



## Junior Mountaineering Club of Scotland / Edinburgh Section

25 Plewlands Gardens,  
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21 February 2003

Edinburgh JMCS members,

### **NEWSLETTER – FEBRUARY 2003**

Welcome to the February newsletter. You will notice the redesigned logo above. This has been suggested to present a more modern image for the club. What do you think? It is only a proposal so feedback is much appreciated. Let a committee member know your views.

Minutes of the AGM held in November last year are attached. Please note that AGM agreed the proposed committee for 2002/2003 together with the subscription rate of £17.00 for all. Those of you who have not already done so should send subscription cheques to me by 30 April.

In addition to the usual meets reports from this year and last included in this note are a couple of tales of Greenland from David & Mary-Lucy More and Charles Stupart. More to follow on this as well.

This winter seems to have alternated Greenland-like temperatures with sudden thaws producing generally thin climbing conditions and poor snow cover in the hills. This hasn't stopped members getting out and about though and a good number of routes have been climbed. As I write the Ben and Creag Meagaidh are coming into good condition, so who knows what the rest of the winter season will bring.

Those of you looking forward to the sun will see that Patrick Winter has put together an interesting variety of meets for the rest of the year. Details of these are overleaf. Of special note is the whole club JMCS meet on Arran in May. Due to a clash with our Rum meet the Edinburgh section was not represented at the whole club meet in 2002 (held on the Jubilee weekend) so it would be good if this trip was well supported this year.

Enjoy what's left of the winter and I look forward to seeing you on the hill or in the pub soon.

**Neil Cuthbert**  
**Secretary Edinburgh JMCS**

## 2003 Summer Meets

DATE	LOCATION	FURTHER INFORMATION	CONTACT	NOTES
2-4 May (Early Spring Bank Holiday)	<b>Naismith Hut, Elphin, Assynt</b>	<a href="http://www.smc.org.uk/huts/naismith.htm">http://www.smc.org.uk/huts/naismith.htm</a>	Bryan Rynne t. 0131 443 7982	<i>£5 ppn</i> 8 Places available (possibly more)
24-26 May (Late Spring Bank Holiday)	<b>Glen Rose Camp site, Arran</b>		Neil Cuthbert t. 0131 466 1521	Whole Club JMCS Meet
21/22 June	<b>The Smiddy, Dundonnell</b>	<a href="http://www.mountaineering-scotland.org.uk/huts/hutlist2.html#smiddy">http://www.mountaineering-scotland.org.uk/huts/hutlist2.html#smiddy</a>	Patrick Winter t. 0131 440 3183	<i>£4 ppn</i> 10 places available.
12/13 July	<b>Inbhirfhaolain, Glen Etive</b>	<a href="http://www.mountaineering-scotland.org.uk/huts/hutlist1.html#inbhir">http://www.mountaineering-scotland.org.uk/huts/hutlist1.html#inbhir</a>	Patrick W	<i>£3 ppn</i> 6 places available
9/10 August	<b>Camping Meet @ the Shelterstone, Loch Avon, Cairngorms</b>		Patrick W	Free! Unlimited places!
13-15 September	<b>Caer Fran Hut, Llanberis, North Wales</b>	<a href="http://www.merseysidemc.org/documents/hutbooking.htm">http://www.merseysidemc.org/documents/hutbooking.htm</a>	Patrick W	<i>£4 ppn</i> 8 Places available (possibly more)
4/5 October	<b>Salving House, Borrowdale, Lake District</b>		Sally Dipple t. 0131 339 3830	<i>£5 ppn</i> 3 Female Places, 5 Male Places provisionally available

## Munro Society Lecture

This year's Munro Society lecture is being held at Stirling University on Saturday 5th April at the Proudfoot Building.

The subject is on Maps and Munros and is by Sue Harvey of Harvey Maps.

More information can be had at the Munro Society website at [www.munrosociety.org.uk](http://www.munrosociety.org.uk)

## Getting into Gear for Greenland April 2002 –David & Mary-Lucy More

Starting point... you'll not be able to phone out for any thing!

Begin with a blank sheet of paper, much like the Greenland map we had at the scale of 1:250000. Note down even the tiniest of benefits you have in your instant, centrally heated, double-glazed house. Lay out life's essentials that you cannot live without! After filling one small room you'll realise that you can't take a caravan!

Clothes: - Just the same as you'd wear on the Cairngorm plateau on a bad winter day. Remember you may have to linger there for a period of time. Nothing must be lost, dropped or allowed to blow away. Losing a glove could lead to dire consequences – you won't be able to do up your fly! Consider how mother stopped you from losing gloves: buy a length of tape and clips!

Shelter: - A robust tent for two: sufficient space as you will be spending two to three weeks in it. Pick a non-snoring sleeping partner to share, they (and you), will live longer! Floor insulation is more important than a 5-season sleeping bag. You can always sleep in all your clothes or cuddle your partner! First down on the snow is a 4mm karrimat to cover the tents' floor area. Then, on the inside of the tent a 9mm karrimat, plus a 25mm therm-a-rest mat to live on. Total ground insulation of 38mm: near heaven!

Food: - How the hell do you get 14 days' non-perishable food into 2 empty 12-bottle wine boxes? (Each box has a total volume of 0.28m<sup>3</sup>.) With great difficulty! It took a weeks' packing, un-packing, and re packing: 557 items of food, lighters, matches, cloths & toilet roll (flat pack of course!), are enclosed in each, both finally being secured with 10 metres of duck tape! In all we manage 3800 calories each per day!

Equipment: - Minimum of hassle is the major requirement. Check everything's working and service equipment that's got any moving parts. Within the party try and take one spare of as many items you think may fail. Paper clips are very useful for fixing broken zips; wire wool makes a rawlplug for loose screws in bindings!

Stove: - Jet A1 kerosene fuel is good for powering you into the sky. It's burnt in engines that are so well engineered they can burn kerosene that looks like treacle. Most stoves can't burn treacle; but the MSR Dragonfly stove did, it passed with flying colours. All other stoves failed or had severe running problems that required a rebuild every three to four days. No stove = no water!

Reading: - You can never take enough literature; you may be stranded for a week or more!

Toilet: - Ponder, when, where and how you'll go! The wind and snow will be blowing more often than not. A warm still day will be minus 10 degrees centigrade. Consider digging a hole deep enough to sit in up to your shoulders, this allows you to view the vista, and keeps you out of the wind so you'll stay warmer longer. Digging your trench has the advantage of warming you and your system thereby improving efficiency before exposure!

These ideas may help to make your trip more comfortable and successful!

And the ski mountaineering in Greenland?... that's another tale!

## Greenland – a (kind of) green place of sea, ice & rock – Charles Stupart

### Paws for thought

“Look this note says that polar bears are only rarely seen on the east coast of Greenland during the summer” said someone the evening before we flew out from Reykjavik to Greenland.

At work we talk about having issues, sometimes very big issues, however, we never have problems. In the chapter on polar bears in Henning Thing book “Encounters with Wildlife in Greenland” it talks about problems!

### Avoiding Bears Problems

“Take advantage of the fact that humans – like other apes – investigate and explore their surroundings visually, where as polar bears rely heavily on their sense of smell; therefore be alert & look around every now & then”.

The chapter continues that bears require to pick up your scent to detect & locate you, so the best defence against polar bears, and what they may do to you, is to avoid any encounter (sounds like good solid advice).

The book progresses through various scenarios, such as the bear is in camp or a chance close encounter, and just what to do in each (really a step by step decision tree to follow as you view your wrepper approaching):

1. The bear is unaware of you and feeding.
2. The bear is unaware of you, but approaching.
3. The bear is aware of you, but distant.
4. The bear is aware of you and close!
5. The bear is close to you and threatening!!
6. The bear is hunting & you are the prey!!!

If the bear is treating you as potential food & you do not have a gun (we didn't), do not play dead.

Act instead aggressively and defend yourself with whatever means available (Chounard Zero ice axe, Black Diamond ice screws, snow stakes & a Swiss Army knife).

Fight back (they didn't teach me close arms combat in the scouts), it may help to raise your jacket or pack to make you look bigger (these bears are the size of a mini coupe – Mmmh – need to look very big)!

7. The bear charges!!!!

A polar bear charges at high speed, on all four legs. It does not charge on its hind legs.

Many charges are bluffs. Bears often stop or veer to the side at the last moment. However, it may be difficult to know if a charge is a bluff until the very last moment when the bear is very close. Eek!

If you are faced with a charging polar bear, you have only two options:

a) Shoot to kill (double ices screws & and ice axe at midnight)

Or

b) Play dead (well one of you will be soon anyway)

Then someone pointed out that they had read that a polar bear had been encountered high on the N.E flank of Mt Forel (3360m), 80 km from the nearest ice flow, and not too far away from where we were heading.

So polar bears enjoy mountaineering too.

I decided to black box this impressive carnivore as an objective danger, particular to climbing in this region. I justified to myself that as I can't shoot anyway, carrying a gun would only be unnecessary weight – going against the dictum central to alpinism; travel light, move fast – speed is safety.

Should I stay, or should I go now

In recent years in the quest for warm, dry rock, some of the club's members have made a series of trips to Costa Blanca in Spain, Finalie in Italy and this coming year a trip to Sardinia. During the early 90's thoughts of international venues were to much cooler venues. In 1961 there had been a club expedition to the Stauning Alps on the eastern side of Greenland and a number of members were interested in organising something along similar lines.

It was decided to investigate the possibility of a trip to the Auyuittuq National Park area of Baffin Island. Compared to Greenland it provided reasonably easy access to some great mountains. Maps & aerial photographs were purchased. Literature searched and a couple of objectives identified. Letters were written to the local Hudson Bay store enquiring about food & fuel. Local outriggers were contacted about transport up the fjord. Flights were priced and as late as 1995, some freeze-dried food was received from Canada and tested for palatability by a number of us on a trip to Norway.

Things though were placed on the shelf as member's focus went elsewhere. Years passed and then an opportunity came along for me to do a similar kind of trip with some people who had no connection to the club. This trip wasn't to Canada, but to the Karale Glacier in the Schweizerland mountains, just on the Arctic Circle, on the eastern side of Greenland. Once again it was time to do some research. Before going to the club's 2001 AGM and dinner I went to the National Map library at Causeway Side, here in Edinburgh and spent the morning poured over various maps of the region. I returned home with two colour photocopies of 1:250,000 declassified U.S. Army maps of the area. Some books on Greenland arrived as Christmas presents, followed by some more books and pictures just before New Year.

I decided to go.

## Icy Waters

The 25km transfer from the airport at Kulusuk to Tasiilaq took 5 hours in an open boat. Already I was enjoying the company of those on the trip. Every so often the small boat had to stop to spy the way ahead through narrow gaps in the sea ice. Suddenly a way forward would be found & we would once again be on our way towards the settlement. Tasiilaq, (until recently called Ammassalik) with its brightly painted buildings is one of only two settlements on the vast eastern coast of Greenland, the other at Scoresby Sound. These two settlements provide a main hub for the surrounding smaller villages.

Late afternoon we arrived. We had an hour in Tasiilaq to sort out our kit before we departed for the final leg of the day to the head of the Tasiilaq Fjord. The kit was to be split into three piles; kit and food to be flown in by helicopter, stuff we would require later that evening on the walk in and the luxury items to await our return two weeks later. With half an hour to spare I decided to accompany one of the others on the trip to the supermarket to try and get some tins of fish to supplement our two weeks supply of spam. The settlement, without the deep snow cover of most of the year, was full of arctic disarray; huskies tethered to long chains, dog poo, abandoned sleds, cables, rusty barrels, and pipes. Drying racks loaded with fish & seals set out to dry were evident in the hunter district, as well as the odd seal skin pulled taut to dry before it was used for clothes or what ever practical use it was destined for.

This place, its 1700 people & several thousand huskies certainly had bags of character.

I jumped aboard the small white skiff. This boat, suitably camouflaged for seal hunting out on the ice flows smelt of fish, mixed with a dash of engine two stroke – stained with fish slime and blood no doubt from a recent seal kill. Although a lovely summers day, it was time to rug up against the chill – ready for the off.

This was a far faster boat than the one we had used to transfer from the airport at Kulusuk earlier during the day. The skiff wound its way first up Ammassalik Fjord and then up Tasiilaq Fjord, gradually up this narrowing fjord with sheer rock faces dropping down to the waterline. Residual snow lay seated in the valleys, corries & headwalls, left over from millions of hard winters.

The two and a half hour trip flew by, as suddenly the shore was only 100 metres away. We had travelled 80 km northwards and inland to land at a natural rock jetty where the locals came in the early autumn each year to fish for Arctic Char. As the engine was cut and we drifted into the shore I started to get mixed feelings. One thing was certain – out there were endless swarms of mosquitoes. Experience had taught me that for me, total body cover was the only sure means of coping with them. Stuff the use of DEET – wear all over Gore-Tex, plus your gaiters to protect your ankles, a head net and keep your hands in your pockets.

But what about them bears – the most powerful predator amongst land mammals. Although we would have all loved to have seen one, from a very safe distance, I was glad I didn't have to pull my ice axe from its holster as I came ashore to buzzing.

## Up and into the mountains

Strangely I had a feeling of being in an environment that was both mysterious and familiar. Here at sea level the air was cool and the flora & scenery like that of the Cairngorms, yet we had just past a stranded iceberg before we landed so it couldn't be the Gorms.

Thoughts of bears drifted away as we moved along the shore of the fjord, each adopting their own pace. There brilliantly coloured mosses, dwarf harebell & lots & lots of cotton grass carpeted the ground. As we left the fjord for the braided riverbeds, the lush greens gave way to bleaker colours of grey & blacks, with patches of rustic brown & yellow lichens on boulders. Suddenly I would look up from focusing on the ground & caught sight of the massive walls that loomed above. Once again, head down, plodding on. Then to the moraine, then up the lateral moraine, with the dry glacier on our right. Here on the lateral moraine, small clusters of pink saxifrage or the odd gentian provided the last flora before we eventually reached the snow line and the snow slope that lead to the glacier above at 750 metres. On a rock knoll situated at this height was the small hut. This was to be our base for much of the best part of the next fortnight, when we were not camped on the glacier and climbing further afield.

It was now late evening, or was it early morning? After a meal that was certainly either curried spam, or chilli spam or fried spam, we turned in that morning as diffuse sunlight filtered in through the thin curtains.

It had been a long journey that day from Reykjavik to these mountains that divide the vast Greenland icecap from the coast – the scope for climbing looked endless.

More to follow...

## 2002/2003 Meets reports

### The Peak

David Amos, Sally Dipple, Sandy Sharp and Charles Moreton (Cambridge Caving and Climbing Club) visited **Stanage Edge on 8 June 2002** after the planned new members meet in Glen Nevis was rained off.

Routes climbed included Hargreaves' Original (VS 4c), April Crack (HS 4b), Easter Rib (E1 5b), Inverted V (VS 4b), Good Friday (HVS 5b), Congo Corner (HVS 5b), The Flange (HVS 5b), Cold Turkey (HVS 5a), Spring into Action (HVS 5b), Cave Arête (HVS 5a), Mississippi Variant Direct (E1 5b), and Morrison's redoubt (E1 5b).

### The Lakes

**Langdale 28 & 29 September - Francis and Patrick Winter, Dave Amos, Bryan Rynne and Sally Dipple.**

Francis and Patrick headed up to Pavey Ark on the Saturday, climbing Arcturus (E1 5b), Golden Slipper (HVS 5a), Capella (E1 5b).

Dave, Bryan and Sally went to Gimmer Crag and climbed Ash Tree Corner (VS 4c), followed by Kipling Groove (HVS 5a).

On Sunday the whole party went back to Gimmer. Patrick and Bryan climbed North-West Arête (VS 4c), followed by Whit's End Direct (E1 5b) finished with The Crack (VS 4c). Sally and Dave climbed the Crack followed by North-West Arête.

### Scotland

**Jock Spot's New Members' meet 17 & 18 August - Mairi & Colin Bell, Anna & Neil Cuthbert, Bryan Rynne, Sue Marvell, Paula Muir, Bruce Macrosson, Sally Dipple, Ruth McArthur, Thomas Beutenmuller**

Good weather on Saturday, usual rain on Sunday. Saturday saw Bryan and Sue climbing King Bee (VS) and Tree Hee (Severe) at Creag Dubh. Colin and Thomas were also at the crag and climbed Tree Hee, Gang Bang (HVS 5a), Tip Off (VS 4c) and the first pitch of King Bee Direct.

Sally, Ruth, Anna, Mairi and Paula headed off to Kingussie Crag and had a busy day climbing all of the starred routes up to and including the Hard Severe grade on the crag.

Neil and Bruce visited Duntelchaig and climbed Drum (V. Diff), Swastika (Severe), Bent Peg (HVS 5c) and Top Corner (Hard Severe 4b). Duntelchaig has some good rock in a great situation but a number of the routes are very overgrown and could benefit from more traffic. The Seventy Foot Wall section is the steepest and cleanest with some very good natural lines.

Sunday we all went home although some amused themselves at the Aviemore outdoor shops.

**Inbhirfaolin, Glen Etive 14 & 15 December 2002 – Stewart Bauchop, Francis Winter, Patrick Winter.**

Stewart sent the following report:

"It's dark, it's raining and they've camouflaged the hut! My first visit to the Grampian MC hut and the grid ref sits about one inch off the top edge of the map, bothy fever is rising. Returning up the road a clearing in the trees reveals a solitary light, Inbhirfaolin!

Saturday morning; mild weather and the lack of anything resembling winter prompts a bout of Munro bashing. The three of us set off late and take a lung bursting direct line up into the mists in search of Stob Coir' an Albannaich. Navigation practice is soon the order of the day as we dogleg down around crags in the mist to find our bealach and a view down towards Loch Dochard. Returning into the cloud, we take a bearing for Meall nan Eun, our second hill for the short December day. After a time the slope eases back and right on time a small neat cairn emerges out of the mist, 2 hrs later we're in the Kingshouse bar.

Sunday means an early return for me; Pat and Fran depart for more hill walking."

**Muir of Inverey Cottage 10 & 11 January 2003 – Ruth Love, Helen Forde, Patrick Winter, John Fowler, Derek Hunter, Neil Cuthbert**

The first meet of 2003 and the first to the Eastern Cairngorms for some time. Facilities at Muir Cottage are excellent and are to be further improved over the next few months when the kitchen is rebuilt.

The meet came at the end of a period of settled high pressure with very cold temperatures. Unfortunately this was forecast to finish dramatically on the Sunday so everyone was up early on Saturday to make the most of the best day. The weather didn't disappoint with clear skies, little wind and a good covering of snow.

Helen and John had a short drive but a long walk in to Corrie Kander for the icefall line of Snip-Snip (III). Ruth and Patrick opted for Lochnagar and an ascent of the classic Central Buttress (II). Derek and Neil gambled on conditions and went for Creag an Dubh loch. Unfortunately the cliffs were not holding much snow so route choice was limited. Climbed Sabre Cut (IV,5), which in lean conditions, was exactly how it's described in the book – short and sharp. The return to the car park took in the Munro Broad Cairn and the fine stalker's path descending steeply to Loch Muick.

We were joined on Saturday night by Brian Donaldson, Bruce Hayward and Becky who had been skiing in the hills around Braemar and planned more of the same on Sunday.

Sunday the rise in temperature arrived along with wind and rain and a category IV avalanche warning. The climbers returned to Edinburgh with only the skiers venturing out. Unfortunately that day an avalanche in the Black Spout gully of Lochnagar resulted in the death of a Cairngorm Club member.

**Invercroft, Achnasheen 7 & 8 February – Ruth Love, Eddie Gillespie, Patrick and Francis Winter, Derek Hunter and Neil Cuthbert**

Reverse scenarios from the Muir Cottage meet with the bad weather forecast for the Saturday improving and cooling down for Sunday.

Undeterred by the forecast Ruth, Eddie and the Winters rose early on the Saturday and headed to Coire na Poite on Beinn Bhan for the traverse of A'Chioch (II). Wind and rain stopped play about mid morning and the party retired to the pub for beer and a game of darts.

Meanwhile Derek and Neil drove to Ullapool for a visit to the Fotheringhams. The forecast was to get better from the North West in the afternoon so after a leisurely morning coffee Fraser, Derek, Neil (and Shiel) climbed Ben Mor Coigach arriving at the summit in time for great views across to the summer isles and the mountains of Wester Ross. It was apparent that the thaw had stripped almost all the snow so climbing conditions would not be good even if it cooled down overnight.

So on Sunday Derek and Neil headed south the ever-reliable Northern Corries and opted for Oesophagus (III) in Coire an Lochain. Ruth and Eddie returned to Beinn Bhan and completed the traverse of A'Chioch while Patrick and Francis went for a day's hill walking and climbed Ben Liath Mor.