

## GUMC MATCH REPORT

### PRESIDENT WELCOME:

I'd like to start this newsletter with a moment's quiet reflection for the passing of the winter of 2015-2016 (and also Liam's car). Evidence of spring became apparent on the Torridon meet, with lots of sunny trad climbing and a running waterfall somewhat downgrading the star-status of Deep South Gully. Good winter conditions could still be found lingering on Ben Nevis until early May, however, exam season was rapidly infiltrating the psyche... and it all melted anyway. The Skye meet was the perfect set-up for a casual Cuillin traverse – dry, high clouds, snow patches to melt for water. And down on the sea cliffs it was sunny and the sea quite swimmable. The good, settled weather seems to have continued for most of Reiff – when I left, everyone was having to look for excuses for a rest and Lochiver pie day.

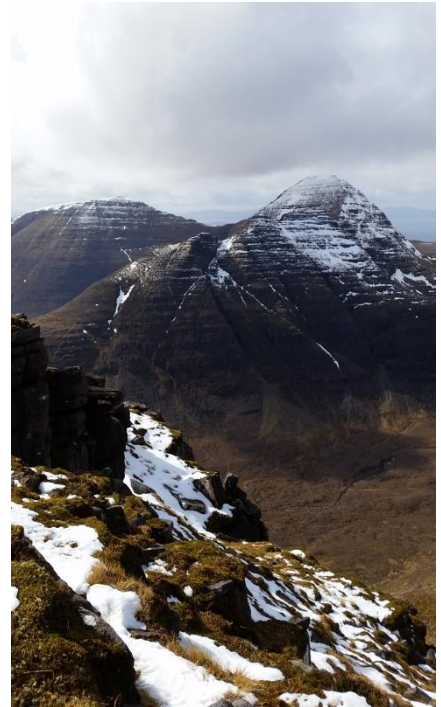
### GUMC ACTIVITIES:

#### **Torridon Meet – Iona McLean**

Way back in the first weekend of April was the GUM club's meet to Torridon. It was during the Easter holidays and the weather forecast was not very good, so the meet was quieter than usual. We arrived at the campsite in the middle of the night and pitched our tents in the dark. However, almost clear skies and the lack of light pollution in Torridon allowed us an amazing view of the stars. In the minibus everyone discussed their plans for the following day as usual. Alex, Jordan and I decided to walk up Ben Dearg, one of the smaller mountains in Torridon that had excellent views of the more popular and commonly climbed Liathach, Ben Alligin and Ben Eighe.

Waking up on Saturday morning and seeing the campsite in daytime, I realised how unprepared I was for the obscene amount of mud that covered the campsite. And I regretted my usual choice of converse as spare shoes. There was a lack of snow on the surrounding mountains, but of course we took our ice axes and crampons just in case. We shared the long walk-in with Alice and Katie who quickly went off to Ben Alligin to climb a gully. Turning off the path, it was a sudden steep walk up Ben Dearg, turning into a bit of a scramble as we approached the top. The sun had appeared from behind the clouds and was reflected by the snow-covered summit. But as expected, there wasn't enough snow for our crampons to be of much use. The views around us were stunning, so with no rush to leave, we really took our time on the summit, enjoying the beautiful weather. After spending about 45 minutes on top, we finally headed down the opposite side which was equally steep. At the end of a long but great day, the sun was starting to set as we walked down to the minibus which was waiting for us.

The next morning it was raining, resulting in most people sleeping in, reluctant to leave their tents. After persuading Jordan to drive the minibus for us, a large group of us went to get black pudding and to The Mountain Coffee Company in Gairloch for tea and scones which I totally recommend. Then we went to the beach, climbed on the rocks and stared wistfully out to sea.



## Isle of Eigg – Geoff Cooper

### An Eigg Adventure

Following tradition, the club has an island meet every year on the first May bank holiday weekend; the usual destination is the Isle of Rum, but having looked over at it on previous trips, and knowing that our pals from the Moray Mountaineering Club would be there that weekend, we decided to go to the Isle of Eigg instead. This allowed us the luxury of taking the fast boat from Arisaig, which left the mainland at a very civilised 11:00 rather than the usual 07:30 from Mallaig! Somehow we still managed to arrive only a few minutes before the sailing and the boarding was faffy – as might be expected.

The morning rain cleared up and we had a nice crossing to the island. Upon arrival, tents were set up on a lovely flat grassy area by the beach and Christoph started cooking a cake. Yes, you read that correctly; he has a special pan for his petrol stove that works like an oven and so he makes cakes in the most adventurous places. Over the weekend, he made two cakes, a meatloaf and a quiche. We like Christoph!

As mountaineering trips go, this was not a very active one... Speaking to Joe Glennie (a former GUMC member now with the Moray MC) we noted “two mountaineering clubs on an island without any mountains – we’d better take plenty of booze”! Some people walked up the one hill on the island (the Sgurr of Eigg), others pottered about on the beaches and

made fires / played about doing bushcraft etc, and nobody even attempted to climb anything. We had a fire by the beach on our first night and joined the Moray MC for a party in their bunkhouse on the second.

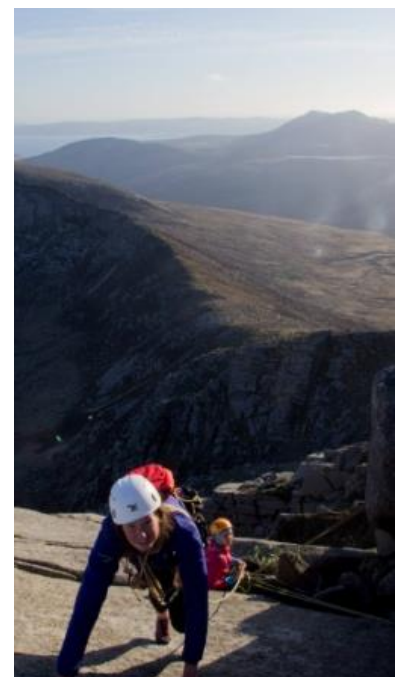
On the final night the wind and rain picked up to epic levels. We went to cook and seek shelter in the community centre on the other side of the bay. Over the night, the weather kept many of us awake and even had some people out running about in their underwear chasing down pots and pans that had been blown out from under their tent porches! Christoph used his MSR Hubba Hubba HP tent for the final time – not only did it bend alarmingly in the wind, but also allowed rain in through the vents, which pooled on the groundsheet and soaked everything. The tent was sold soon afterwards!

Despite the 'exotic' bad weather and lack of mountaineering, it was a fine trip... I reckon we'll be back!



### Isle of Arran – Liam Anderson

Arran in spring. While the rest of the nation stutters in choice of the season, Arran stands boldly in its summer colours. With skies shades of blue instead of grey illuminating the granite slabs that lie like islands in the sea of heather, carving a path to the summits of the pygmy mountains. With such an uncannily warm May the midges still lay low in slumber, grounded by the early date of the calendar and the slight breeze. So with weather beyond belief and a pest-free base camp set up in Glen Rosa Giddy, K-Bo, Emma, Sarah and I enjoyed the classic lines of Sou'Southwester Slabs, Blank and South Ridge Direct. One of my most stress-free and easy-going trips since arriving in the GUM club.





### **Cave Adventures – Duncan Butler**

#### **“Troglodyte Tendencies Required”**

In the woods about a kilometre up Glen Loin, behind the village of Arrochar and in the shadow of The Cobbler and Ben Narnain, lies a small, but interesting network of caves. The caves were formed in a very big and – I can imagine – very exciting rock fall, a long time ago. What remains is an area of very large boulders with tunnels and chambers (and a few hidden and perilous drops) to explore, all beneath the canopy of the birch and pine trees they sit among.

When climbing and mountaineering underwent its shift from the pastime of reverends and professors to that of the gnarly working class in the 20s and 30s, many a Glaswegian shipbuilder or factory worker would spend their weekends climbing on The Cobbler.

These men (as almost all of them were) were much less well off than their professional gentlemen predecessors, so a place to sleep without cost (and without the fabled “boot and bunnet” wearing rats of the barn on the local farm) was a necessity, tents were expensive and cumbersome, so many of this new generation of climbers turned to the Arrochar caves for a place to shiver through the night. They have been hosting cheapskate climbers ever since and it was only a matter of time before the Gumclub would go and explore them.

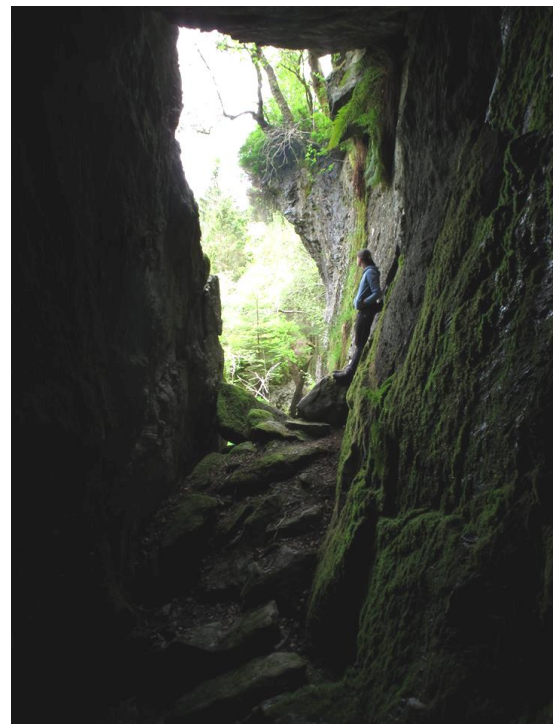
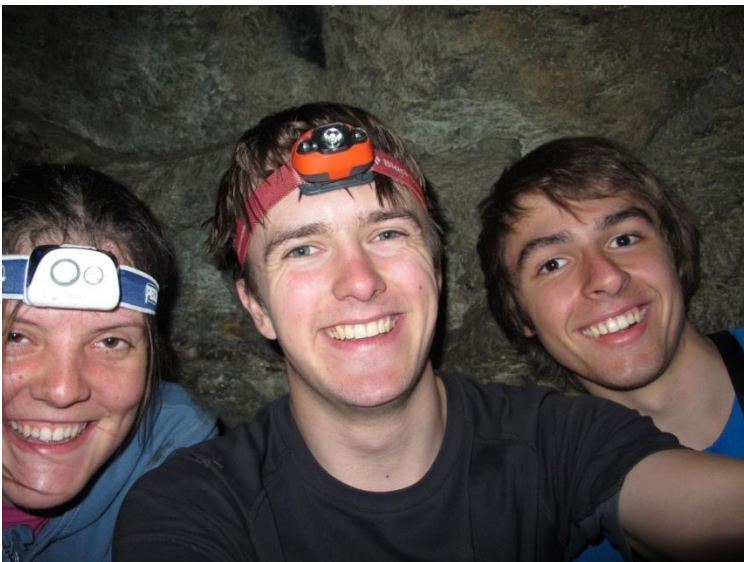
A plan was hatched between Liam, Alice and myself to sleep in the caves for the two nights before the Skye meet and to climb the best of the Cobbler’s classics by day – purely to



justify the trip. After missing the last train on Wednesday, Liam and I headed up on Thursday morning, with Alice in hot pursuit on the next train, having finally finished her year's coursework. Armed with a copy of *Mountain Days and Bothy Nights*, the book that inspired the trip, we located the caves, set up camp in the largest and most sheltered chamber we found and began exploring.

Behind these boulders, half way up a rock face is a large rectangular gallery, an easy scramble to the cave, and the not-so-secret knowledge that a tight squeeze at the back will drop you into a large (pitch black) chamber with many a tunnel leading off from it caused the birth of GUMC's caving faction. With a typical Gumclub 2:3 headtorch to person ratio, and trailing a rope behind us (safety first), we spent a while exploring the enormous chambers, tight tunnels and general dankness of the caves. Eventually we found the secret "lochan" – accessed by some old-school body-belaying, and definitely inhabited by some sort of aquatic cave monster, after this we took the mandatory cave selfie and went to look for firewood and fresh water.

Both were found and a pleasant evening of cave-whiskey, cave-tea and eventually sleep was followed by a very Scottish walk-in to the Cobbler, where the rain washed away our dreams of Punster's Crack and Whither Weather. Instead we walked along the road to Tarbet, bought a very reasonably priced pint in the hotel and waited for the minibus to take us to Skye for more adventures.



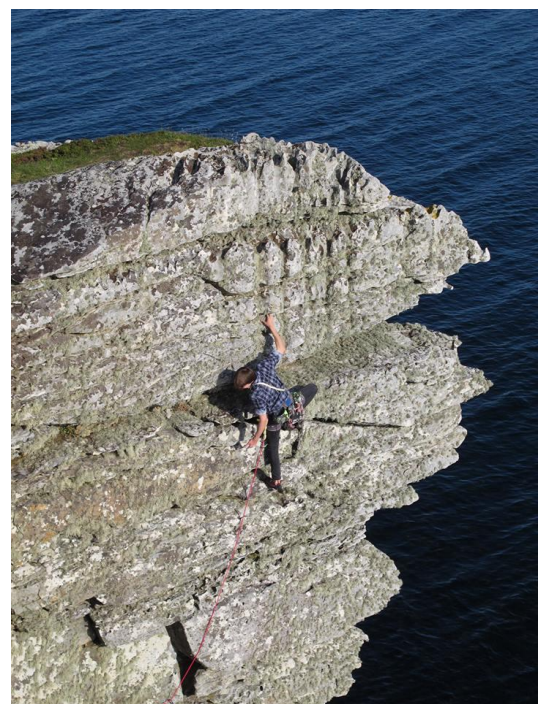
## **Skye Meet – Alex Ferguson**

With exams finally finished and the sun shining, the GUMC headed out on the second last meet of the semester to Skye. On arrival at Sligachan campsite we joined the designated GUMC area which was set out by strategically placed cars. After a restless night in cramped tents, a large group of us set off to Glen Brittle and Sgurr nan Eag while others went climbing and some attempted the Cullin ridge traverse.

Starting on the beach, we plodded up the path, with a view of the coast and out to Rum and Eigg. We stopped for a break at Coire Lagan and some were tempted to go for a swim when the sun finally emerged from behind the clouds. On reaching the summit we sunbathed and admired the fantastic views out to the islands before beginning the scramble down. By the time we reached Glen Brittle camp site, the weather was glorious and those tempted to swim earlier decided to take a dip at the beach. While they endured the frozen sea, a family kindly let some of us borrow kayaks to explore the amazing caves on the coast.

Once back at the campsite, we traded stories with other groups and a few of us had a delicious BBQ whilst trying, and failing, to avoid the onslaught of midges. Some went to the pub and others built a bonfire on the beach before collapsing in their tents for the night./

After a typically slow morning, one group set off to tackle the Dubh ridge, some went climbing and, after an hour sitting outside the Co-op in Broadford, a group of us finally reached Elgol's sea cliffs. It was definitely worth it for an afternoon of cragging and relaxing in the sun. Unfortunately, my Skye adventure ended on the Sunday night but most stayed another day for more fun-filled cragging, hiking and swimming.

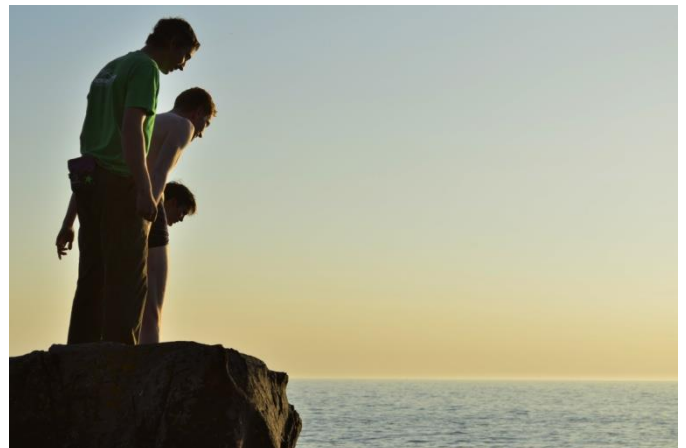


## Reiff Meet – Ignacy Czajewski

Sea stacks, Sunny Slabs, and Sick Sends

Possibly the sunniest meet in living memory, the Reiff trip was full of firsts, from first HSs through first HVSs to first ground falls (thankfully not from very high up). With ample psych the only thing holding anyone back was the sunburn, which made some of the more Scottish club members as red as

Nick's controversially killed lobster. However, seeing as we always complain about bad weather, too much sun could hardly be used as an excuse not to climb. On the other hand, as more of a celebratory meet for those who just finished their exams, I wondered how much climbing would actually be done, especially with Alasdair bragging about the worm he was going to eat well before the meet even started. With a full bottle of tequila between him and the worm I expected at least one day to be sacrificed to the god of hangovers and poor decisions. I was, however, pleasantly surprised as every day was spent climbing. Even on the first day several keen climbers tackled a surprisingly awkward "cave" VS, while Liam overcame any ornithophobia he may have had as he made his way up a delicate slab, dangerously close to an agitated cormorant. The rest of the week passed in a similar fashion, with both freshers and more veteran members improving on personal bests, and Jack dedicating himself to swimming every day, diving into the sea in consistently more inventive ways. Probably most impressively from the Tyrolean on the way back from the Old Man of Stoer, on which the climbing was phenomenal, made even better by the life altering Lochinver pies. Only once did ambition get the better of any of us, namely Robert, Hana and me, as we set off to climb Spaced out Rockers on the Road to Oblivion, a two pitch E4 we were thankfully able to back off of dry and without the loss of gear. However, our hubris was swiftly punished by a long and arduous bog slog back to the campsite, while the others sat comfortably on the beach by a fire. Overall, one could hardly wish for a better week, and even though Libby did leave a gallbladder lighter, we somehow returned to Glasgow with more body parts than we set off with...



## WHAT TO PACK FOR THE ALPS –Katie Bowen:

### **Sleeping Things!**

Tent, bivvy bag (although consider that Ecrins huts are approx 8-10 euro per night), sleeping bag and mat. Can get quite cool in the valleys at night and snowy bivvys are possible even in summer.

### **Eating Things!**

Gas canisters might be tricky to get hold of in some remoter valleys. In France blue “clip on” canisters are really popular and incompatible with “screw” stoves. Meths can be interesting to obtain. Also a spoon or something (pitons?) and a drinking vessel.

Nothing like a Thermos flask to proclaim that you are a Brit on holiday.

Remember having a lighter = friends for life!

Water Bottle(s) or Camelback, because kidney failure isn't cool

### **Wardrobe Department**

Trainers or approach shoes

Mountain boots if you're planning on some alpine

Flip flops

Rock shoes

Clothing – is quite personal but as you might go from -5 at 3am in the morning to +35 degrees in the valley layers are pretty handy. Long sleeves are good to prevent sunburn and trying to pull off the goth look on a glacier with a dark base layer will be a tad uncomfortable. It's generally warm enough to dry things pretty quickly if you wash them in the shower. Remember socks.

Belay jacket or a warm fleece.

Waterproofs – should (hopefully) live in the bottom of your rucksack so can be lightweight. In reality, if it's raining it'll probably be quite sweatily humid in the valley anyway.

Hat and/or lucky buff

Gloves – thin pair for dexterity and while moving, thicker pair for cold early morning starts or “just in case”

Swimming Things and Towel – for siesta



## **Climbing Gear**

Harness

Sport climbing – quickdraws, couple of slings and screwgates, **prussiks**, belay plate.

Alpine climbing – as for sport but also couple of long-ish ice screws, more slings and screwgates, set of nuts, maybe a few cams, tat. You can buy orange plastic things for a couple of Euros which allow you to turn a regular screwgate into a pulley and reduce friction for crevasse rescue.

Helmet – as if the French guide above you doesn't drop rocks on you your friends will.

Rope – a half is probably the most versatile and lighter, though a 70m single will be good for sport routes.

Crampons – make sure they fit your boots and put them on the right feet, also thread the straps through your laces so they don't go tumbling 57m down the North face of Monte Disgrazia. Anti-balling plates extremely useful for negotiating slushy glaciers. Stash a couple of zip ties in case of breakages.

Axes – most alpine routes can be done with a walking axe, either wrist or bungee leash to prevent it going on a solo adventure into a crevasse.

Walking poles – useful for long walk-ins and dodgy knees/ankles.

## **Misc Things**

Head torch

Knife – primarily for slicing le fromage

First Aid Things – trauma dressing, finger tape, blister plasters, painkillers.

Washing Things

Compass, whistle, batteries

Camera

Mobile Phone, Charger, European Adapter Thingy (there are sockets in the huts). 112 for emergencies.

Suncream

Sunglasses

Notepad and pen – for hitchhiking signs, recording thoughts and feelings, Hangman etc

Pack of cards?

Small plastic bags, like your mother said, are always useful.

## **Maps and Guidebooks**

You can get the relevant ISN map (it's blue) from the same shop as you can get chicken nuggets.

Escalades autour d'Ailefroide – available locally. For valley cragging and multi-pitch sport. French. Has in-jokes but good topos.

Mountaineering in the Ecrins Massif: Cheaper alternative for Alpine. Will get you up a route but not entirely accurate.

Ecrins East Snow and Mixed: expensive but lots of options for alpine, especially around the Glacier Blanc basin, English and French versions available.

## **Admin**

Passport, the campsite will hold it while you're there so a photocopy might be useful.

EHIC

Insurance – either BMC (more expensive, full on “travel insurance” but extra monies for reciprocal rights) or Austrian Alpine Club (cheaper but “rescue-only”), should come with a little card to carry.

Euros