

THE FORMATION OF THE J.M.C.S.



**The inaugural meet of the JMCS at the Narnain Boulder,
29-30 August 1925.**

PRESENT (L TO R): W SPEIRS, JA STEVENS, C ROBERTSON, AJ RUSK,
? WADDINGTON, CW PARRY, RN RUTHERFORD, GR SPEIRS, AG HUTCHISON.

(1) The beginning of the J.M.C.S.

By A. G. Hutchison

Two days on the still war-scarred battlefields of the Somme were enough for us and it was with relief that Rutherford and I returned to Amiens where we had arranged to meet Arthur Rusk. It was July, 1924, and our meeting point marked the start of a mountaineering holiday in the Bernese Oberland.

As the train bearing our friend swept round the steep curve in the station, we suddenly became aware of an excited figure leaning half out of the carriage window and wildly waving its arms. This turned out to be Rusk. He was bursting with a new idea.

‘A NEW Mountaineering Club’ that was the theme. An association for mountaineers in which they might meet kindred spirits and find among them those who could teach them the rules of the game. It would be a Club in which the members would learn the rudiments of mountain craft and it might also become a ‘feeder’ for the senior club which required conditions of membership.

The three of us talked over the project long into the night and next morning our reflections were considerably heightened by the prospects of the Bernese Alps, themselves brilliant in the sunshine. They made a glorious back-drop viewed across the central plains of Switzerland, as the train thundered its way down the Aar Valley.

Our next few days were fully occupied as we prepared for arduous things to come by several days preliminary training.

Later, having crossed the Balmborn, and en route over the Petersgrat towards the Bietschhorn, we became stormbound for a day in the Multhorn Hut at the head of the Lauter Brunnen Valley. It was here, in that hut, that the constitution for the new club was hammered out and agreed upon. I think we also decided on the name then.

The first meet of the J.M.C.S. was held at the Narnain Boulder in the corrie below the Cobbler, Arrochar. Here is an extract from Rutherford’s diary on the event, noted at the time:

Saturday, August 29, 1925.

Left Queen Street (Glasgow) Station by the 5.55am for Arrochar. Reached the Narnain Boulder by 9.25 and put in some good work with plenty of hands to build up the shelter wall. We stopped at noon and were back by 2.40 p.m. having traversed Jean and the Cobbler. Arthur (Rusk) arrived in the evening. It was poor weather. That night there slept seven under the Boulder, Eddy (Andreae), Waddington, Robertson, A. Hutchison, Arthur, Parry and the writer. A. J. Stevens and the Speirs emulated the coneys farther up the Narnain.

Sunday, August 30th, 1925.

The morning was bad so the inaugural meeting of the Junior Mountaineering Club of Scotland was held with Arthur and Parry still in bed. Arthur made a good outline of his aims for the Club and Eddy was elected Glasgow President, and W. Speirs Secretary. E. C. Thomson and Elton came up from below. The whole party then went up Ben Arthur in mist and rain.

It might therefore be fair to say that it was in the hills of the Arrochar Alps that the J.M.C.S. came to birth.

Rusk died in 1965. Looking back, it is possible to recollect something of his philosophy of life, one result of which being the idea which led to the formation of the J.M.C.S.

Rusk looked on mountains as a challenge. Many do. But, to him the challenge did not only provide an opportunity in which he might express himself.

He looked on mountains from a wider angle and felt the challenge as something more subtle. They were not chance phenomena. They were there for a purpose and had a part to play in the scheme of things. They influenced the lives of men and pointed a way, endlessly, up and beyond the low levels where, for the most part, man’s course is run.

Metaphysically speaking, mankind need not live in the valleys. The mountains vision could and should have a wider implication in human events.

So, he had a burning urge that men and mountains must meet. I think if he were living now, how much he would rejoice that more and more they do.

Over the door of the Town Hall in Sacramento, California, a Legend is engraved:

'Give me men to match my mountains.'

Those who go on the mountains might well ponder these words in respect of our responsibilities in today's world. Still more widely, they might provide a clue on how to restore the sense of purpose which the world needs so much.

(2) More Than Fifty Years Ago

By R. N. Rutherford

Elsewhere in this issue Archie Hutchison has told how he and I met Arthur Rusk on our way to Switzerland where Arthur developed his plans for the J.M.C.S. while we climbed the Alps together. So many things have changed since those days that it may be of interest to recall something of our climbing before 1925.

Both Archie and I had begun climbing before we left school in 1920. One of our schoolmasters was G. F. Woodhouse, better known as Bobbie because he led the bell ringers of the church in the ringing of 'Bob Majors.' Bobbie, a member of the Fell and Rock Club, was not only a fine climber but also a gymnast who represented his country at the 1912 Olympics in Stockholm. It was he who took each of us to Seathwaite in Borrowdale and introduced us to rock climbs such as Kern Knotts Chimney on the Great Gable. Our first climb in winter conditions were from Crianlarich when we gained the tops of Cruach Ardrain and Ben More in snow.

In May 1921 we began our weekend camps at Arrochar. In those days not everyone owned a car. We were poor engineering apprentices and so, except at New Year and Easter when we used the train, we travelled by push bike. Leaving our works in Govan and Bridgeton at 12 noon on a Saturday we would cycle home and as soon as we could, would load our bicycles with a home-made tent (7 ft. by 6 ft. by 4 ft. high), ground sheet, sleeping bags, food and a Primus stove on which to cook it. What could not be strapped to the bicycles, such as dry shirt and trousers, was carried in rucksacks on our backs. From Hillhead we soon reached Anniesland where Crow Road came in on the left, the road to Jordanhill slanted off to the left between tall hedges and the road to Temple turned sharply to the right. The carriage-way to the west through Knightswood had not yet been made. If we went past Jordanhill to join the Dumbarton Road at Scotstoun it meant many miles along a road the surface of which was cobbled with granite setts and tram-lines down the centre. Glasgow Corporation trains ran as far as Dalmuir; beyond that point the track maintenance on to Dumbarton was worse. No one liked riding over cobbles and so at Anniesland we turned right, crossed the canal at Temple Sawmills and rode on to Canniesburn Toll where horses were still being shod at the smiddy. Passing through Bearsden we climbed higher before speeding down through Duntocher to Old Kilpatrick. From there we had to put up with a few miles of tram-lines as the road wound its way through Bowling till we reached Dumbuck. After that the road had many ups and downs but no problems; we crossed the Leven at Alexandria and leaving Loss and Tarbet behind, came to the end of our $37\frac{1}{2}$ mile ride.

At Arrochar we crossed the bridge into Argyll and there at the side of the Sugach Burn we pitched our tent. Breakfast on Sunday morning was always the same — porridge followed by bacon and eggs. Most of our climbing was on the rocks of Jean, the Cobbler and the Wife, but there were days on the Spear Head and other climbs on Narnain. Back down at

Sugach we would brew up a cup of tea before striking camp and riding home to Glasgow ready to be at work when the horn stopped blowing at five to eight on Monday morning.

During the Glasgow Fair, at the New Year, Spring and Autumn holidays we would get farther afield, to the Cairngorms, Arran, Glen Coe, Ben Nevis and the Cuillins. We enjoyed them all but the Arrochar hills were our first love. By the standards of to-day our rock climbing was nothing to write about. We carried no pegs or other ironmongery. We worked with nuts and bolts all through the week. We wore no harness and attached ourselves to the rope with a bowline or middleman's knot. One thing is certain. We were physically fit and the feeling of achievement when we reached our tops in all weathers gave us an inspiration which still remains.

(3) Early Days

By C. E. Andreae

It was in October 1921 that I first met A. G. Hutchison and R. N. Rutherford when we were students in the Engineering Faculty at Glasgow University. Along with X. K. Hunter of the same fraternity we quickly developed a firm friendship and during that first winter at the University Hutchison and Rutherford, who had learnt their mountain craft from a schoolmaster at Sedbergh, spoke long and enthusiastically of the joys of camping and climbing and the delights of the Scottish hills generally. As a result we were first blooded in the snows at Crianlarich in March 1922 and were introduced to the Cobbler region of Arrochar in the following summer.

Proceeding out from Glasgow on the humble push-bike we always camped at the same spot above Sugach farm at the head of Loch Long, and at the time we felt like pioneers, for camping was in its comparative infancy and we never saw a tent north of Luss. On the ascent from the loch it became a ritual that we should stop at the two large boulders at the foot of Narnain, where one of the two provided good scrambling exercise, but the other held no such attraction except for a large overhang. Thence we proceeded to the Cobbler — the traverse of Jean, the airy arete to the Cobbler himself and the descent by the big gully at the back of the north peak, with variations. That first week-end was the first of many such that for me was to last for four years. The regular pattern was to camp at Arrochar in the summer, while at Easter, during a break after the University term, we went to Crianlarich where we were royally looked after by a Mrs Buckingham in her minute cottage. We called it Buckingham Palace! From there we explored the feast of snow-covered Munros that were within walking distance and with the aid of the trusty bicycle we covered the Beinn Derain group and Stob Ghabhar.

Regarding our leaders it might be mentioned that Hutchison, though a year younger than Rutherford, was the bigger of the two and possibly more voluble, but if we tended to look to him for leadership this was not to belittle Rutherford who, though small and relatively silent, was thoroughly sound and I could not have wished for a better and safer companion on the hills. There was an occasion when he and I had been held up by some hard reeve on the far side of Stobinian with the result that we had to struggle down the glen to Ben More farm in the dark with a late arrival at Buckingham Palace. Mrs Buckingham was understandably a little worried and said 'I wouldn't have minded so much if Mr Hutchison had been there, but with young Mr Rutherford . . .'

At Arrochar it was generally misty and wet and I remember about that time the fickle weather produced eleven fine Fridays in succession followed almost invariably by a poor week-end. But there was always the companionship and understanding born of the hills and many are the happy times that we spent OH the Cobbler, the Spear Head and Jammed Block Chimney of Narnain and others, though the Right Angle Gully of the Cobbler took a while before yielding to assault.

Our expeditions were, of course, not confined to Arrochar and Crianlarich, and among others, three in particular might briefly be mentioned. First there was a long week-end in Arran where, after a late evening climb along the A'Chir Ridge, a hurricane suddenly blew up at midnight and flattened our tents. We spent the rest of the night acting as tent poles and were glad at least that it did not rain. Next day we recovered ourselves and our tents and in any case it was far too wild to be on the tops. On the day following, in quieter conditions, we managed a climb on Cir Mhor before rushing for the mid-day boat from Brodick. Then there was a glorious spell of five days after taking our degree in March 1934 when Rutherford, Hunter and I stayed at the old half-way hut on Ben Nevis. After various climbs in misty but dry conditions we had an epic day in bright sunshine when we crossed the Ben, followed round the Carn mor Dearg arete and across the col to Aonach Beag. The panorama all round was superb with Goat Fell plainly visible eighty miles away. The return was made round the north and east side of Carn Mor Dearg finishing up with an arduous toil of a thousand feet up from the Mhuilinn glen to the hut in pitch darkness. Never did a camp dinner taste better. Lastly, we four spent two weeks in Glen Brittle in summer 1924. We covered a lot of ground in that time in reasonable weather, climbing anything between Sgiurr nan Gillean and Sgilur Alasdair, but one of my clearest recollections was the limpet-like behaviour of my clothes to the rough gabbro rock — perhaps showing how *not* to climb.

For the first two years our climbs and expeditions had been limited to the 'original quartet, sometimes augmented by A. J. Frazer who with Hunter was to join the S.M.C. in 1924. Then late in 1924 Hutchison and Rutherford began introducing new recruits to the hills, the early ones including the Spiers brothers, C. W. Parry, C. M. Robertson and J. A. Steven; so it was that the birth of an idea began sowing itself in the minds of our leaders. They then went off to Switzerland in July 1925 to be joined there by A. J. Rusk who arrived bubbling over with excitement with the idea of forming a new club. He could hardly have had two better henchmen than Hutchison and Rutherford. The idea was discussed up the hill and down dale and finally on a day when they were weatherbound in the Mutthorn hut at the upper end of the Lauterbrunnen Valley the draft constitution was drawn up and the name Junior Mountaineering Club of Scotland was decided upon.

About the same time, though without any connection with the proposed club, we thought of building up a wall under the hitherto useless Narnain Boulder to provide a howl for intending climbers. Periods between climbs were given over to the building which was rough and ready — just large stones and sods of earth and grass with no tools except our hands, but in the end it provided reasonable accommodation for seven people, four in the inner section and three in the outer, which was just serviceable provided the weather was not too inclement.

It seemed a happy chance, therefore, that the shelter should have what I believe was its inaugural occupation at the same time as the first meeting of the J.M.C.S. So it was that on the 30th August 1925 the club came into being in the most original circumstances — 'conceived' in the Mutthorn hut and 'born' under the Narnain boulder with the chairman, Arthur Rusk, conducting proceedings from inside his sleeping bag! He began by reading the

constitution and putting it to the vote; the meeting then continued in a slightly informal way in the presence of thirteen people — Rusk, Bartholomew, Hutchison, Rutherford, Parry, Waddington and myself under the Boulder; A. J. Steven, the Speirs brothers and Mellon from tents in the vicinity, while E. C. Thomson (S.M.C.) and Elton came up from camp at the loch-side. The eight people who were not already in the SMC became founder members. W. B. Speirs was appointed secretary and to me fell the honour of the presidency. It was a dirty day and after the club was well and truly founded the whole party attacked Ben line in mist and rain.

The Edinburgh section had its first meeting ten days later and in November 1925 a party of about twenty, including the president, J. G. Osborne, and secretary, the late T. E. Thomson, came through to Glasgow to meet our section. It was fine to foregather with them and to exchange experiences, and after tea sixteen of us (mostly from Edinburgh) set off to Arrochar to celebrate the occasion on the hills. On arrival at Arrochar the party split up; the wise and perhaps more financially endowed, consisting of Osborne, Ainslie, Wright, Rose and Turnbull stayed at Ross's Hotel; Brown, Hedderwick and Edgar spent the night in a car and/or tent somewhere on the loch-side, while the stalwarts (or madmen) Rusk, Bartholomew, Kirkland, Steven, Mellon and myself struggled up in the darkness to the Narnain Boulder.

It so happened that a Naval vessel was visiting the old torpedo station at the time and on spotting our hurricane lanterns on the hillside gave us the benefit of their searchlight for several hundred feet. We discovered later that the Navy thought we were a search party (after all, what other explanation for a party being on the hillside on a November night?). They reported to the hotel where they were reassured in the best presidential manner by Osborne that it was only a case of mental deficiency, and after the exchange of a few colourful remarks the Navy retired.

Regarding the foregoing nocturnal escapade this was something like the ante meet activities of the S.M.C. in reverse. It is worth while recalling that at Easter 1891 Gilbert Thomson and Naismith took the night rain from Glasgow to Dalwhinnie where they alighted at 3 a.m. From there they set off along Loch Ericht over the top of Ben Alder and across the wild untracked waste of the Moor of Rannoch to Inveroran where they arrived at 8 p.m. for the meet. They must have travelled nearly forty miles and said they had no difficulty. Our own adventure palls beside this herculean effort, but it sets a standard for some J.M.C.S. 'toughies' to emulate.

Finally all the preceding events culminated in the first ever formal meet of the combined Edinburgh and Glasgow teams at Crianlarich at New Year 1926 at which the following were present Addenbrooke, Aikman, Campbell, Elton, Gibson, Macdonald, Macfarlane, Martin, Osborne, Roberts, Rose, P. Scott, W. G. Scott, Smith, the Speirs brothers, the Steven brothers, Thomson and Wright of the J.M.C.S. together with Bartholomew, Hutchison, Hunter, Rutherford and Rusk of the S.M.C. It is not proposed to tabulate who did what over the period but all the peaks within the area were well and truly covered while a party moved up to Bridge of Orchy for two nights and climbed Beinn Dorian, Beinn Dothaid and Stob Ghabhar. The highlight of the meet was the first annual dinner at which twenty J.M.C.S. and seven S.M.C. members were present, the latter included the president and, secretary, J. A. Parker and George Sang, who came over from Tyndrum as specially invited guests. Speeches were made by Rusk, Osborne and Spiers and most particularly by Parker. Three *bona fide* hotel guests were asked to join in and evidently had the time of their lives. Certainly no members who were present will forget the occasion.

THE EDINBURGH SECTION

(1) 1925-1939

By Bill Myles

It has been said that a labour of love brings its own reward and so it has been with me in putting together this short history. The reward has been in reading the Journals of the period kindly lent by Robert Elton, an original member.

The original President, Jack Osborne, provided me with a potted history of the Twenties and Thirties as a backcloth for the activities of the Club in these far-off days. He also sent me his photograph album, one photo from which is reproduced here.*

An incident in the first official meet held at Arrochar in November 1925, clearly shows that the original members got themselves into the same sort of scrapes as the present bunch. A party composed of Rusk, Bartholomew, Kirkland, Andreae, Stevens and Melon arrived late at night and proceeded to Narnain Boulder. A destroyer obligingly turned a searchlight on them and guided their faltering footsteps up the hillside to the astonishment and alarm of the Hotel party who, observing the 'pillar of fire,' were evidently not in a fit state to find the correct solution, and attributed the phenomenon to some electric, physic or volcanic disturbance.

They were finally reassured however, by a party of naval officers who called to enquire if the party were in distress; on being informed that the distress was merely mental, they expressed themselves forcibly and in accordance with the best nautical traditions.'

The Section was formed on the initiative of Arthur Rusk and Bay Bartholomew. That the idea was sound is proved by its continued thriving existence after fifty years. The fears that it might become a rival club to the S.M.C. were completely groundless and it has in fact proved an ideal training ground and weeding-out process for the Senior club.

In the early years, time and transport were the limiting factors upon the Section's activities. Literally, everyone in the land, that is, everyone fortunate to have work, worked on a Saturday morning and many in the afternoon as well. For the first few years, the official meets were held at New Year and Easter only, usually combined with the Glasgow Section. These were very well attended, there being, for example, fifty-nine members and guests at the New Year Meet of 1931 at Loch Awe.

The Southern Highlands were the main venue for most meets and the early meets were held at Fort William, Arrochar, Strathyre, Tyndrum and Crianlarich. In July 1928, a small meet was held in Skye and this lasted for two weeks.

The middle and late thirties saw a greatly improved economic situation in the country as well as better motor cars and roads and more extensive forays were undertaken as well as visits to the Alps by various parties.

The journals of the period, published both in April and November in these years, are beautifully written and full of detail. Indeed, one cannot help thinking as one reads them that Section Secretaries to-day should be invited to read them soon after their appointments.

They provide a fascinating insight into the manners and customs of the period as well as all sorts of other information. For example, J. S. Carter's Celebrated Climbing Boots are advertised at £4 12s. 6d. from the early twenties until 1929 when disaster hit the Western World. Then they rocketed in price by half-a-crown and remained at £4 15s. until the thirties were almost out. By jove, there's inflation for you.

Several accounts pay tribute to the staffs of a number of hotels. Reading between the lines, these poor folk had a lot to put up with and probably deserved a tribute. How many reports to-day finish like the one in J. xviii, 388 . . . ‘The Club wishes to record its appreciation of the arrangements made for its comfort by the staff’?

Roads at the time north of the Glasgow-Perth line were nearly all single track with passing places and the vehicles, to say the least, were not too reliable in adverse conditions. We have in J. xx, 223 the comment that ‘the night in the open proved too much for Bell’s car, for at 4 a.m. on Saturday it showed no signs of life, in spite of being pushed up and down the road several times. Sutherland was packed into Stobie’s car and Bell was perforce left behind. The journey continued without further mishap and Glen Brittle was reached at 8.45 p.m. Bell surprised everyone by turning up next day, having reached Kyleakin on Saturday night after repairs to his car.’

Jack Osborne, in his comments, recalled that on ‘one Sunday evening, we ran into a snowstorm. This was before the days of windscreen wipers, but the top half of the windscreen could be lowered, so the snow blew in our faces at the rate of the storm plus 25-30 m.p.h. of the car, which collected a drift completely filling the back seat and much of the front.’

The story, however, which gives the best picture of the hardiness of the early members of our Club, both on the hill and off it, is told in J. xviii, 53. ‘On returning to Strathyre, it was discovered that the road by Loch Lubnaig was under water and impassable. Undismayed, the party set out in three cars, only to find a mile or so from Strathyre a loch instead of a road. Bartholomew’s vehicle, which started life proudly under the name William the Conqueror, and, falling on evil times, was degraded to William the Conk, put up a splendid performance and proved itself to be a genuine floater. On reaching the firm bank, it was gratefully re-christened William the Cork. Cox’s submarine tactics were less successful, and an Alpine rope had to be employed to get him ashore. Gibson’s Rover shied nervously and complaining of old age and rheumatism, retired by the Loch Earn route.’

Motor cyclists fared no better and are often mentioned, a typical instance being (J. six, 445), ‘One of the features of the meet was the ill-luck of the various motor-cyclists concerned. Sutherland was prevented by a cracked cylinder head from appearing at all. Stobie’s lighting system failed and he achieved a traverse of the Black Mount in black moonlessness. Kellock was distressed at Ardlui by loud expensive noises which informed him that his gear-box had passed over. Lindsay, while travelling over the Black Mount at full speed on his ‘Galloping Terror’ (about 35 m.p.h.), sustained a rapid and alarming puncture. His lights also gave trouble on the way home.’

It must be borne in mind that the transport of equipment was not the problem it is today. The axe and the rope were the only tools used. Pitons did not arrive until the mid-thirties and, in any case, were frowned upon as being unsporting.

Trains, too, presented problems such as are described in the account of the New Year 1927 meet to Tyndrum. We are told (J. xviii, 53) that ‘On Saturday 1st January everyone was roused at an unearthly hour of the morning by the elephantine movements of Baxter, Brown, Knox, McInnes, McLaren, Pattullo, MacPhee, Robertson and Wilson. These worthies — narrowly escaping assassination — succeeding in catching the 8.07 a.m. train, and, what’s more, they compelled the officials of the L. & N.E. Railway by threats, graft or other subterfuge, to stop the train at Gorton, where they alighted. This, in itself, is no mean feat, for we seem to have heard that on a former occasion, even the powerful vocabularies of the S.M.C. were unable to stop the train at this spot.’ Times have changed indeed. The Modern Club Member is generally going to bed at 8.07am on New Year’s Day! Trains were of course extensively used and those whose business or sport involved travel used to carry

a time-table in their pocket. The Easter Meet 1931 Report reliably informs us (J. xix, 300) that ‘it was discovered that while the scheduled connections made Glasgow at 12.15 a.m., the L.M.S. Section of the 6.05 p.m. from Dalwhinnie stops at Coatbridge (en route for London) at 10.15 p.m. and from Coatbridge, of course, there is a frequent bus service (S.M.T. and Midland) taking about thirty minutes to Glasgow.’

Some things have not, however, changed with the passing of time. Take navigation for example (J. xviii, 203), about which we read ‘On the other hand, Ben Lui drew a number of parties, but most were baffled by the mists. Bartholomew, Campbell and Mackay from Coninish searched in vain for the Central Gully, and then seem to have eaten some sandwiches under a boulder. E. A. Hutchison and Grieve found themselves at the col between Beinn a’ Chuirn and Meall Odhar and beat a retreat appalled.’ It would seem from this that the weather has not changed very much either.

After a small meet to the Clachaig Inn in 1935, the virtues of this well-known Hotel are extolled at some length (J. xx, 479) ‘surely the Inn should be used more for small meets. When one can get a hot bath (first two men anyway), a five-course dinner in the cosy wee parlour upstairs, a bed, a four-course breakfast in the bar, to say nothing of a magnificent view of the Battle of the Modden River — all for 7s.6d. — one can afford to ignore minor inconveniences.’

In spite of the economy which most were forced to practice at the time, a certain amount of indulgence appears to have taken place (J. xix, 225). We read that (New Year Meet 1931), ‘The worst performance stands to the discredit of two well-known habitués of Inverarnan, who were so overcome by the reaction occasioned by uncontrolled indulgence at dinner that they were barely able to climb into their car and motor home.’ Another field of activity, it will be observed, which has not changed with the years.

Those responsible for the management of the whole Club A.G.M. in future years, will doubtless be interested in another part of the report on the same meet, ‘The attempt of the Chairman of the A.G.M. to defeat last year’s record time of thirty-five minutes was ably frustrated by the introduction of a number of completely irrelevant proposals and amendments.’

Over the years, a host of names flit across the twenty-eight Journals covering the period. Without actually having known them all, it would be impossible to make a selection of the most notable characters. The names which seem to appear most are Rusk, Bartholomew, Osborne, Elton, Addenbrooke, the Brothers Speirs, Hutchison, Andreae, A. Scott, P. Scott, Harrison, R. Gibson, T. H. Gibson, MacPhee, Dr Myles, Sandeman, Lillie, Pattullo, Ogilvie, Campbell, Dunn, Gerrit, Russell, Grieve and the master fiddler, Geddes.

I am quite certain that those whom I have omitted through lack of knowledge are or were the sort of fellows who would not have minded anyway.

Poised on the brink of yet another new era in Scottish Mountaineering, the Section disbanded itself in 1939 to tackle a Very Severe problem of a different variety.

(2) 1945-1963

By Mike Fleming

In hindsight, the story of the Edinburgh Section of the J.M.C.S. falls into clearly defined chapters, although this clarity of definition was not usually apparent to the immediate participants. Since the War, the story of the Club divides itself into three such chapters the

post-war period up to the mid-fifties (the age of the hard men), from the mid-fifties to the mid-sixties, and the period from then to-date.

The Post-War period was one of re-incarnation and consolidation of a Club which, like so many others, had gone into recession during the war years. The first bus meet of the Edinburgh Section, which marked the revival of the Club, was to Crianlarich on 17/18th January, 1948. On this and ensuing meets were to be found many 'weel kent' faces, some of whom now tend to be associated with Glasgow (would you believe) rather than Edinburgh. The nucleus of the new Club, for such it really was, consisted of such mountaineers as Malcolm Slessor, Donald Hill, George Chisholm, Jimmy Russell, Dan Stuart, Fred Mantz, Donald Bennett, Geoff Dutton, and that inveterate time traveller Jimmy Marshall who was certainly ahead of his time and probably not yet out of night nappies.

The solid character of the Club can well be summed up by glancing through the above selection of members. None of these were 'transient' mountaineers who flash into existence, sparkle for a brief spell, then disappear never to be seen again. Most of them are now considered to be establishment figures, pillars of the S.M.C., a whole galaxy of potential presidents of the S.M.C. They are not renowned tigers (apart from Marshall) but they are a thoroughly competent mountaineers with a wealth of experience. The reliability and staying powers of these men was precisely what was required to set the J.M.C.S. back on its feet again after the 39-45 interruption. And this they did. And for that, they have earned our enduring gratitude..

By the mid-fifties, the Club was on a secure footing with a membership of around seventy, from which up to thirty would attend bus meets; figures which have remained consistent through the years. The Club was building up an impressive record of achievement both at home and abroad. Peter Pan Marshall had been joined by Rip Van Winkle Clarkson. Everything was set fair. Then the chapter abruptly closed.

In the mid-fifties, many of the figures who had reinvigorated the Edinburgh Section moved on into the S.M.C., and, although many of them remained active, their connections with the Section were largely severed. This left a vacuum which could have proved disastrous to the fortunes of the Club, but, instead, what could be described as the Golden Age of Mountaineering, was heralded in the East — an upsurge of great mountaineering talent which sprang largely from the Edinburgh J.M.C.S.

Two contrasting characters, in particular preserved the necessary continuity between these two periods. Jimmy Marshall — a prime figure in the 1950's; brilliant, ebullient and through whom the 'Currie Boys' — Dougal Haston, Jim Moriarty and Jim Stenhouse — entered the scene. Jim Clarkson was the dominant personality of the early sixties; gaunt, eccentric, but super-enthusiastic and a super-organiser through whom the Dunfermline climbers, Ian MacEachran and Johnnie Knight joined the Club to meet with Dave Bathgate, Brian Robertson, Alister McKeith and those who were eventually to form the illustrious Squirrels Mountaineering Club.

Again, the late fifties saw the emergence of the great Robin Smith, whose combination of ability, physique, enthusiasm and drive assured this precocious climber of a rapid entry into the global annals of mountaineering fame. A perfect foil to Smith was the pleasant, unassuming brilliance of Derek Leaver, perceptively described in an English Guide Book as one of the most under-rated climbers in Britain. He was perhaps the neatest and most beautifully balanced climber of all that assembly of talent. He graced all routes hard or easy for sheer enjoyment, but lacked the drive and ambition of some of his contemporaries. And he was none the worse for that!

Behind the stars there emerged a solid phalanx of assorted characters of varying ability but infectious enthusiasm. The tigers provided the garnishing but the latter were the solid meat of this flourishing Club. Too many to enumerate them all, but names such as Mike (Picasso) Guest, Jim Waddell, Ian (Black) Douglas, George Allan, Keith Murray, Graham Tiso, Roger Phillips, Jim Hall, Alec Barclay, the Glen Grant twins, Ron Swanson, and many others arouse pleasant nostalgia.

This was the last era of the bus-meet, which had its disadvantages — restriction of time and venue at week-ends — but nevertheless was highly functional in preserving the identity and spirit of the Club. These years preceded the affluent times of today and the only transport between official meets was usually the Clarkson ‘taxi’ or the Tiso ‘Rocket,’ plus assorted motor cycles of doubtful vintage. The climbers were an incredibly scruffy, tattereddemalion crew. The Smith encampment on Gunpowder Green would have assured him today of a spot on ‘Panorama’ as some strange denizen of the Third World. Hitch-hiking was still a major means of access to the hills.

Club Dinners were always held at the Glencoe Hotel. The staff religiously removed all breakable ornaments prior to the festivities, and only replaced them after the last unsteady member had departed, the hard men swarming down the outside walls of the Hotel, and the softer (or drunker) ones more conventionally, but no less noisily, by the door. After one such occasion Swanson decided that he was too tired to walk down the track to Lagangarbh, but thought that if he acted drunk enough, he might persuade someone to transport him in a wheelbarrow which lay handy in Cameron’s barn. This pseudo-Thespian manoeuvre (he only thought he was acting) achieved its object. However, unbeknown to him, the wheelbarrow’s formal function was in mucking out the byres so Swanson was left strictly alone for the rest of the meet. On another occasion Keith Murray disappeared one night in Langdale after an evening on scrumpy in the Old D.G. He was later discovered standing in the middle of the river at the dam below Gimmer staring puzzledly at the water and babbling, ‘Look — no feet.’

The overseas activities of the Club flourished too. Increasing numbers of members holidayed in the Alps, the Dolomites and Norway. Climbers like Smith and Haston began to account for some of mountaineering’s major ascents. The highlight of the Club’s overseas activities was without doubt the highly successful expedition which was mounted to the Staunings Alps in East Greenland in 1961 (see J. xxvii).

But, at the apparent height of its success, this chapter too, in the history of Edinburgh J.M.C.S. began to draw to a close. The success of the bus meets began to wane as more private transport became available. For a spell, their continuation depended on a fruitful liaison with the Edinburgh Mountaineering Club, the formidable organisational talents of Jimmy Thin being combined with those of Clarkson for a few years. But this also failed to last and bus meets finally became a thing of the past.

Again, in the mid-sixties, this unique group of climbers began to split up. The Squirrels splintered off to form their own Club which, with the help of strong groups in Dundee and Aberdeen, was to keep the accent of Scottish mountaineering in the East till the end of the decade. Many other members joined the S.M.C. and gradually lost contact with the Club as their interests took them elsewhere. Haston and the Currie Boys left the scene.

But chiefly responsible for the closure of this chapter was a series of tragic mountaineering accidents. The Club had been relatively free from such incidents apart from two sorrowful deaths in the fifties, Crichton Allan on Cairngorm and Ted Wise on Nevis. But the mid-sixties dealt a series of punishing blows. Robin Smith’s death in the Pamirs was the greatest loss to mountaineering in general, but Keith Murray had a fatal fall in Green Gully on Nevis

and Jim Clarkson's death drew on the very life blood of the Club. And so a chapter closed. It would have to be called Clarkson's chapter.

But, already the climbers who were to see the Edinburgh J.M.C.S. through to the present day were appearing on the scene. One chapter closed but another was already opening.

(3) 1963-1975

By Jim Clark

Since the early sixties the most important influences on the Club have been changes in transport. Car-ownership has increased to include the young and the affluent whilst the improvement of Highland roads from single track and the introduction of dual carriageways in the Lowlands (where the most significant development has been the Forth Road Bridge, completed in September 1964) have put many mountain areas within easier reach of Edinburgh. The joys of the bus, geared to a 5-day week with a 2.30 p.m. start on Saturday and anguished cries to the latecomers on a Sunday night, no longer appealed. A car could provide ready access for a full weekend to a favoured spot for a few selected friends and was naturally much preferred.

Evidence of dissatisfaction with the Club's arrangements became apparent with the almost complete boycott of the 1963 Dinner at Roy Bridge, when only ten turned up. However, a club such as the Edinburgh J.M.C.S. cannot be over-selective or would not have survived fifty years of changing membership. Bus-meets, in conjunction with the Edinburgh M.C. were to continue as the basis of activities until 1966 when only thirteen people travelled to Arrochar.

With the abandonment of the bus-meets, consideration was given to our role with the Edinburgh M.C. as the only clubs in Edinburgh open to non-selective entry. Experienced, middle-aged, opinion held that we should throw in our lot with the E.M.C. and retain the J.M.C.S. part in parentheses. Views were many and various and advice sought from other sections of the J.M.C.S. succeeded only in confusing and obscuring the issue. Constitutional changes for the J.M.C.S. as a whole, however, were again in the wind and the issue was finally resolved when the autonomy given to all sections saw the Edinburgh J.M.C.S. constituted as an independent club in November 1967, but otherwise following exactly the same lines as formerly. The Edinburgh M.C. proceeded on their own way as well, concentrating more on the family and social aspects of mountaineering and open to mixed membership.

By the late sixties, the Club had a nucleus of people owning cars who were prepared to co-operate for meets under the discretion of a meet secretary, this post being allocated to the committee in rotation. New meet venues were now introduced and keenly supported and remained as annual or at least bi-annual events. These included North Wales, Derbyshire, Wasdale, Rum and of course, Skye and the Northern Highlands.

Between meets, expeditions by car became more and more active with increasingly distant centres, formerly regarded as holiday venues, becoming accepted for ordinary Friday to Sunday night week-ends. Notably, one must mention what became an annual event established by Robert McDonald. Leaving on Friday evening, the early hours of Saturday were spent bivouacking at Kyle of Lochalsh. We caught the first ferry, then went on to Glenbrittle or Sligachan to set up camp and eat a hearty meal before setting off for the Cuillin Ridge traverse. The hours of darkness were spent bivouacked on the ridge then when Sunday dawned,

we went on to complete the traverse and with luck, enjoy a lunch-time pint before snatching an hour or two of sleep and catching the ferry to drive back to Edinburgh for work on Monday morning. To quite a few, this trip became an essential part of the annual training for an Alpine holiday and was invariably carried out in ideal weather in early June.

The late sixties also saw the opening of the Club hut at the Smiddy, Dundonnell, made possible by funds subscribed in memory of Jim Clarkson, who died on a meet ascending Carn Mor Dearg on 17th March 1968. Yet another tragedy occurred on a summer meet to the Shelter Stone when John Gemmel fell in Pinnacle Gully of Ben MacDhui on 5th July 1970.

Recent developments with influence on the Club have been the advent of outdoor education in Edinburgh so generously promoted by the Corporation until the Cairngorm disaster in November 1972. Committees and other such Councils have opined on our role as a Club with a responsibility to school leavers introduced to the sport and more experienced mountaineers have sought to use the Club as a general depository for novices rather than encourage young members by their own active participation. While we continue to attract new members, the increased interest is also absorbed by clubs new to the city bearing names such as the 'Care and Cray' and 'The Plantagenets.'

Increasing commercialisation of mountaineering is very apparent and is perhaps typified by the construction of climbing walls such as that at the Meadowbank Sports Centre and in numerous schools and further education centres throughout the city, while the natural attractions of Salisbury Crags remain out of bounds through Act of Parliament from Westminster. Marketing of the sport now extends beyond equipment, books, periodicals, celebrity lectures and foreign travel to include even clubs themselves which can be found advertising in the B.M.C's 'Mountain of Life' and on the walls of suitably accommodating pubs throughout the land. Whether these influence, and the, recent inflationary increases in petrol and motoring costs will affect the Club significantly remains to be seen. As one veteran of the Club in his late thirties remarked at a recent meet to Gunpowder Green, 'It's only the names and faces that change, the Club carries on the same as ever.'

(4) The Smiddy, Dundonnell

By Jim Clark

During 1965, the Secretary had been in contact with a group known as Scottish Mountaineering Huts, based in Musselburgh, and believed to be a cell of the Mountain Bothies Association in Scotland. A list was provided of various derelict properties with details of the Estate Factors and from this selection, various trips were made to view the proffered premises. It was in this way that we came to spend the 'New Year of 1966 at the Dundonnell Smiddy.

Since the local smith retired after the Second World War, the forge had only occasionally been kindled by a visiting smith from near Strathpeffer and, as demand for his trade died out, the building fell derelict. Work on the road from Saltbed to Braemore Junction gave it a short lease of life as a howff for the contractor's camp on the Smiddy Green when the adjoining stretch of Destitution Road was upgraded from single-track status in the early sixties.

With the attraction of An Teallach, the potential for a hut in the Dundonnell area was indisputable and accordingly the committee leased the Smiddy in the name of the Club. A sum of £10 was allocated from funds for repairs and we proceeded to brush out the dirt, plug the leaks and hang a new padlock on what remained of the door. We now had a bothy which was to prove popular for holiday week-end meets and became the traditional New Year Meet venue. It was also claiming some keen devotees who would make the 220 miles trip from Edinburgh on a Friday night and return on the Sunday night, enjoying a reasonably traffic-free A9 with its associated hazards as prelude an finale to an active two days in Wester Ross.

When Jim Clarkson, our Honorary Member, died in 1968, it was decided that a memorial to him worthy of his devotion to the Club would be to improve the Smiddy to a condition which would set a new standard for mountain huts in Scotland.

Following the Memorial Appeal, it was possible to begin work on the Hut in earnest, although the budget was still limited and great reliance had to be placed on voluntary labour. This inevitably resulted in somewhat sporadic progress of the work, the bulk of which was carried out between the spring of 1970 and autumn of 1972, when the hut was deemed sufficiently complete to be officially opened. This ritual was carried out by Iain H. Ogilvie, M.B.E.

The conversion was tackled from the outset as a conservation project and unless the features of the building interfered with its use as a climbers' hut, they were retained and much of the original character remains. The forge and bellows continue to function but an octagonal table takes the place of the anvil on its spring-block, while sink, work-top and cooker replace the work bench with its adjusting frame and steel-leg vice. When being shod, the horse stood where the bunks are now positioned, tethered to the ring which can be seen in an opening in the timber lining which insulates the sleepers from the walls of Torridonian sandstone.

To the simple rectangular building with low pitch slated roof, a small extension was added to house the W.C. and provide a small tool-store. The original shutter-board window remains but the door was replaced in similar style with a two-leaf stable door. As with Alpine mountain huts, where the shutters are painted in the colours of the appropriate national flag the door was painted azure blue in a white frame and the upper leaf emblazoned with a white saltire. A small plaque beside the door records that the conversion was made possible by funds subscribed in memory of Jim Clarkson.

The total cost of the project amounted to some £860, which was raised entirely for this purpose by the Club, £600 resulting from the Clarkson Memorial Appeal, while loans, hut-dues and donations acquired during the progress of the works made up the balance. Reaction to the hut by users in the first two years of operation could not have been more favourable. Practically all active Scottish clubs have held meets there and many have made a return visit. The facility of providing an easily reached base for ready access to the extensive area of Strathnashellach and Fisherfield is now being realised.