statements that England is well provided with woodlands, and gives some appearance of reliability to the notion, derived from Latin writings, that the mountainous region of Scotland carried vast woods.

It is, however, in these pre-medieval times that the destructive influence of man on forests becomes more intense, especially if it be granted that man and a deteriorating climate were both tending towards the same end. In most of his major activities man tends to have a destructive effect on forest. Of these activities, house building and warming, agriculture, including both crop-rearing and stock-grazing, hunting, and warfare

concern us principally. It is not unlikely that the last two, hunting and warfare, have been given an exaggerated importance in relation to the destruction of forests. There is no doubt that prolonged warfare in any region destroyed the forest, since fuel was consumed by these early armies in large quantities, and the only fuel was wood. There is no doubt also that extensive intentional destruction of forests took place at intervals, but such forests, left to nature, would quickly regenerate, especially the hardwood forests of the Borders, to which such destruction seems to have been mainly confined. Tales of intentional felling or burning of forests to prevent their harbouring wolves are not to be taken too seriously as evidence that this was often practised. So the Romans are said to have destroyed the forests in order to destroy the Caledonians, but it is most probable that the Romans confined their systematic clearances to the immediate vicinity of their roads, walls, and camps. And even there a considerable amount of the felling was simply the result of the need for timber for construction and heating. The setting up of palisaded camps and of hutments, the maintenance of these and of roads, and the fuel requirements of garrisons and armies, would denude the immediate neighbourhood of standing forest. But that much heavier destruction than this took place is open to considerable doubt. As to the later invaders—Scots, English, Danes, and Norsemen—the destruction of forests is not so much to the advantage of the invaders, especially of guerilla bands, that it should have been undertaken except in very special circumstances. The labour involved in destroying virgin forest was at that time too great to admit of its wanton practice. This we can estimate from the authentic examples of deforestation which are preserved. The Norman invasion was too short and sharp to have had any effect on the woodlands in general, and the consolidation of the feudal system over England and Scotland is more likely to have had a beneficial effect on woodland than otherwise, as we have already noted. No doubt large areas of forest were affected in producing the palisaded fortalices and houses which preceded the

stone and lime castles more popularly associated with the feudal lords. At a later stage the Borders are stated to have been denuded of timber during Border forays, but contemporary evidence of this is not very satisfying. Professor Ritchie in his book, "Animal Life in Scotland," from which so much may be learnt on this subject, refers (p. 317) to the account that in John of Gaunt's invasion in 1380 "it was possible to hear the sound of 80,000 axes felling the timber of the woods." But this stands out as an exception—an exception to which the traditional belief may be due.

The unreliability of such accounts, which are obviously intended to pander to the desire to magnify men or events, is well illustrated from the following pages of the same book. Here Boece is quoted as saying that Fife is bare of woods because they were destroyed to get rid of thieves, and at the same time, that the building of the ship, "the Great Michael," wasted all the woods of Fife except Falkland Wood. Both cannot be true; both are most probably actually untrue, or at least exaggerations. The same sort of exaggeration underlies statements regarding the burning of forest in the Highlands in order to get rid of wolves and thieves.

The utter destruction of forest by man in his more peaceful activities is much more widespread than what is accomplished during warfare or feuds. In the early stages of civilisation the chief necessities are dwellings, fuel, food, and clothing. Each of these tends to consume timber or to prevent regeneration of forest. There is reasonable enough evidence to show that considerable amounts of timber were used for house-building from very early times, so that even in early historic times timber had to be imported for building purposes, both in England and in Scotland. In its general facts the description of Scotland by John of Fordun in the fourteenth century is quite applicable to the country at the present time, everything considered. He describes the divide between the sources of the Clyde and Forth as some twenty miles of land "with groves, brushwood, and marshes." "*Along the foot* (our italics) of these mountains

(the Grampians) are vast woods full of stags, roedeer, and other wild animals of various kinds; and these forests sometimes afford a strong and safe protection to the cattle of the inhabitants." Contrast is drawn between the fertile lower lands and the uplands and lands along the Highlands which are less productive except for oats and barley. Of the Highlands, "the country there is very hideous, interspersed with moors and marshy fields, muddy and dirty; it is, however, full of pasturage grass for cattle, and comely with verdure in the glens along the water-courses. This region abounds in wool-bearing sheep and in horses," etc. These extracts show that by the fourteenth century the general appearance of the country—not only of the Lowlands but also of the Highlands—was not much different from what it now is. But not much later in the fertile Lowlands there is a timber famine, and visitors are shocked by the total absence of trees. That is to say, woods are less abundant than at the present time. We are not on such certain ground as regards the Highlands, but it is not improbable that at least in the Highland border much of the forest had been destroyed. This destruction simply takes the form of replacement of forest by arable fields on the more fertile lower ground, and by patches for oats and barley in the cleared stretches of heather and grass pasture for sheep and cattle in the uplands and Highland valleys. It has to be recollected, too, that goats were abundant in the Highland pastures, and no animal is so destructive in the forest as is the goat. There seems to be good general evidence that cultivation was never brought to any great perfection in the Highlands, but the extent to which it was carried on is a question which still requires more investigation than has been given to it.

Early agriculture in naturally poor soils like those of the Highlands was almost certainly of the shifting type, *i.e.*, the ground was used until exhausted and then fresh ground was opened up somewhere else. Where this sort of cultivation is accompanied by grazing, the complete destruction of forest is certain. It should also be remembered that, to the early cultivator, one of the

greatest difficulties, if not the greatest, was that of drainage. For this reason what is often the most fertile ground, the plains and valleys, cannot be cultivated. As we have noted, the bulk of the better woodland occurred in the Highlands on well-drained ground, *i.e.*, on the lower hill-sides and sloping ground of the foothills; the wet valley bottoms, with their thickets and "shawes" of oak, alder, and willows, were only fit for "pasturages," even when the scrub was removed. One has only to examine the sites of primitive agriculture in Lewis and the western crofting regions to realise how, in a wet climate, even steep slopes are preferable to wet flatter ground, and how much pain may have been taken to make use of such well-drained sites. In the Highlands in general, too, it is remarkable how often, in quite unexpected places, sites of older cultivated ground are now found covered with long-established vegetation. So that it is possible that the extent of cultivated land on sloping ground was much greater than it now is. The greater development of agriculture in recent centuries was made possible by methods of drainage which made available large areas of waterlogged meadow and peat-skinned land, while at the same time the earlier "lazy-bed" crofts became economically unworkable.

It is necessary, too, to have an adequate idea as to the condition with regard to grazing animals in earlier times. By the Middle Ages at least, and probably long before that time, flocks and herds of sheep, goats, cattle, and horses had reached very considerable numbers. By the fourteenth century the interest in the chase was dying down in favour of those more sophisticated pleasures for which cash was required. The royal forests, therefore, were given up or were transformed into grazings which provided this necessary money.

While we can only say that it is very probable that Scotland, including the Highlands, has from prehistoric times carried very considerable herds of sheep, cattle, and goats, it is on the other hand quite certain that by early historic times domestic animals were quite numerous. In the early Middle Ages foreign visitors remark on the



*September 1940*

OAK-BIRCH FOREST—LOOKING TOWARDS BEN VENUE  
A remnant of the old Caledonian Forest, typical of the more Southerly Highlands.

*R. M. Adam*

numbers of sheep. By the fourteenth century, in Tweeddale and the neighbourhood, there were many thousands of sheep, including flocks up to 10,000. The king himself had 10,000 in Ettrick Forest. It is reasonable to believe that a similar state of affairs existed in the Highlands, which had such fine "pasturages." The ancient Caledonians were noted as being flesh and milk eaters in contradistinction to the more vegetarian Lowlanders. At early times a trade was established between the wool and hide producing Highlands and the Lowland cereal producers.

In short, then, it may be stated that while in the Highlands the complete destruction of forest and its replacement by arable farms never reached any considerable extent, yet from very early times the pressure of grazing on the forest has been quite strong, resulting in the more gradual replacement of woods by open pasture. Since this pressure was contributed to by goats as well as by sheep, cattle, and horses, it has been completely effective in preventing the regeneration of forest on any ground once laid bare. On the other hand, limited areas of open woodland were doubtless conserved for wintering; and these, along with more extensive woodlands in the less accessible and unpopulated districts, were all that remained of the ancient Caledonian Forest, even in the fourteenth century. Since then this process has gone still further as a result of similar causes, but most likely only to a relatively slight degree. In the last three centuries the most important single factor in the destruction of forest in the Highlands seems to have been the extension from England of the iron smelting industry. From early times the necessity of using wood (or charcoal) for iron manufacture had been a burden on English woodlands. In Scotland this was apparently not an important industry until the beginning of the seventeenth century. Then, owing to the scarcity of timber in England, and following "the present general obedience in those parts (the Highlands)," Sassenach iron smelters started operations in the apparently temporarily subdued Highlands. In spite of laws aiming at the prevention



of this industry, the invasion continued; until, after the '15 Rebellion, some five large blast furnaces were consuming acres of woodland from the Firth of Clyde to the Spey. At least, in the Western Highlands only the oak-woods have partly recovered from this destruction; the pine woods affected have almost completely disappeared. But in the East and Central Highlands partial recovery has taken place. In addition to the blast furnaces, ship-building also consumed large quantities of timber. But in districts where conditions were suitable for the pine it recovered. For example, Glenmore Forest was felled round the end of the eighteenth century, but by the end of the nineteenth century it was again fit for felling, and was felled during the last war. In fact, the felling of forest does not necessarily mean its destruction unless soil and climatic conditions have become less favourable, or unless regeneration is prevented by intensive grazing by flocks or by ground game, among which the rabbit must now be included as the chief offender.

At the same time as this destruction of timber was proceeding in the Highlands, the reverse process of rebuilding new woodlands and forests was taking place over the country as a whole. This was the result of two quite distinct trends. In the first place the country laird was becoming less and less of the feudal patriarch and more and more of the modern landlord. In the old days the "big hoose" was as often as not the geographical as well as the social centre of the community. The nakedness of the old Scottish mansion was almost a byword among strangers. With time, however, the appreciation of the æsthetic value, the shelter and the privacy obtained by surrounding their houses with trees and woodland, resulted in the replacement of the drieck and bare treeless Lowlands of the Middle Ages with a land to which Bishop Leslie's description may well be applied—covered with "grene woodis, schawis, and forrest fair" as well as with cornfields and pasture. Similar improvements took place in the lower valleys of the Highlands, though perhaps with less success on the whole. In the second place, the commercial value of timber began to be more

clearly realised, and from the seventeenth century onward greater and greater areas of woodland were planted. Many of the eastern and southern Highland glens owe their forests to this surge of interest in woodland. The trees planted and the character of the woods are often different from the natural woodlands which grew there in the past; and earlier interlopers like the larch, spruce, and beech, which we now accept as almost native, as well as the later North American conifers, though they have not on the whole driven out our own Scots pine, have at least almost entirely replaced the remnants of natural oak forest left by the Middle Ages along the Highland border.

In conclusion, we may sum up by stating our opinion that, during the present climatic epoch, which has lasted (with one minor period of greater warmth and lower rainfall) for some 4,000 years, there has been little change in the character of our woodlands, and in the Highlands not so very much change in the area these woodlands have covered. Certainly woods were temporarily destroyed, but, on the whole, recovery seems to have taken place, except that gradually the increase in the grazing population narrowed down regeneration; and a similar result followed the long-continued persistence of a moist and dull climate, especially in the west and on the upper hill slopes. In most parts where forest is now absent it has been so for very long periods, and from the results of pollen statistics it is most likely that forest is now as abundant as it has been since early historic times.

## **SOME VARIATIONS AND DISCOVERIES ON LOCHNAGAR.**

**By J. H. B. Bell.**

THE following rock climbs were done in excellent weather at the end of July 1941 by Miss N. Forsyth (L.S.C.C.) and the Editor. In general the novelty is limited to a section of the route, and the result has been to straighten out or make the previously known route more direct. In several cases a piton has been used, but the second has succeeded in removing such an artificial aid or safeguard except on one severe pitch in the direct ascent of Tough Brown Ridge from the corner at the foot of Raeburn's Gully. This was altogether a severe ascent of 250 feet or so. The Labyrinth on Creag an Dubh Loch is entirely new.

Both members of the party agree in their respect and enthusiasm for the rock-climbing possibilities of Lochnagar. The most fascinating problem which remains unsolved is a more or less direct ascent of Black Spout Pinnacle from near the foot of Black Spout. This may be impossible or involve far too many artificial aids. The most fascinating route so far achieved is undoubtedly Eagle Buttress, which is now nearly direct, except for a 50-foot wall in the lower half which looks utterly impossible. For a great part of the way the route lies on a narrow arête, a knife-edge in parts, and the name should certainly be altered to Eagle Ridge. The writer of these notes has no hesitation in classing it amongst the few most attractive Scottish ridge ascents for continuous difficulty, soundness of rock, airy exposure, and general symmetry of architecture. He is inclined to assert that it is superior to anything of its kind on Ben Nevis.

Newcomers to Lochnagar cliffs should realise that dryness of rock is essential on these difficult routes. The granite of Lochnagar is a fertile soil for green lichens, mosses, crowberries, and other plants: even a dense mist can make a deal of difference to adhesion on the steep slabs, where it is occasionally necessary to climb in stocking soles.

## Errata and Note.

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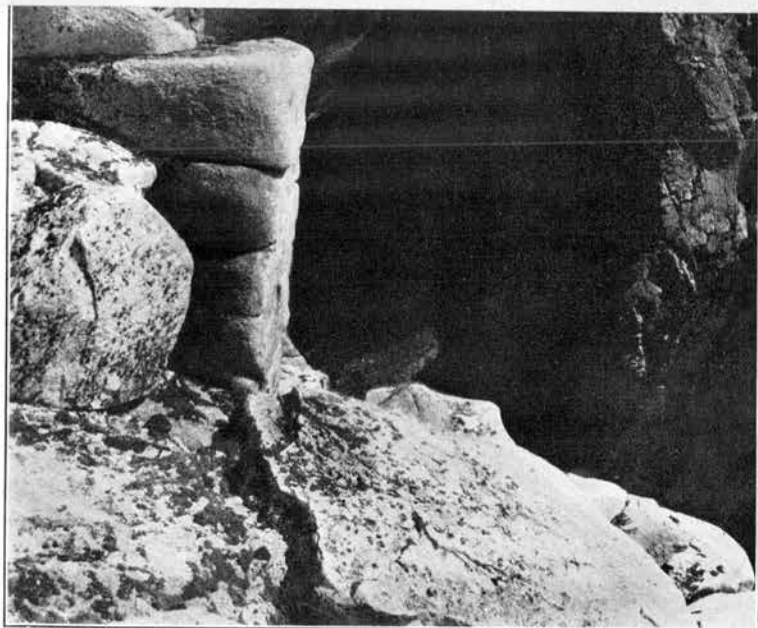
*Illustration, facing page 12.*—The title should be

SGORR DHONUILL FROM NORTH BALLACHULISH

and *not* Sgorr Dhearg as stated.

*Page 352, end of Mr Robertson's Article.*—An explanatory *Note* with reference to this article appears in Vol. 23, p. 51.

*Page 151, line 8.*—For W. L. Wood read W. L. Woods.



THE CLIFFS OF LOCHNAGAR

Henry C. Dugan

From the top of Black Spout looking across to the Cuidhe Crom. The two rock buttresses on the right converge upwards to the Black Spout Pinnacle. The sky-line above this is at the head of Central and Shadow Buttresses. Eagle Buttress and Tough Brown Ridge are concealed by the mass of Black Spout Pinnacle.

### **Shadow Buttress A.**

This was ascended direct from the lower part of Shadow Couloir. One keeps fairly close to the edge above Shadow Chimney. Then the spiral green terrace joins in from the left and the further ascent is detailed in the new "Guide to the Cairngorms." There is an interesting 15-foot pitch at the junction of the routes. The whole ascent is pleasing, rapid, and moderate. It took us ninety minutes.

### **Shadow Buttress B.**

This was ascended from near the lowest rocks, to the right of Shadow Couloir and below the entrance to Douglas Gully. The start is up long, parallel slab ribs with a deal of gardening. Thus one continues to a large, inclined grassy terrace about 130 feet up. It is all pretty difficult, with few holds or belays. Then 50 feet up to the left to a wonderful niche with a flake belay. Above this place, The Pulpit, the rock wall becomes very steep. One steps to the right and then left up a groove, then a short traverse to right and 15 feet straight up to the two Pinnacles. It seems that this is the only way, so the ensuing crux has to be negotiated. It is a vertical wall with an upper ledge which can just be touched when standing on the left Pinnacle. It is a flat ledge with a big flake at the left side. It seems possible to proceed from there. A piton had to be used, as the wall had no positive holds. It is a severe movement to attain this ledge, and a difficult traverse to the left over the flake. The flake can be used with care. Beyond the flake one can ascend on secure holds to an excellent belay, which is 40 feet above the Pinnacle. An easy 10 feet above is a huge cairn on the established route. We took two and three-quarter hours to the cairn and twenty-five minutes thence to the top of the Buttress.

### **Eagle Buttress.**

An account of an improved route on this splendid ridge appeared in the November 1940 issue (Vol. 22, p. 253), an account of an excellent climb in rainy conditions by Messrs Scroggie and Ferguson of Dundee. As we had perfect conditions and were able to straighten the upper part of this route, and as we had the benefit of the description given by our predecessors, we make no apology for giving another, perhaps more detailed, account of this best of all routes on Lochnagar rock.

The start is the same as for the original route of June 1936, from a few yards up Douglas Gully by a series of fissures and mantelshelves, followed by lichenized slabs to the ridge crest about 100 feet up; difficult.

The crest is crossed, and a narrow oblique chimney followed on the other side. Then comes an easy, short section on grass and blocks. The wall on the true crest is composed of vertical slabs with narrow grooves, over 50 feet high. It looks impossible. The conspicuous cairn erected in 1940 by the Dundee men is on the crest above this, and there is a choice of steep, difficult, discontinuous slab ribs to reach this. We found a loose piton below one of these ribs.

Beyond the cairn there is a narrow ridge-way rather like the knife-edge on Scawfell Pinnacle. Soon the ridge sweeps up to the vertical and a severe pitch follows a good stance and belay. Here was a fixed piton which we could not extract. It is a short, severe ascent to a holdless groove. In dry conditions we did not use the piton. From the groove the severity continues up a steep rib, round to the left and into a secure niche about 50 feet above the good stance.

An easy section follows and a short narrow ridge. The route continues just on the right of the crest below a wall with a thin crack for handhold. It ends at a corner, where one must climb a nearly vertical crack to regain the crest. It seems likely that the Dundee men traversed at a lower level short of this and only regained the crest at the summit.

The most difficult pitch follows, as it is necessary to climb a 6-foot vertical wall in order to swarm up into an upper groove on the left. This is unavoidable. One stands on a short knife-edge; the leader used stocking soles and drove a piton into the wall. There is little foothold, so the piton served as such while the left hand grabbed a spike edge for the swarm up to the scoop. Another knife-edge follows this pitch and a belay is soon found. The second was able to retrieve the piton before ascending this pitch, steadied by the rope.

Another little vertical section follows shortly, where one ascends a wall on the right to a mantelshelf. There follows another overhang for which boots were again removed. A coping slab protrudes above, and the only passage of the difficulty is by a most strenuous pull up to the left, grasping the far edge of an inclined slab.

More holdless slabs follow at a more moderate inclination, but difficult owing to their smoothness and the scarcity of cracks. It is pure friction work. The final section is easy; more steep, smooth slabs ascending steeply to the right, finishing close to the top of Eagle Buttress. It is hoped that this description will give a just impression of the continuous difficulty and excellence of the climb.

### **Tough Brown Ridge (direct start from foot of Raeburn's Gully).**

This 250-foot ascent, which took us over three hours, was the hardest of our Lochnagar climbs. A reference to a new descent of Tough Brown Ridge appears in the

*Journal*, Vol. 22, p. 149. On that occasion W. H. Murray and I intended a complete direct descent but were compelled to desist above the final precipitous part. We were able to continue by a steep, direct descent into Raeburn's Gully, reaching the gully floor about 150 feet above the lowest rocks of Tough Brown Ridge. This steep descent was over 100 feet, but furnished with good holds and not very difficult. In July 1941 we left our rucksacks below and used this descent to regain them. We did not continue up the easy upper part of Tough Brown Ridge.

We started just inside the corner of the scree shoot of Raeburn's Gully, where we left a cairn. A mantelshelf leads to a difficult corner before a long vegetatious groove, sloping steeply up to the left. At the top of this was a short traverse right and an ascent of some grass-covered blocks to a small stance. A severe pitch followed in order to attain a grassy terrace 30 or 40 feet above. The last 15 feet are severe and holdless. A piton was used, and, as there was a fine belay on the terrace, the second was able to remove the piton and come up by a delicate traverse further to the left with no steadying holds. The 60-foot crux pitch comes almost immediately, above this terrace and a little to the right. One climbs a block and is then faced with exceedingly steep, smooth slabs in three ill-defined steps. The difficulty increases as one mounts. After the second step one is standing in a smooth, shallow scoop and all handholds have vanished. The leader here discarded boots. On the right was an edge above a vertical wall. It was necessary to lean across this and drive a piton into a crack in the wall. A stone was used for this purpose. Even in stockings the balance was most delicate and the friction doubtful. The problem is to stand on the piton and reach up to a rounded flat ledge in order to swarm up on to it. There is a good pulling-edge beyond, but it is a very severe pitch. One is not yet out of the wood, as there is over 20 feet of very difficult climbing, somewhat complicated with blaeberry and crowberry plants, before one reaches an upper terrace with a good belay. The second was able to negotiate this pitch with two pairs of boots as a waist encumbrance. It was an excellent performance. Another 10 feet of easy climbing and an easy traverse to the right took us to the top of the descent into Raeburn's Gully.

It is suggested by Mr W. A. Ewen that the name Tough Brown Ridge be now applied to this route and the ridge above it, and that the pioneer ascent of 1896 be called the Tough Brown Traverse Route.

### **Black Spout Pinnacle (from the Left Branch).**

Our researches here were not very fruitful, and there was a dense, wet mist. There was no feasible start below the entrance of the Left

Branch, but a little higher we moved to the left, attracted by a narrow chimney between an expanse of smooth, steep slab on the left and a vertical wall on the right. It is nearly 100 feet long, and has an awkward entry from below and a narrow difficult section more than half-way up. At the top one is on a little ridge projecting outwards from the upper, vertical cliff. I prospected beyond, along the face and downwards, hoping to turn a corner to the right and so effect an ascent, but the exposure was severe and the project abandoned. Later on, the situation was again viewed from above the vertical wall but unhelpfully.

The next attempt was made just above the short pitch in the Left Branch. The ascent goes up to the left and easily for quite a way, but not on good rock. A slight descending traverse to the left leads to the bottom of a long, vegetatious, slabby gully which we ascended very carefully, as the dank mist had loosened the vegetation. The gully is closed in by overhangs at the top, but we found a difficult way out on the cliff on our right, on small holds requiring careful testing. Then steep and moderate rocks led us to the ridge crest close to the cairn on the summit of the Black Spout Pinnacle.

### **The Gargoyle (West Buttress).**

The "Guide Book" route is taken so far as the first difficult pitch in Gargoyle Chimney above the easy oblique terrace across the cliff face. This seems to be the second Cave pitch described in the "Guide." Our ascent went up the right wall of this cave and continued straight up to a fine stance. Then a steep, narrow chimney with an exit on the right followed by a detached block on the left, over a strid to a big slab. Then an easy section to below the final rocks below the Gargoyle, which looked more like a Sphinx. The climbing hereabouts is on steep, clean rock with rounded edges. The best finishing route is by an awkward traverse to the left and up a steep groove beside the Gargoyle to the top. On this upper section there is a grand, furrowed, vertical wall on the left and a ferocious chimney which cleaves it. The whole upper part of the climb is full of interest.

### **Creag an Dubh Loch—The Labyrinth.**

The impressive front of nearly three-quarters of a mile of 700-foot-high granite crags above the southern shores of the Dubh Loch in the neighbourhood of Loch-nagar has been most unjustifiably neglected by climbers. The cliffs have a most intimidating appearance and are rather inaccessible. The known routes, up to date, are



the easy central gully, the difficult south-east gully, (recently) the north-west gully, and also the ridge to the left of the south-east gully, which is fairly easy and direct. The author's party made a reconnaissance scramble on the broken face to the right of the north-west gully, but the problem of finding a definite climb of a face-like character of the full height of the cliff seemed rather hopeless of solution, as viewed from the path on the opposite side of the Loch. Nevertheless, the stalker at Spittal of Glen Muick told us that some climbers had praised the rock-climbing possibilities there and rated the quality of the rock as much more sound than that of the Lochnagar cliffs.

So on 27th July 1941, a perfect day of sunshine and dry rocks, Miss N. Forsyth (L.S.C.C.) and the writer walked to the Dubh Loch and discussed matters. There was only an unfounded hope that something would be discovered, nothing more. The first glint of faith I owe to my partner, who thought there was some sort of a break in the cliff wall just short of the big expanse of lower slabs, beyond which was the scree shoot emanating from Central Gully. The intuition proved brilliantly right, and the result was a splendid rock-climb of continuous difficulty, which, with no combined halts at all, as we were working against time, kept us at grips with the rocks for three and a half hours of steady exertion. The rock proved to be excellent, the rock scenery magnificent with gradually extending vistas over Dubh Loch and Loch Muick, and the issue was in doubt almost to the end. It was not a face climb, properly speaking, as we were led by a tortuous route through an inner amphitheatre of the crags; but the predominant character of the climbing was similar to that of a face climb. As on all granite climbs, rounded ledges with a carpet of vegetation were encountered occasionally and served to enhance the difficulties, but generally we climbed on clean rock. It is hoped that the title is not inappropriate, and that others will repeat and perhaps improve this excellent route. There are one or two severe pitches, and great care is necessary there. The description given is

as brief as will suffice to mark the essential features and no more.

The start is like the lower funnel of a watercourse, with clean rock surfaces and straightforward climbing. A severe pitch of about 50 feet is soon encountered, where boots had to be removed and progress made in stockings on smooth, steep ledges with only a few press-holds for the hands. There was a good belay above.

An easy section succeeded this, as the line of our trough bent to the left into a huge amphitheatre of the mountain. On the left was a formidable, steep slabby wall; on the right a cliff. The gully now turned right and ended up against a vertical cliff.

The next hard pitch was an exit up the slabs on the left, close to this cliff, making use of a long, discontinuous crack at the junction. This was a very awkward 50-foot pitch, very strenuous, as there were only few and unsatisfying toe-scrapes on the slab. The variable crack was used for the right arm and there was much wedging, often against lush vegetation. A bad bulge had to be passed and the last bit was worst. A good stance and belay existed above.

An easier section followed. The walls to right and left seemed unclimbable, but a sort of broken arête rose steeply in front. High on our right was a rowan tree. The broken arête was really a minor projection out of a face. The rock was of grand quality, exceedingly steep and with good holds. After we were up we could see another sort of ridge rising towards the skyline on our right. A short, severe pitch with an awkward mantelshelf intervened. One jammed a fist in a crack and pulled up on to a smooth slab.

Soon afterwards we took to a steep, open chimney which later became impossible and caused us to cross awkwardly to the right to the base of our final, steep, and very difficult arête. A broken vertical slab pitch of about 40 to 50 feet came next. This was the most severe of the climb, of typical rounded granite with no positive holds, and all of the ledges masked with crowberry and heather. An unstable block in a critical niche added to the difficulties, but there was an excellent belay above.

The final section was just difficult, and we emerged on the plateau quite close to the main top of Creag an Dubh Loch. This brief description, which appears to emphasise some of the less orthodox and more unpleasant features, entirely fails to do justice to the general excellence and exhilaration of the climbing.

### In Memoriam.

GILBERT THOMSON.

1859-1941.

THE death of Gilbert Thomson awakens many memories connected with the early history of the Club; and my knowledge of him concerns mostly that period. There are few living now who can recall the interest he took and the practical help he gave in the early proceedings of the Club's formation. These are all fully recorded in the early numbers of the Club's *Journal*. But it is only just to his memory that the more recently elected members of the Club should know something of the active and helpful part he played in its original formation. Unknown to Thomson at the time was the writer of a letter (Naismith) which appeared in the *Glasgow Herald* more than fifty years ago. To this letter Thomson replied, sympathising with the sentiments therein expressed. The practical outcome of these two letters led to a public meeting being called to consider the formation of a Club on the lines suggested. The initial outcome of that meeting was the formation of a Provisional Committee to frame a Constitution and consider qualifications for membership. Thomson became a member of the Committee by reason of his appointment as Hon. Secretary. He, in addition, rendered exceptional service by giving a room in his office in Bath Street, Glasgow, for meetings of the Committee. For these services he may well be regarded as one of the original founders of the Club.

While it has been easy for me to recall these earliest associations of Thomson with the Club, and rightly assess his merits connected therewith, I find it difficult to deal with his merits as a climber. That he was a member of the Alpine Club indicates that he possessed high qualifications as a mountaineer, and that he was called on to reply to the toast of the Scottish Mountaineer-

ing Club at its Jubilee banquet sufficiently indicates the high estimation in which he was held by his fellow-members. Thomson was always a cheery companion in any expedition, and as a frequenter of the Club Meets showed his unabated interest in what had come to be one of the most successful results of the Club's activities. What his merits were as a cragsman I cannot say, for age limits the exercise and often excessive strain of modern mountaineering.

The Club has lost a good companion, and one to whom it owes much for its original inception and unabated subsequent success. A. E. MAYLARD.

GILBERT THOMSON was the first member of the Club that I met. Our meeting, which opened a new world for me, took place in his office in December 1890. He proposed me for the Club in 1893. In 1895 we shared our first rock-climbing holiday in Skye, and in 1904 I shared his first visit to the Alps. With the exception of the holiday in Skye we did very little climbing together in Scotland other than at Club Meets. In our week at Sligachan we did the Pinnacle Ridge, Bidein by the Druim nan Ramh, Blaven, and Alasdair. Thomson was a delightful companion, a good and careful climber, and one who could be relied on anywhere.

Naismith was his usual companion, so much so in fact that it was sometimes said that Thomson's reputation as a climber would have been much higher if he had not climbed so much with Naismith. They were strong walkers, as the following two walks will show. In April 1890 they walked from Clachaig over the summits of Bidean and the Buachailles to Kingshouse, where they arrived thirteen hours later in a famished condition. To test whether their "worn-out condition" was due to want of stamina or to want of food they decided that at Easter 1892 they would take the night train to Dalwhinnie and, on arrival there, walk to Inveroran for the Club Meet via the summit of Ben Alder and Rannoch Moor, a distance of 41 miles. This programme was duly carried out. They left Dalwhinnie at 3.30 A.M. and arrived at

Inveroran sixteen and a half hours later in good condition and still going strong. They had taken plenty of food with them (*Journal*, Vol. 2, p. 124; 18, 5).

Thomson attended many of the Club Meets, at which he was always most welcome. Probably the last that he attended was the Easter 1937 Meet at Fort William, but at which he did no serious climbing.

Thomson had five seasons in the Alps, and joined the Alpine Club in 1906. In 1904 we were at Cogne, which we reached from Aosta by way of the summit of Mont Emilius (guideless). From Cogne we had several good climbs (with guide), the best being the Grand Paradis by its steep, snow-and-ice eastern face. In 1905 he was with Solly's party at the Goschener Alp where they made several guideless expeditions. In 1906 he was again with Solly's party, at Saas Fee this time, where the Weissmies was probably his most important climb. In 1908 we were at Praraye, from which we made several guideless ascents. We then went to Courmayeur for a few days and climbed Mont Dolent (with guide), a delightful ascent. In 1913 Nelson and he were at Chamonix and Kandersteg, and from the former climbed the Petits Charmoz and the Aiguille du Tour.

Thomson contributed many excellent articles to the *Journal*, all interesting and some of great merit. Perhaps the most important were the following: "The Arrochar Mountains" (*Journal*, Vol. 1, p. 63), which described his first climbing excursion with Naismith; "Bidean and the Buchailles" (1, 89), which describes the walk mentioned above; "Cir Mhor" (3, 212), giving a good description of the exploration of the Glen Sannox face; "The North-East Ridge of Aonach Beag" (3, 332) describes most graphically the first ascent of the ridge and is, perhaps, Thomson's best article; "Some Mechanics of the Rope and Axe" (10, 17), a technical paper; "The Coming of Age of the S.M.C." (11, 3), a valuable paper written when he was President; "Some Early Informal Meets" (18, 1), of historic interest; "Some Reminiscences" (22, 14), a delightful paper which appeared in the Jubilee

Number and was the last article that Thomson contributed to the *Journal*.

Professionally Thomson was a Civil Engineer in private practice in Glasgow, his special subject being Sanitary Engineering. He lectured on that subject in the Royal Technical College for over twenty years, and was the author of an excellent textbook on house drainage. He became a Member of the Institution of Civil Engineers in 1911 and he also held the M.A. degree.

When passing through Glasgow I always, if time permitted, made a point of calling at Thomson's office to see him. The last time that I did so was in August 1939, and I little thought then that it was the last time that I should ever see him. He was my oldest and one of my most valued friends in the Scottish Mountaineering Club.

J. A. PARKER.

### **DAVID ALEXANDER CLAPPERTON.**

**(Died 6th September 1941.)**

DAVID CLAPPERTON was one of the Club's strongly marked characters: there was nobody just like him. Qualities seldom brought together in one individual were combined in his unique personality. Known to his friends in that now defunct association "The Bunkered Brotherhood" as Brother Prudens, he might well have earned this sobriquet in the S.M.C. Cautious as a climber he certainly was; quixotic, no. Although a man of splendid physique he confessed to "salvationist" leanings and rarely indulged in strenuous rock and ice work.

He joined the Club in 1910, attended many of the Meets, and was seldom absent from the Annual Meeting and Dinner. Mountaineering with him was an inspiring pursuit, and in addition to a long record of expeditions in Scotland he is credited with many visits to the Alps. Stories of his exploits, some of them doubtless apocryphal, are legion; but that concerning the sale at auction of a certain pair of boots at one of the Club Meets remains on record in our *Journal*.

The friend of Presidents, and appreciated by those who knew him best, he was the type of man who did many

a kind action by stealth and would have blushed to find it fame. He will be missed by many senior members of the Club.

S. F. M. CUMMING.

### **WILLIAM FRASER.**

THE Club has lost an old member and a very good friend and helper by the death of William Fraser at the age of seventy three. He joined the S.M.C. away back in 1907 and to the last he kept up his interest in our doings, even when his strength was failing.

He was the Manager of Neill & Co., Printers, in Edinburgh, and it was in this capacity he rendered valued service in the printing and publishing of our "Guide Books." As General Editor of these "Guide Books," I can speak of this with knowledge and with gratefulness. His time and his skilled advice was always at my disposal, and I do not know what I should have done without his ungrudging help in the last fifteen years.

Under his supervision all the existing "Guide Books" were set up and printed. He would spend hours of his valuable time with me in his private room going over all the little details and sundry difficulties that cropped up when a "Guide Book" was in process of coming into being or a new edition was being brought out. I relied on his judgment for many things and he never failed me. I will miss him terribly. He served the Club faithfully and well.

Good-bye, old friend, till we meet again.

A. E. ROBERTSON.

### **ERNEST A. BAKER, M.A., Litt.D.**

**1869-1941.**

ERNEST A. BAKER was a west country man, born in 1869 at Bath, where he received his school education. But his studies did not end at school. In 1892, as an external student, he graduated B.A. of London University, with First Class Honours in English Literature. He followed this, in 1898, by taking his M.A. degree in

Classics, and ten years later earned the rare distinction of Litt.D. (London). By profession a Librarian, he held positions successively at Bath, Derby, Wallasey, and Woolwich. Then for some years he lived in Edinburgh, working as an editor under the late John Buchan (Lord Tweedsmuir). Finally, in 1919, he was appointed the first Director of the newly formed School of Librarianship of London University—a position he filled until his retirement in 1934.

There can be few places of interest in the British Isles that were not well known to Baker. His wide culture and restless energy led him to explore many localities with archæologic, historic, or literary associations, while a strong spirit of adventure drew him to cliff and mountain or to the underground world of the limestone districts. And abroad, as at home, he found relaxation in the mountains, climbing in the Alps of Switzerland, the Sierras of Spain, and the Pyrenees.

Baker had a facile pen and, notwithstanding his professional occupations, made time to write and publish many books on literary and other subjects. His "Guide to the Best Fiction," "Guide to Historical Fiction," and his great work in ten volumes, "History of the English Novel," all give proof of deep critical study and research work, combined with sound, original judgment. Of his writings on outdoor pursuits his two books on caving should first be mentioned. For Baker was an ardent "cave-man" and did much pioneer work in discovering and exploring underground ways. His books, "The Netherworld of the Mendips" (written in conjunction with H. E. Balch) and "Caving," describe much of this exploration and many adventures.

But Scotland was always the lodestone to Baker. His first ascent of any mountain was in 1890, when, as a youth, he ascended Ben Nevis. His last visit to the mountains was at Easter 1939 when he joined the S.M.C. Meet at Tomdoun. In Scotland were the two rock-climbs which to the end held a predominant place in his memory—one was the first direct ascent of Crowberry Ridge in the party led by Mr G. D. Abraham, and the second



was the unrepeatable climb on Ben Nuis, Arran, by the chimney suggested by the late L. J. Oppenheimer but led mostly by Baker himself. The attraction of Scotland is also shown by his books "On Foot in the Highlands" and "The Highlands with Rope and Rucksack." If some readers feel that Baker allows his political opinions too much prominence in these books, all will agree that he gives charming accounts of his journeys in the Highlands, accounts full of interesting historic and literary references.

Wherever Baker lived he always became the centre of a group of kindred spirits, impressing on them all his own untiring, youthful enthusiasm for some form of study or relaxation in the surrounding countryside. And he still strove to keep up these old activities and friendships when, towards the end, overwork and mental strain had undermined his general health. Until the last he never gave in.

J. M. DAVIDSON.

### **LAWRENCE PILKINGTON.**

**1855-1941.**

THE death of Lawrence Pilkington on 7th October 1941 deprives the Club of one of its original members. Although he held no office in it and attended no Meet, so far as I am aware, he, with his brother Charles, helped to bring the Coolin to the notice of climbers. Charles represented the Alpine Club at the 1897 Dinner of the S.M.C.

Charles misled many by saying that Skye was the driest place in the British Isles, but Lawrence knew better when he wrote, "For three weeks it rained more or less every day; when the barometer fell it rained cats and dogs, when it rose a sea mist crept up the hills in the morning, turning into a persistent rain in the afternoon. The quantity of rain which falls on and the rapidity with which it drains off these mountains is indelibly impressed on our memory."

Lawrence first visited Skye in 1880, when he made the first ascent of the Inaccessible Pinnacle with his brother

Charles; a peak that later Mrs Charles Pilkington, who died in November 1941, was the first lady to ascend.

Lawrence was especially interested in the Alps. He started early at the age of seventeen, and in 1878, with his brother Charles and cousin Fred Gardiner, went to the Dauphiné and began climbing without guides, where they made many ascents, including Les Écrins. In 1879 they had their great year, when they climbed the Meije, which feat put the hallmark on guideless climbing as far as the Alpine Club was concerned. He was always a keen walker and a great goer, and with Matthew Barnes completed an early record fell walk in the Lakes in 1883, when they covered 60 miles in twenty-four and a half hours.

In 1884 he was crushed by a rock in Piers Ghyll and lay for six weeks at Wastwater recovering, and so ended his days of serious climbing, but his great love for the mountains never diminished.

Lawrence Pilkington had an excellent brain for business and was extremely versatile, with wide interests. Besides being no mean performer on both piano and organ, he was also the author of two novels and five books of poems. He was a brilliant talker, particularly enjoying any conversation that offered the spice of an argument. Above all, he was a most lovable person and one whose friendship and kindness was felt by many.

DENIS F. PILKINGTON.

### **MRS MACRAE OF GLENBRITTLE.**

ALL Scottish mountaineers who have climbed the Cuillin from the comfortable hostelry of Glenbrittle Lodge during recent years will have kindly memories of the warm-hearted hospitality dispensed by Mrs Macrae. We regret to announce her death, which took place in a nursing home in Inverness last December. Whenever there was a climbing accident nothing was left undone to aid the rescue work and to minister to the comfort of the victims. The place of Mrs Macrae will not be easily filled.

**NEW CLIMBS.****No. 1 Buttress ; Sgoran Dubh.**

The following notes on either one or two climbs on the southern half of No. 1 Buttress of Sgoran Dubh by the late H. I. Ogilvy, though somewhat fragmentary, may be of interest to future climbers on this excellent crag.

The first climb is from notes received from Graham Ritchie of the Grampian Club, who partnered Ian Ogilvy on 7th April 1940. The climb was of more than difficult standard, some loose rock was encountered and the final weather conditions were bad. The face is rather complicated, but the top tier, called afterwards the Northern Rampart, is most imposing. Below its southern end, but with intervening grass, is a fine wall with a rib from its south end and another to the north of this up which the climb went.

Ascend right-hand rib for a moderate 70 feet then walk left to the foot of an *arête*, the edge of a wall. Over 100 feet of difficulty follow up this edge. Belays are poor, but the end is secure. A 40-foot crack goes up the face on the left to a good ledge below a sloping slab. There is an escape to the right, but one goes left round an exciting corner and then straight up an open chimney. A broken ridge now continues to the foot of the top tier, called the Northern Rampart, and this was explored at its southern end, where some exciting cracks were avoided owing to the bad weather. The finish was made by the left in an easy gully in the upper corrie to the south of the Buttress. There was a final good 50-foot pitch beyond a definite break in the ridge.

The other brief account is to be found in "Cambridge Mountaineering, 1940," p. 50, where it is stated that the "Central Route and Northern Rampart" were first ascended on 18th August 1940 by H. I. Ogilvy and Miss L. Scott Robson. The first 220 feet are very difficult and on good rock. A severe slab pitch of 70 feet follows, leading to the Northern Rampart, which is

very severe and can be split into two pitches of 50 and 90 feet respectively. Two very difficult pitches then lead to the top.

### **Ben Nevis ; Creag Coire na Ciste ; Central Rib.**

As seen from the foot of Douglas Boulder this crag presents five distinct summit towers. Four of these can be seen from the C.I.C. Hut, but that one next No. 4 Gully is hidden by South Trident Buttress. The North and South Gullies run up to the skyline between the two right-hand towers and the two left-hand towers respectively. The new route begins at the lowest point of the rocks and runs up to the central tower; it is somewhat artificial in its lower section but follows a distinct rib throughout. The first ascent was on 10th July 1941 by Messrs M. W. Erlebach and E. C. Pyatt (both J.M.C.S.) by through leads. The final tower was not led, though both men climbed it. The general standard is just difficult, only the final tower being harder, and of very inferior rock.

Near the foot a steep nose of wonderfully rough rock is surmounted on good holds. The route goes to the right and there soon follows an overhanging right-angled corner. Higher up, two parallel gullies are seen on the left and the climb goes up the ridge on the right of them. Situations are exposed but holds are magnificent. The route finally gains a broad ledge beneath the final tower; from here is an easy exit on the left to the plateau. The final tower is steep and even overhanging in parts. The rock is of bad quality, and the route lies entirely to the left of the two cracks which cleave the Tower, slanting up into a shallow depression, traversing right, then under the overhang, and so to the top.

E. C. PYATT.

### **Glencoe ; Stob Coire nan Lochan ; South Buttress.**

This was climbed on 11th September 1941 by R. L. Plackett (C.U.M.C.), Miss C. M. Curtis (F.R.C.C.), A. Bumstead and G. C. Curtis (C.U.M.C.). The climb is about 400 feet high and is very difficult—severe unless under dry conditions.

Proceed round the foot from South-Central Gully and you find a long, steep crack in a corner which seems to overhang. Steep, smooth slabs flank it. Fifty feet or so beyond this is a prominent undercut nose of rock above one's head. Ten feet to the left of this, just below an obvious deep-cut chimney about 50 feet up, the climb starts at a cairn. To the left of this the buttress is more broken and further routes may be possible.

One climbs a leaf of rock and a groove leading to a platform. Then one goes straight up towards the base of the deep-cut chimney but traverses left before reaching it, continuing on the rocks to the left and reaching a large grass platform below a great wall. This may be climbed, but is very hard and is best avoided by a left traverse, crossing a deep groove and reaching a dirty chimney leading to the top of the wall. (The wall was climbed on a rope from above by Mr Plackett and Miss Curtis.) The foot of this chimney is on a long horizontal traverse, a way out to the left on to easier ground, also attainable from below or above. Above the wall one proceeds upwards over grass to a corner with a crack in the back on the left. Climb this crack until one can traverse left, round into a gully leading to the top of the buttress.

It is not easy to follow this route from the illustration in *Journal*, Vol. 19, p. 313, but the landmarks should suffice, especially if the cairn survives. The long horizontal traverse is nearly half-way up the cliff.

R. L. PLACKETT.

NOTE.—Mr E. A. M. Wedderburn and the leader of Slav Route on Ben Nevis made a route up this cliff in November 1934, but it would appear to have started well to the left of this route and to have involved a good deal of traversing in one or other direction.—ED.

### **Ben Tarsuinn, Arran—No. 2 Chimney.**

The ascent of No. 2 Chimney was made on 23rd July 1941 by a large party consisting of Messrs W. Carr, H. Grant, G. M'Kinley, C. M'Pherson, W. Russel, A. Slack, and Mrs F. Grant. The actual climbing time

was about three hours, although hours had been spent "gardening" on the previous day before any adequate holds were revealed. The crux is in the first 15 feet, and is climbed more on good faith than on good holds. Care should be taken throughout the climb with the numerous chockstones, many being of doubtful security.

The climb started from a grass ledge some 10 feet up on the left. An awkward step was made to a small hold at the foot of a groove. Here it was found necessary to thread a rope sling through a tiny chockstone before the leader could make the next step into the groove. Then followed a delicate movement upwards until a welcome grip could be made on a firm chockstone some 12 feet up the crack. The crack continued until larger chockstones gave something more convincing in the way of hand-grips. Above this a fine stance was found in a cave. The through and outside route led to a larger cave. Another through route and a large grass terrace was reached. The last passage will be difficult for stouter members and will afford infinite amusement to the rest of the party.

Above this the route went up a rib and over a large mossy slab of moderate difficulty. By continuing over some large chockstones the summit was reached.

H. W. GRANT.

### **Route 1—The Indicator Wall, Ben Nevis.**

This wall rises steeply from the easy terrace to the left of Gardyloo Gully. Just before the wall terminates near the Observatory Buttress there is a short terrace about midway up the face, and the route starts directly under it in a groove which leads to a small, deep recess, about 50 yards from the extreme left end of the terrace at the foot. The upper terrace is reached on very sound granite slabs and the route continues to the summit; the finish is beside the S.M.C. Indicator. The ascent was effected by J. F. Scott, J. T. Austin, and W. Moore on 11th July 1941.

A slanting fault was turned above the recess; the route goes obliquely to the left on slabs and a slab rib. From a corner the upper terrace is attained by a traverse to the left into the gully dividing the wall from the Observatory Buttress (compare North-west

Face and Good Friday Routes, *Journal*, Vol. 22, pp. 68 and 134). Between the terrace and the edge of the plateau there are smooth overlapping slabs and the route follows a series of grooves, starting 30 feet from a magnificent tower at the right-hand end of the terrace.

The climb is about 400 feet long, and the standard (in boots) very difficult. The name Indicator Wall has been suggested for the whole face.

J. F. SCOTT.

### **Sgoran Dubh—No. 2 Buttress.**

On 31st August 1940 my sister and I enjoyed an excellent rock climb, in perfect conditions, on the No. 2 Buttress of Sgoran Dubh. We left the Upper Bothy at 11.20 A.M., crossed the stream at the sluices, and moved up to the right, crossing the stream which issues from between Nos. 2 and 3 Buttresses shortly below the rocks. We then climbed obliquely to the right until we struck the foot of a lovely, continuous rock ridge, which rises straight up above a long, thin, sandy, bare runnel or concave slope. This is very conspicuous as seen from the Bothy. I think the Rose Ridge was the next on our right, and the latter in its upper part curves round above the top of our ridge. At any rate this right-hand ridge seemed narrow and well-defined, and very steep at its base. The "Guide Book" description is too vague to decide the point, but on A. E. Robertson's photograph, facing p. 186 of the *Cairngorms Guide*, the Sandy runnel shows up well and continues upwards along the line of the Ridge, the crest of which is brightly illuminated.

Our ridge may be 400 to 450 feet high. It finishes at a grassy col where it is joined by other ridges from the left. The col leads over and down into Fan Corrie. The climbing was well-defined and interesting throughout, with many good, narrow pitches of a difficult standard. The rock was good. It is well worth visiting.

After lunching in the sunshine at the col we traversed along inside Fan Corrie and down a little, crossing a rocky rib and a little stream. A short ascent took us to the lateral precipice of Diamond Buttress. The first 80 feet or more was very steep, even sensational, with small holds but good ones. Then things became easier and we finished by the original pleasant route to the plateau, not far below the top of Sgoran Dubh Mor.

J. H. B. BELL.

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE CLUB.****HIS GRACE, THE DUKE OF ATHOLL, K.T.****Honorary President, 1923-1942.**

IT is with sincere regret that we have to announce the recent death of our Honorary President. The Duke of Atholl has always shown a most kindly and understanding interest in our sport. We remember his great kindness when we held Meets at Blair Atholl, and those of us who attended the 1928 Dinner will recall his genial presence there. We deeply regret the accident which prevented his attendance at our Jubilee functions a few years ago. The Club is much the poorer for the passing of its Honorary President, and Scotland for the loss of one of its distinguished sons. Our sincere and respectful sympathy is extended to the Duchess in her bereavement.

**NEW YEAR MEET, 1942—LUIB.**

THE New Year Meet, 1942, was originally intended to take place at Crianlarich, but this was altered to Tyndrum by the Committee, as there was no accommodation at Crianlarich. In the event, it proved that Tyndrum would not accept the members until New Year's day, and a rather anomalous situation developed. On the principle that where the MacLeod sits there is the head of the table, it must be decided that the Meet was finally located at Luib Hotel, as it was to this refuge that the President, attended by three ex-Presidents, a Vice-President, and an ordinary member betook themselves.

An onslaught was made on Sgiath Chuil on New Year's day, but foul weather compelled a retreat, after lunch, from an altitude of 2,000 feet. On Friday, 2nd January, the assault was resumed with success, and all the party, with the exception of Ling, went on to Meall a' Churain as well. The two following days were execrable, and nothing was done except to entertain a





*January 1942*

NEW YEAR ON STOB GHABHAR

R. G. DONALDSON (J.M.C.S.) and J. J. ST CLAIR

*J. E. MacEwen*

visiting party from Tyndrum on the Saturday. This was a jolly day. On Monday, 5th January, Unna and Poynton Taylor crossed Stobinian and Stob Coire an Lochan to Loch Voil, reached Strathyre, and enjoyed sundry misadventures on their return journey to London.

The personnel of the Meet comprised the President, R. Jeffrey, and Messrs J. S. M. Jack, W. N. Ling, H. MacRobert, Poynton Taylor, and P. J. H. Unna.

### **TYNDRUM CAVE MEET.**

This was attended by Messrs Allan Arthur, K. K. Hunter, R. G. Inglis, J. G. Osborne, J. J. St Clair, and Prof. H. Turnbull (members), and A. C. Arthur, D. G. Turnbull (guests).

Expeditions were as follows :—

- Jan. 1. Osborne to Loch Lyon.
- „ 2. The Arthurs and Turnbells, Osborne and St Clair did Bens Dorain and Dothaidh.
- „ 3. The members went to Luib, enjoyed excellent hospitality, good entertainment and mirth, and an 8-mile walk.
- „ 4. Turnbull, Hunter, St Clair, and M'Ewen did Ben Lui by the Central Gully. Allan Arthur and Inglis went via Choninish and a pass to the Dalmally road, and later on attended church. D. G. Turnbull and R. G. Donaldson did Ben Dubhchraig.
- „ 5. M'Ewen and St Clair ascended Stob Ghabhar.

### **KINGSHOUSE CAVE MEET.**

There were present Messrs J. H. B. Bell, J. E. M'Ewen, and G. Peat (members), and R. G. Donaldson, A. Hendry, and Stewart (J.M.C.S.) guests.

The New Year was well and truly ushered in, but atrocious weather intimidated the company until New Year's Day evening, when the triangle walk was done. On Friday M'Ewen descended Glencoe; Bell and Donaldson climbed Central Buttress, Buachaille Etive, on streaming rocks, direct to left upper corner of Heather Ledge and then by the original easier route. Descent was by Curved Ridge. The others wallowed in the streaming Chasm. They had enough after Pitch 7 and returned saturated. On Saturday Peat walked to Bridge of Orchy, M'Ewen and Donaldson joined the Tyndrum Meet, whereas Hendry and Stewart must have climbed something.

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, 1941.**

The 53rd Annual General Meeting of the Club was held in the Central Hotel, Glasgow, on Saturday, 6th December 1941, at 5 P.M. The President, Mr Robert Jeffrey, was in the chair, eleven members being present. Following the meeting nearly all the members dined together informally.

The Hon. Treasurer's statement was approved, and also the transfer of balances on the Jubilee and Investment Realisation Accounts to the Revenue Account. From the latter £100 was transferred to the Hut Fund, and a further purchase of Defence Bonds was authorised. Messrs Kellock and Cumming agreed to submit a report on the Commutation Fund.

Mr Aikman reported that the membership stood at a figure of 282. There had been seven deaths, the most recent being that of Mr Gilbert Thomson, a founder of the Club, to whom a special tribute was paid. One new member, Capt. J. E. MacEwen, had been elected by the Committee and was welcomed to the Club. A message of good wishes was sent to those members in the Forces.

Dr Bell's Editorial Report was approved, and he stated that paper supply was assured for the two issues of the *Journal* for 1942. Rev. A. E. Robertson reported continued satisfactory sales of "Guide Books." It was decided to bind a further supply of the Ben Nevis and Cairngorms volumes, and also to print another 200 copies of the "Cobbler Guide."

It was reported that the Library and Slide Collection had both been reasonably well utilised. Mr G. R. Donald had kindly presented a number of books. The Club Room had been well used by the J.M.C.S. Mr Harvey reported that the C.I.C. Hut had been well used, although the hut nights had fallen to 225 as compared with 325 in the previous year, most occupants being J.M.C.S. members and other visitors. A supply of coal and oil had been taken to the Hut.

The present Office-Bearers and Committee were re-elected for another year. Difficulty about accommodation arose in connection with the proposed New Year Meet, and members wishing to attend were advised to apply to Tyndrum Hotel. A suggestion was made by Mr Allan Arthur that Clachaig Hotel might be available for an Easter Meet, but no official action was taken.

## NOTES AND EXCURSIONS.

*The Editor will be glad to receive brief notices of any noteworthy expeditions. These are not meant to supersede longer articles, but many members who may not care to undertake the one will have no difficulty in imparting information in the other form.*

### Variations on Route 1—Carn Deag—Ben Nevis.

1. Instead of beginning the climb with the "easy 15-foot pitch," start at the lowest part of the curving buttress, which constitutes the first half of the climb, and go up the steep right-angled edge, finishing by a groove on its right wall. The first few feet are hard. 31st August 1941: R. L. Plackett (C.U.M.C.), W. W. Campbell (J.M.C.S.).

2. Instead of avoiding the "repelling-looking recess" by climbing the right wall of the gully, the recess was climbed more or less directly to the base of the chimney above. 31st August 1941: Miss C. M. Curtis (F.R.C.C.), W. L. Rankin (J.M.C.S.).

R. L. PLACKETT.

### Stuchd an Lochain—Glen Lyon.

Pilot Officer M. B. Nettleton, R.A.F.(V.R.), on leave from active service, was in Glen Lyon on 7th January. Along with Mr M. E. D. Poore he cycled from Bridge of Balgie up the glen to Loch Giorra and ascended by hard snow and ice up the cliffs of the corrie above Lochan na Cat to the summit of Stuchd an Lochain. This corrie, facing north, was most impressive. The most outstanding memory of the day was the evening Alpine glow along the Ben Lawers range as seen across Loch Giorra through the trees near the Lodge.

### The Old Post Road from Poolewe to Kinlochewe.

In the belief that some confusion may arise from a comparison of statements made in my article in the November 1941 issue of the *Journal* (Vol. 22, pp. 328 and 329) with those made by Mr J. A. Parker in an article, "The Old Tracks through the Western Highlands" (*Journal*, Vol. 20, p. 166), I consider it right to offer an explanation on two points.

Mr Osgood Mackenzie in his book, "A Hundred Years in the Highlands," pp. 32 and 33, evidently regarded the track from Letterewe to Kernsary via the Bull Rock and Ardlair, along the north shore of Loch Maree, as the post road, although it is a difficult track to follow in certain parts. Mr Parker in his article, from a close study of General Roy's military map, for which the survey was made between 1747 and 1755, points out that the surveyors considered that the most frequented way to Poolewe took the easier route from Letterewe to Kernsary, across the hill towards the Fionn Loch and under the steep slopes of Beinn Airidh a' Charr. This track is clearly

marked in Roy's map, and no indication is given in it of Osgood Mackenzie's "post road" via Ardlair. The One-inch O.S. Map shows the Fionn Loch route by a dotted line.

*Kinlochewe.*—It appears that the name "Kenlochew" is mentioned on Roy's map.

*Rights of Way.*—An unobserved error has crept into the text of my article on p. 328, line 4. Instead of "fifty" this should read "forty" years, constituting a lapse. A. E. ROBERTSON.

### **Oxford and Cambridge Universities Mountaineering Clubs.**

What is surely a unique coincidence during the present year is that the office of President in each of the above organisations is held by a J.M.C.S. member. We offer our congratulations to Mr G. R. McCarter, President, O.U.M.C., to Mr R. G. Donaldson, President, C.U.M.C., and to all concerned. More especially is this a tribute to the all-round excellence of our Scottish mountains.

J. H. B. BELL.

### **REVIEWS.**

**The Mountain Vision.** By F. S. Smythe. Hodder & Stoughton. 18s. 308 pp. 16 illustrations.

This is a charming and colourful book of philosophic reflections and reminiscences somewhat in the vein of "The Spirit of the Hills." There are elements of mysticism intermingled with stirring passages of adventure and near escapes. The illustrations are excellent and far better, in general, than the one on the front cover. There are several mistakes due to careless proof-reading.

**Over Welsh Hills.** By F. S. Smythe. A. & C. Black, London. 12s. 6d. 101 pp. 51 illustrations.

Mr Smythe continues his happy mountaineering reminiscences, this time in Wales. The text is amply supplemented by the inclusion of numerous photographs.

**Kindred Club Journals.** Acknowledgment is made of the following: *British Ski Year Book*, *Appalachia*, *Sierra Club Bulletin*, *Tararua Trampler*, *Les Alpes*.

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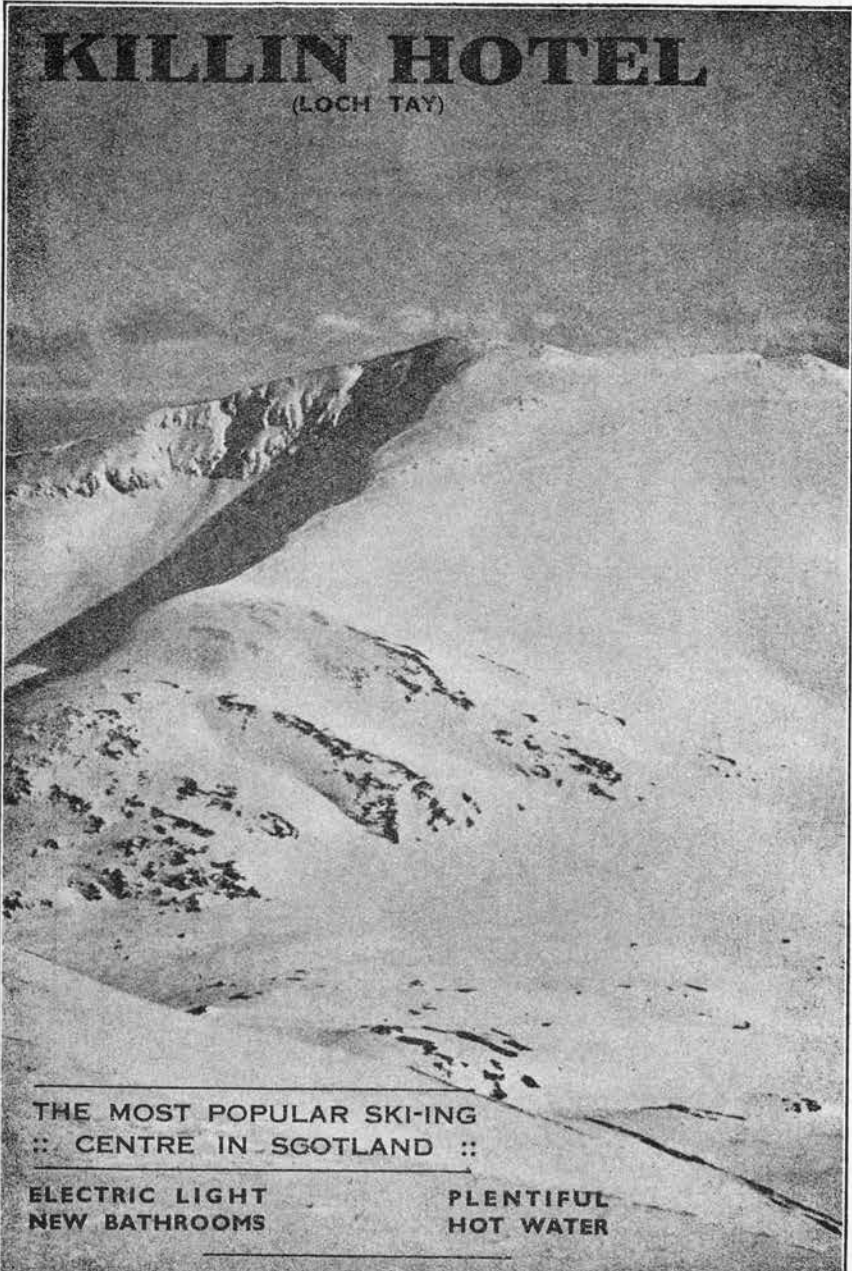
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