

MORAY MOUNTAINEERING CLUB

Established 1931



INTRODUCTION

The Moray Mountaineering Club was established in 1931 with the declared aim 'to encourage mountaineering and serve as a bond of union amongst lovers of the Scottish hills'. Membership is centred on the Elgin and Forres areas but enthusiasts from Keith, Fochabers, Inverness and even Aberdeen regularly attend meets.

Annual club activity ranges from monthly 'bus' and 'weekend' meets, rock climbing and occasional evening and social functions. A nominated committee member manages each activity. The main interest centres on both summer and winter hill walking, but there are a substantial minority of rock-climbers and winter mountaineers. Munro and Corbett 'bagging' are a particular incentive and the club boasts more than twenty 'Munroists' among the hundred and sixty or so members.

A small elected committee manages the club on behalf of the membership, with decisions being ratified at the Annual General Meeting in March each year. There is a small annual membership, the bulk of which funds individual insurance through the Mountaineering Council of Scotland, as well as a monthly newsletter. The club also has its own website.

BUS MEETS

A primary activity of the club is its monthly 'bus' meet. These always take place on the third Sunday of every month when the bus departs, usually westwards, from the Lossie Green car park, Elgin at 7 am routing via Forres and Inverness. This enables a large variety of destinations to be reached for a day's outing; indeed in this we are the envy of many other clubs less favourably placed. To the south, Ben Lawers and Glencoe are the practical limits with Kylesku to the north. Within these boundaries anywhere on the mainland with a road large enough to take a coach can be visited. Kintail and Torridon are perennial favourites. Please note, however, dogs are not permitted on the coach. Maynes (Buckie) currently provide the transport for 'bus' meets.

One distinct advantage of travelling to the hills by coach is that it is not necessary to start and finish at the same point, as is the case with a car. For example, on a Kintail meet you can be deposited at one end of the south Cluanie Ridge and picked up at the other. This is taken to its logical conclusion in a number of traverses organised throughout the year when everyone is dropped on one side of a mountain group and the coach then travels round to pick them at the other, for example, from the Linn of Dee to the Cairngorm chairlift car park. The only disadvantage of this is that once underway, you are committed to finishing the route; there is no turning back.

The 'bus' tends to be treated by regulars as a mobile club-house and as well as renewing friendships, making plans or swapping gossip, it is the source of much good humour. It also becomes the place to sleep after an early start and long day on the hills. Normal practice for people on 'bus' meets is to have a rucksack packed with food and equipment ready for a day on the hills, which goes into the coach boot and is taken out with a minimum of delay at the alighting point. A second bag is taken onto the coach containing a change of clothes, in case you return soaked in rain or sweat, and any other little luxuries you fancy, perhaps some food, a flask of coffee or even beer. You'll also need maps to plan your day and your hill boots if you are not already wearing them. Anything left on the coach will be perfectly secure during your absence.

During the outward journey it is customary for the President to come round the coach making a note of members intended routes. On your first time out, you should let him or her know your level of fitness and experience. If you are inexperienced or are under 18, you will be asked to stay with a nominated person or group but eventually, you will be able to identify others who match your speed and interests. Note that, thank goodness, not everyone elects to do the same route in a long crocodile. Conversation comes naturally whether it is to admire a distant view or battling through rain and mist. You will find that it is a good way of making new friends. It is important not to undertake too much on the day, particularly in poorer weather, not only is it unsafe but you are most likely to delay the departure

(and possibly cause the cancellation of the pub-stop!!) as the intention is to be back at Elgin by 10 pm and often earlier during the winter months. If you enjoy your first outing, during which you will be considered a guest, you may wish to join us a second time. Returning from that trip, the club Membership Secretary will give you a membership application form. Once completed, it will be presented to the committee for approval at their next monthly meeting.

WEEKEND MEETS

For the more adventurous, except in the depths of winter, the club organises 'weekend' meets normally midway between each 'bus' meet. These are generally smaller, more flexible affairs with members sharing cars. They are often planned to coincide with Elgin local holidays and can be at places well beyond the limits for 'bus' meets. A variety of accommodation is used; mountaineering club huts (Glenbrittle, Lagangarbh, or the C.I.C. hut; bothies (Glendessary, Lone or Rum) or camping (Arran, Ardgour or Ben Hope). Whatever the venue, and the effort expended during the day, the evenings tend to be very sociable.

ROCK CLIMBING

Every Wednesday evening throughout the summer, as long as daylight permits, a group of enthusiasts meet to climb. The usual venue is the sea-cliffs near Cummington where there are a fine variety of short routes on sandstone. They are conveniently situated for both Elgin and Forres and, besides being enjoyable for their own sakes, are also excellent training ground for longer routes, for beginners learning the basics, and for Munro 'baggers' with a nervous eye on Skye's Inaccessible Pinnacle, if only to find out what they are letting themselves in for. Informal trips to longer routes are often arranged as well. It has sometimes been possible during the winter months to arrange access to the climbing wall at R.A.F. Lossiemouth so that rock enthusiasts can develop their skills and maintain their fitness in a warm, dry and more pleasant environment.

EQUIPMENT

With experience, men and women quickly form individual preferences and opinions regarding equipment. These notes are therefore for the benefit of beginners. It is easy to be pedantic about the requirements of a newcomer to the hills. For example every experienced mountaineer would agree that a map and compass are essential equipment on the Scottish mountains, but if you are a complete beginner and not even sure how to use them, it might be well worth delaying the purchase until you have been on a bus meet or two and have had the opportunity to get advice from experienced companions. In the meantime, make sure that you stay in the company of someone who has them. Personal equipment however cannot be shared but stout boots, waterproofs, warm clothing and food are essential. In winter, an ice axe must be carried and the club provides spare ones on 'bus' meets should you not have your own. There are plenty of people able to show you how to use one should you be a complete novice. Please remember, it is your own responsibility to be properly equipped and therefore safe.

THE SOCIAL SIDE

Between September and April, once per month, a series of indoor meets is arranged, usually on the Thursday following the 'bus' meet. The venue and programme is announced on a separate syllabus and there is likely to be a small charge to cover expenses for the speaker and the cost of the room. The format is usually an illustrated talk on a subject of interest to mountaineers, but particularly popular each year is the members' slide show when the club's keen photographers show their best slides from the previous year. There are prizes for various categories. There is a BBQ in June and the annual Ceilidh is held in November. It is traditional that after the December 'bus' meet (a short walking day), the coach calls at a pre-planned hotel for a Christmas meal. This is often so popular that in addition to a full coach, several members and guests come by car.

MERCHANDISE

Club badges, in either metal or cloth, as well as coloured T-shirts and sweatshirts bearing the club logo are available from the Merchandise Member. These are very popular, and as we are proud of the club why not show it? There is also a small library of literature for loan (free) covering all aspects of mountaineering and hill walking, and not just in Scotland.