

This year started with great promise, as following two days of torrential rain over Hogmanay and New Year which included winds strong enough to cause cancellation of the Edinburgh Hogmanay celebrations, on the 2nd January we had a day of blue sky and wall to wall sunshine for our scheduled Barry Buddon walk as the photos below show.



We did compromise over the plan to light a fire on which we would cook our lunch as the thinking was that after the deluge of the previous days any wood found anywhere outdoors just wouldn't burn enough to cook anything so brought the usual packed lunch sandwiches with us. It was cold and barely lifting above zero all day but the wind had dropped completely and we walked out beyond the lighthouse covering a total of around 10 miles and saw interesting birds including a group of turnstones on the beach and a stonechat and flock of goldfinches on the bushes of the Army Ranges.

The next event was the AGM which was held on 15th January on Zoom, once again taking advantage of Morag's Zoom account and her willingness to host it. It also avoids the need for anyone, including me, to have to travel to St Andrews on a January evening to attend. The meeting's formal business was straightforward with the committee remaining unchanged and there also being no change in the subscription levels. These remain, due to the Club's current healthy bank balance, at £25 for full membership, despite the Club having to pay £26.75 for each member to Mountaineering Scotland (MS) to cover the Club's affiliation fee to MS for the year April 2025 – April 2026. This covers liability insurance for any Club related activity. It also includes the cost of The Scottish Mountaineer (the MS magazine) which goes to every paid up Club member. Those who are members of more than one Club and whose £26.75 is being paid to MS by their other Club need only pay £7 for their FMC membership and for those just wanting to keep in touch and whose membership is purely social the membership fee is £5. Your subscriptions are now due so please, if you wish to remain a member, could you, if you haven't already done so, make contact with Irene, our treasurer before making any payment. This is because we were informed by the Bank of Scotland that they were going to start charging us a not insignificant sum just to operate our small Club account so we are currently investigating moving our account elsewhere to a bank that offers either no or minimal charges and it might cause problems if you tried to pay money into an account that might be in the process of being closed. I think Irene has already been in touch with most of you about this issue. The business meeting was then followed by the usual quiz which as last year's winner it turned out to be my task to present and it also turned out that it was a tie! Les and Irene despite being in the same room did not work together but ended up with the same total. They did not have the same answers correctly / incorrectly answered.

Following the brilliant Barry Buddon day, now a distant memory, no members climbed anything during the rest of January or in February with the next club outing being on 2nd March! I think all of us will look back on January and February as being weeks of very grey cold weather always with a cold wind often accompanied by rain for some of the day. Although storm Eowen was not on a scheduled weekend for a club outing I felt it just reinforced the feeling that going anywhere was not going to be a pleasant experience apart from the very occasional day such as Thursday 6th February when for one day sandwiched between a series of miserable days anyone who happened to be free could experience similar weather to that of 2nd January!

On 2nd March the forecast was good enough to tempt out five Club members. The forecast was still of cold winds and significant windchill on the high tops so the group chose to avoid anything very high and instead settled for the Sma Glen and climbed the Graham, Meall Dearg from Amulree. The photos show they had a good day with clear views and I think they were all delighted to be on a hill where they could enjoy a view and stay dry.

The other successful event has been the annual dinner. After the successful event of last year when 15 of us enjoyed an excellent meal at the Courtyard restaurant in Cupar we decided to return there this year. There was a similar turnout a few days ago to that of last year and again, we all enjoyed an excellent meal and it was a chance for some the wider membership and those no longer able to climb high or remote hills to meet up with friends and hear about what some members are still getting up to.

Looking ahead, the usual cottage at **Boat of Garten** has been offered to us for the weekend of **16th – 18th May** which is two or three weeks later than usual so possibly a bit warmer? There is plenty of room in the house so just let me know a couple of weeks before if you would like to go.

For this year's **Summer week a house on the Ardtornish estate by Lochaline** has been booked for the week **Wednesday 11th – Wednesday 18th June**. Ardtornish Estate has too many cottages / houses / or flats in the big house to be able to cope with a mass change over on the same day such as Saturday or Sunday so for this reason each holiday let has its own change over day and we are booked into one where it is a Wednesday! The house that we are going to is bigger than we really need as it can sleep up to 10 so if anyone would like to join us for all or part of the week let me know. Currently there are 6 of us committed to going for the week and another possibly for two or three days.

Now that we are well into March and with longer daylight hopefully we can look forward to some good days with reasonable Spring weather amongst our beautiful hills?

Jean

