

Cairngorm Club Climbing Activities – Issue 1 March 2026

This note provides a summary of the Club's climbing (roped) activities that take place throughout the year. Please contact the Club's Climbing Meets Secretary at climb@cairngormclub.org.uk for more information or any queries you have on the Club's climbing activities. This note covers the following topics:

- Club Winter Indoor Meets
- Club Summer Outdoor Meets
- Potential Climbing Venues
- Other Climbing Meets
- Organising Other Meets
- Communications using WhatsApp
- Participation in Club Climbing Activities
- Training Course for Climbers
- Crag Access

Winter Indoor Meets

We aim to climb outside as much as we can, but if the weather is not suitable for outdoor climbing we climb indoors at the local climbing walls. During the winter months there is a regular Wednesday afternoon/evening meet at Transition Extreme (TX). Members also use other climbing or bouldering walls in the area such as RGU, Alford Community Campus and Bloc 10 at other times during the week.

Summer Outdoor Meets

During the summer months we plan to have at least one weekly outdoor day meet on Tuesdays with the option of moving it to another day of the week if the weather forecast is poor for Tuesday. Traditionally the outdoor meets start at the beginning of British Summer Time (BST), which allows members who are only free in the evening to join the meets on the longer summer evenings. However, if the weather allows it, we will try to climb outside before BST starts.

Members are encouraged to suggest a venue they are keen to visit for the next few weekly meets rather than using a preset schedule of crags. This gives us the flexibility to choose a suitable venue based on the latest weather forecast. A list of potential crags is provided at the end of this note for this purpose.

Finalised details of the week's outdoor meet (venue/timing/parking etc.) will be posted on a WhatsApp group used by the Club's climbers on Monday (more information about this in "Communications").

Start times may vary depending on tide times or travel distance. If we are thinking of going further afield than the local crags, we will try to give advance warning so people can make arrangements for a longer day out.

Sometimes we are forced to make a change of venue on the day (e.g. weather), we will post this on the WhatsApp group for any last-minute updates.

Potential Climbing Venues

At the end of this note is a list of crags we might visit during the season. They are grouped into the following categories:

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- South Aberdeen Sea Cliffs (covers crags from Altens to Newtonhill);
- North Aberdeen Sea Cliffs (covers crags from Collieston to Longhaven);
- Aberdeenshire Inland Crags (covers crags mainly near Ballater);
- Angus or Perthshire Venues (for full day meets or at the weekend);
- Strathspey Venues (for full day meets or at the weekend);
- Moray Coast Venues (for full day meets or at the weekend);
- Selected Birded Venues (visits only possible before birds return to nest);
- Less Popular South or North Aberdeen Sea Cliffs.

The list of crags is restricted to crags that:

- have sufficient routes in the grade ranges that our regular members like to climb;
- are popular with most members who participate in our meets;
- are normally free of nesting birds (or may only have isolated nests);
- are within a reasonable driving distance from Aberdeen for an afternoon, evening or full day meet.

Some of the popular crags provide a more limited range of grades available than what we would like, these are noted in the crag list.

The list includes venues that are further afield than we have typically used in the previous year's e.g. Angus/ Perthshire/Strathspey/Moray Coast. These can be used for longer day outings or at the weekends and will provide more variety in our climbing venues. This also allows people who are only free at the weekends to participate in Club climbing meets.

Many of the coastal crags require a low tide to access the routes. In the crag list the coastal crags are categorized (using the guidebook system) as either requiring:

- a low tide (Tidal) to access the routes;
- those that are possible outside of low tide (Partial Tidal) but will restrict access to some of the climbs;
- and those that are not generally affected by tides (Non-Tidal).

Tide times and heights for the coming week can be found on the BBC Weather app or from [TideTime.org](https://www.tidetime.org) for a longer lookahead.

In addition to the tide times other factors play a part in determining whether there are likely to be good climbing conditions on the coast. Unfavorable conditions can occur if the humidity levels are high or conditions result in condensation on the rock. This results in the rock feeling "greasy" which makes climbing unpleasant and insecure. A general rule of thumb is that a lack of a breeze and/or sun on the rock can result in "greasy" conditions during the summer months but this is difficult to predict accurately.

The crag list includes some crags that we typically don't visit often/at all as they don't meet all our requirements or just aren't popular but may be worth considering as an alternative to the "usual suspects".

Some crags are more popular with members than others and have enough routes to justify multiple visits in any season.

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Some venues are much better as early season venues so we may visit them more than once at the start of the season to make best use of them.

Information on most crags in the list can be found in the following guidebooks;

- Scottish Mountaineering Club (SMC) North East Outcrops (NEO) 2003 Edition,
- The Royal Deeside Climbs 3rd Edition by Jules Lines;
- SMC Highland Outcrops South 2016;
- SMC Sport Climbing (or 7aMax sport climbing)

If a crag is not in any of these guidebooks or there is more up to date information available, links to any information or topos will be posted on the WhatsApp group. The SMC route database is also a useful resource for information on crags and routes: <https://routes.smc.org.uk/> as well as UK Climbing <https://www.ukclimbing.com/>

A lot of the coastal crags in NEO are occupied by colonies of nesting birds which we avoid during the nesting season. However, it may be possible to climb on these crags in late winter/early spring after the winter storms have cleaned the crags and before the birds return to nest. A small number of these crags have been included in case there is an opportunity to climb on them before the birds return. Some crags may only have a few nesting birds which may restrict some routes but it may be possible to climb on parts of the crags without disturbing the birds. This is mentioned in the crag list. Members should be aware of the legislation concerning the protection of nesting birds and their responsibilities to comply with the legislation, and in particular the protection of birds included in Schedule 1 which can be found on both inland and coastal crags, see RSPB webpage for more information <https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/schedules>.

Other Climbing Meets

There are a number of Club Weekend meets that might be of interest to climbers (see the club calendar for details). As the places on these meets are usually limited and fill up fast, if you want to climb on these meets you will need to organise a climbing partner and book your places via the meet organiser as early as possible.

It is also possible to organise specific climbing meets that can either be scheduled for a specific date/venue (possibly with accommodation booked) or left more open with just a date scheduled so that a venue and any accommodation can be organised closer to the date, based on the weather forecast.

Most Club members organise their own (winter or summer) climbing in the mountains but if there is enough interest to have a group meet for a particular venue or area this could be organised, (bearing in mind the risks of having multiple teams climbing on the same route.)

There may be sufficient demand to organise some longer climbing trips to other parts of the UK or overseas.

Of course, the WhatsApp group can be used to organise adhoc meets or to find a climbing partner for a particular day (see more on Communications).

Organising Other Meets

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Extra meets (outside of the weekly day meet) will need people who are willing to take the lead in organizing a specific event – especially one that they want to see happen. It will also need people to commit to joining it, otherwise they are unlikely to succeed. If you think you would like to organise a meet/trip please let the Climbing Meets Secretary know what you are thinking (type of event and date), and whether you would like any support and we can determine how best to organise it. We will use specific WhatsApp groups for this purpose (see Communications below).

Communications using WhatsApp

The Climbers WhatsApp group will be the primary communication method for weekly Club indoor and outdoor meets. Any Club member is welcome to join the Group by contacting the Club Climbing Meets Secretary. The group currently has about 70 Club members of which about 40 have participated in at least one meet in the last year. To avoid having multiple overlapping conversations in this relatively large WhatsApp Group we are going to set up a WhatsApp Community which can consist of multiple WhatsApp groups that are set up for specific purposes. The current WhatsApp group will be incorporated into the Community which is expected to have separate groups for:

- Club day and evening meets (usually Tuesday or Wednesday);
- Arranging ad-hoc meets or finding partners;
- Chat on climbing topics e.g. asking for advice, stories/photos of your climbing, selling gear etc.,
- New groups will be set up for specific trips e.g. weekends, further afield.

In a WhatsApp Community people can decide which of the Groups in the Community they want to join and participate in e.g. post in or get notifications on posts. A Community has a dedicated event function which notifies all members of the community of planned events. This will be used for any organised meets.

Participation in Club Climbing Activities

Anyone participating in a Club climbing meet **must** be a current member of the Club to ensure all parties are covered by the Mountaineering Scotland (MS) insurance. For interim members this is limited to 4 meets or 6 months, after which they will need to join as either an Associate or Ordinary member which includes MS insurance.

For people who are new to climbing it is recommended that you gain some experience of climbing at an indoor wall before joining an outdoor meet. Joining one of our indoor meets is a good way for you to get to know us and us to know you before venturing outdoors.

For outdoor meets we expect people to be a competent indoor (roped) climber so that they know how to safely tie-in, belay, hold a fall, etc. in a controlled indoor environment. Climbing outdoors exposes individuals to additional hazards and risks which are absent at an indoor wall. There are also a lot of additional skills that need to be learnt and practiced. To enable a safe transition from indoor to outdoor climbing, an inexperienced climber would ideally get some professional training on outdoor climbing before joining Club meets. However, this is not always possible and so on Club meets inexperienced outdoor climbers should team up with a pair of more experienced climbers. This should allow them to gain some of the knowledge and experience they need to become an independent outdoor climber, but this should not be seen as is not a substitute for training that

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is given by a professional organisations. Club members do not provide any formal training on Club meets, and individuals should be aware of the risks involved in climbing and mountaineering and be responsible for their own actions and involvement in any Club climbing activities. For completeness, this is the Mountaineering Scotland Participation Statement.

“Mountaineering Scotland recognises that climbing and mountaineering are activities with a danger of personal injury or death. Participants in these activities should be aware of and accept these risks and be responsible for their own actions and involvement.”

Some venues may not be suitable for inexperienced outdoor climbers due to the specific hazards associated with a venue e.g. those with an exposed un-roped approach/scramble or those requiring abseiling skills etc. If you are unsure of your abilities or experience to safely participate in any of the Club’s outdoor climbing meets the Club’s Climbing Meets Secretary will be happy to discuss this with you.

Training Courses for Climbers

Many organisations such as Mountaineering Scotland, Glenmore Lodge, Professional Guides etc. provide a good range of formal training courses on climbing skills and techniques. There may be partial funding available from the Club (usually at 50% non-residential cost) for an individual to attend a recognised course that we cannot easily provide. Applicants for Club subsidies should normally be a paid-up member (Associate or Ordinary) for at least a year, however there can be a little flexibility in this requirement in line with one of the club's charitable aims which is to encourage participation in the sport of mountaineering.

Crag Access

Since the NEO outcrops book was published in 2003, there have been some changes in parking/approach routes to crags. We will try to advise on the best parking/access for crags where we know this is an issue. To maintain good relations with the local communities it is important we take care on how and where we park/access the crags. For some venues where there is limited parking so it would be helpful to organise car shares.

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List of Crags - suitable for Club day meets (midweek or weekend)				
Area and Crag	NEO page or other source	Tidal, Partial or Not	Birded	Comments/Notes
South Aberdeen Sea Cliffs				
Long Slough	52	NT	Partial	Just enough routes in the right grade range but best early season before the VS routes on the left hand side are affected by birds.
Cainrobin Point	106	NT	No	Popular - good quality climbs over a good grade range. Access and Parking can be problematic.
Yellow Wall	Topo	NT	No	Sport - has become very popular with longish routes in the 5s and 6s
Boltsheugh	186	NT	No	Sport - A good selection of easier graded sport routes on both upper and lower tiers. Some trad also possible
MurrayHeugh	Topo	NT	No	Sport - Good set of easier 5-6c sport routes on non-tidal Eveready Slab. North facing. Other harder sectors are tidal
Blackrock Gulch	64	PT	No	Small venue with a some good easier graded climbs but nothing worthwhile in the harder grades.
Souter Head	67	PT	No	Popular - good variety of routes and grades. Needs low tide to reach rainbow inlet, but some other parts are accessible at higher tides
Clashrodneyn Pink Slab	103	PT	No	Popular - pink slab routes are only accessible for short period at low tide. A few non tidal routes can be done on upper tier or move to Cairnrobin pt
Alan's cliff	58	T	No	Popular - Lots of pleasant easier graded climbs, needs low tide and calm sea to traverse the base of crag to access all the climbs
Humpback	61	T	No	Enough good routes in the right grade range, needs low tide to access the stack, and use of a rope handrail to descend the stack
Deceptive Wall	51	T	No	Popular - Lots of routes in the easier grade range, but needs a low tide and a favourable wind/calm sea state for good conditions
North Aberdeen Sea Cliffs				
Graip	203	T	Partial	Good climbing on the tidal area, needs a low tide and a favourable wind for good conditions. Nesting birds may restrict access to some routes
Fulmar Wall	219	PT	No	Good selection of longer routes on good granite, low tide to access the routes at the seaward end of the gully, but possible if not high tide/rough sea
Meikle Partans	222	NT	No	Most popular venue on this part of the coast - great routes at all grades on some of the best granite on the coast
Greymare Slabs	233	NT	Partial	Needs a calm sea to access routes safely by abseil. Lots of easy slab climbing but not good for routes above HS. Birds may nest on top part of cliff
Alligator Ridge	260	NT	Partial	Good selection of routes on but partially birded on east facing wall and the ridge in summer which may restrict climbing options
North Glash Quarry	UKC	NT	No	Sport - good selection of easier sport routes 5s and 6s on one slabby west facing wall and one steeper east facing wall
Aberdeenshire Inland Venues				
Pass of Ballater - West	Royal Deeside	N/A	No	Popular venue - Lots of great routes at all grades on all 3 tiers in Jules's new guide (3rd edition)
Pass of Ballater -East	Royal Deeside	N/A	No	Popular venue - Lots of great routes at all grades on the eastern areas in Jules's new guide (3rd edition)
Bellamore	Royal Deeside	N/A	No	Good early season venue with good range of grades before bracken and insects make it unpleasant/overgrown. Rock can be friable
BurnOVat	Royal Deeside	N/A	No	Popular venue - lots of small buttresses in the glen. Best early season before insects become problematic. Rock can be friable
Cambus o May - Sport	Royal Deeside	N/A	No	Sport - Renovation of the quarry means there are now a good range of newly bolted routes at all grades, but the back wall is slow to dry.
Clachnabeinn	381	N/A	No	Not been visited by the club for a while, lots of good easier grade routes. Needs a warm still day to be a pleasant climbing experience
Angus or Perthshire Venues (for full day or at weekend)				
Kirriemuir Quarry	SMC Sport/7a Max	N/A	No	Sport - Good selection of easier graded sport routes that are possible in most conditions (dries quickly and is a sun trap)
Rob's Reed nr Forfar	SMC Sport/7a Max	N/A	No	Sport - Harder routes but better climbing than Kirriemuir (there are no easy routes below 6a) on sandstone/conglomerate.
Abroath sea cliffs	SMC Sport/7a Max	PT	Partial	Sport - not used by the Club, worth a visit as it has a good range of grades. Variety of sectors/aspects from easy access to committing abseils
Glen Clova	415	N/A	Partial	Great venue with great choice of routes at all grades (Kirriemuir can be used as a backup if it is wet in the Glen)
Polney Crag Dunkeld	SMC Highland S	N/A	No	Great venue with great choice of routes at all grades
Strathspey Venues (for full day or at weekend)				
Hunty's Cave	SMC Highland S	N/A	Partial	Great venue - excellent routes at all grade, can be midgy as its sheltered. Stays dry in light showers
Creag Dubh	SMC Highland S	N/A	No	Great venue with many classics but with limited easy routes and notorious for some bold climbing
Moray Coast Venues (for full day or weekend)				
Cummingston	311	PT	Partial	Good range of route and grades, but a lot of the easier routes are very sandy. Nesting Birds can be encountered at top of routes. Mainly N facing
Logie Head	338	PT	Partial	Very popular - Good selection of routes in all grades. Best early season before birds nest on tidal and star zone, other sectors are usually bird free
Redhythe Point	350	PT	Partial	Not used as a Club meet venue before but has lots of easier graded climbs and various different sectors/aspects
Selected Birded Venues (visits only possible before birds start to nest)				
South Cove	79	NT	Birded	Good routes when clean, faces SE so catches any sun in winter/early spring before birds return
Red Wall	265	PT	Birded	One of the largest and finest cliffs in the area with good range of grades and some classics. Serious and intimidating climbing venue
Less Popular South or North Aberdeen Sea Cliffs				
Clashrodneyn North	103	NT	No	Small venue with limited number of routes and exposed scramble access. Been used in the past by the Club
Bridge of One Hair	45 and UKC	NT	No	Set of short easier routes on the east facing wall (not in NEO but on UKC) but protection is sparse (top rope). N facing wall suffers from condensation
Whisky Cliff	43	T	No	Possible to combine with Bridge of One Hair. Limited number of routes, accessed via abseil and steep grassy topout
Peel Slough	131	NT	No	Very short climbs on east facing wall with limited gear. North facing wall needs favourable wind to reduce condensation
Hidden Inlet (South)	UKC	NT	No	Small venue with a limited number of routes, best for a short session. Lack of gear on easier routes and suffers from condensation
Floors Craig	167	NT	Partial	Rarely visited but lots of suitable graded climbing, recent rock fall has affected some areas. Need to walk in from Newtonhill now
Greenslough	Topo	NT	Partial	New venue at Newtonhill (since NEO published). Routes mainly VS and upwards
Earnsheugh	109	NT	Partial	One of the best crags in the area for hard climbers (VS and above) but requires committing abseil descent. Fulmars present in the summer!
Buchan Wall	Topo	NT	Partial	Big cliff nr Boddam developed by Keith Milne, only one easy route at HS with committing abseil in, partially birded
Habour Wall and Back Door	181	PT	No	Rarely visited by Club as routes mainly HVS+ but good climbing with a south and north facing wall
Cambus o May - Trad	Royal Deeside	N/A	No	4 decent routes in 2nd quarry HS to E1, just enough for a short visit or combine with sport routes in 1st quarry