



Cioch Mountaineering Club (Dunfermline)

Established 1988

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Happy New Year!

Meet Report: Christmas Meet, Onich 2nd/3rd December 2011

Chairman's intro from Dave Paton:

Hi everyone. I hope you all got home from Inchree safely. I would just like to say that I thought the evening went exceptionally well and everyone seemed to have a great time, I certainly did. Thanks again to Richard for organising the Photo competition, the standard seems to get better each year and there were some great pics. I also have to say I thought that Wattie's was a worthy winner. Thanks again, again to Richard for organising the Ceilidh dancing, he did a great job. However, he is looking for someone to take over from him next year, fairs fair, it would be great if we could get a volunteer [*this may prompt Bill to whisk Joyce off for another round the world trip!*]. Also thanks to John for again selecting and playing the more 'modern stuff'. Even the owner of Inchree though that his selection was good. The numbers were a bit down on last year, but what we lacked in numbers we more than made up for in spirit. Tell everyone who wasn't there what a great night they missed. I'm looking forward to next year already.

Meet Report:

Hoping that the forecast would be correct for once, Wattie and Richard set off from Dollar at 7:30 on the Friday morning aiming to make the most of the Christmas meet weekend. The forecast said that the sky would be blue in the morning with a front working its way eastwards from around lunchtime. As they turned off the motorway at Stirling they met the cloud front – so much for another accurate forecast! Never mind it was not raining - yet... The target for the day was the Corbett Beinn nan Imirean on the north side of the A85 as it runs through Glen Dochart. As they parked up clear of the access road to Auchessan the weather was even less inviting with a light drizzle starting to fall. Once past the crags of Creag nan Uan the drizzle had changed to rain and then snow – at least snow was preferable to rain. The cloud level dropped and the compass had to be brought out to find Meall Garbh and the ridge up to the summit. The walking was now in 6" of snow and the wind was getting progressively stronger so a quick about turn was made when the cairn was reached and the sandwiches were left in the rucksacks for consumption back in the car. At this point Richard's new Meindel boots started to press on his ankle bone and cause a sharp pain leading to the odd expletive that Olly would have been proud of – it was not going to be a good weekend for Richard and new boots! Despite Richard hobbling a bit they were back at the car by 13:30. A combination of sitting in the car in wet gear whilst eating lunch and drinking tea soon had the windows steamed up. As they were almost finished a car which could have been Maureen's drove by so they set off in pursuit, but since they did not catch up after a few miles Wattie reckoned that the driver was going too fast to have been Maureen.



Neil, Stuart and Sharon were also starting off their Onich weekend with a Friday walk. With notching up another munro in mind they had opted for Beinn Mhanach but taking account of all the recent wet weather they drove to Achallader farm to climb the hill via the coll between Beinn Achallader and Beinn an Daingean thus avoiding the often squelchy walk in from Auch. Reasonable progress was made but the weather got progressively worse as the day wore on with the wind increasing and showers blowing through. Eventually a choice had to be made when the 630m col below the final climb was reached – time to call it a day and leave the tick for a better day. This turned out to be a good decision since they did not get back to the car until 16:00.

The Onich Hotel enjoyed a good bar meal trade on the Friday evening with 15 meet attendees opting to dine there before they headed for the Four Seasons bar and the hard work for the evening – yes voting for the category winners in the annual photo competition. As with recent years the standard of entries in the competition was high with a good number of entries in the new Nature category. Members of ScottishHills.com were also in the bar on the Friday evening so they were asked to join in judging the photo competition – the more the merrier.

email contributions to newsletter@cioch.co.uk

Dave P takes up the story:

On arriving on Friday night everyone seemed to be filled with gloom about the forecast for the Saturday and a lot of people seemed to decide to have a long lie and do very little. However, after a conversation with Olly and Stuart we decided that 'The Pap' would be a good option and after roping in Graeme we made plans. The Pap is something that I've always wanted to do, but when I was 'bagging' it seemed to get overlooked, so despite the weather I was looking forward to it. There was also the added bonus that, as it was a short day, we could get a bit of a lie in. As it turned out the weather on Saturday morning wasn't too bad, it had stopped raining. I even glimpsed some blue sky from the chalet window and the wind seemed to have dropped. So we set off with more optimism than seemed possible the night before. We climbed the well worn, zigzag path to the coll, finding that for most of the way we seemed to be sheltered from the wind. Views to Ardgour opened up and most of the surrounding Munro tops seemed to be clear as well. We even had the occasional patch of blue sky. All in all not what was forecast. We did get a bit wind at the coll but the path spiralled round the Pap and most of the climb was sheltered. It was bit windy on the summit, but worth it for the views across to the Mamores and along Loch Leven to Ballachulish and Ardgour beyond. It was mild enough to drop off the summit and sit in relative comfort to have lunch. The walk down was uneventful, with Graeme, Stuart and I opting for the return by the same path and Olly taking the direct route. We only experienced one light, short shower, which was barely worth putting waterproofs on for. All in all, a good, if somewhat short day out. It just goes to show that sometimes it's better to take a chance with the weather. After all if the weather had turned nasty we could have turned back.

The weather forecast was certainly a good excuse for a long lie but it was not bad enough to stop getting the cobwebs blown away and working up an appetite for the Saturday evening meal. Steve, Mags, Wattie, Richard, Bruce and Alison opted for a circular route to the transmitter mast above Balahulish. The route started from the slate quarry beside the village and initial entertainment came from members on the Royal Marine Reserves [correction from printed version] who were practicing climbing up part of the quarry on ropes and ladders and then abseiling down another. One poor marine had obviously earned the wrath of his instructor and was having to do push-ups over a large muddy puddle. There was a pleasant wander up through pine woods and then an aerobic steep ascent to the mast where some shelter from the wind was found behind the transmitted cabins allowing a quick snack. Then there was a long winding descent on a good forestry road to near the Glencoe visitor's center and then a loop back on a road side path to Balahulish. Steve and Bruce disappeared into the distance and were back at the cars some time before the others. Richard decided that wearing brand new Scarpa Manta boots on a walk which involved a fast tramp on hard, non snow covered tracks was not the best idea he had ever had since a lovely blister had developed on his little toe.



David Currie wins the prize for being the most adventurous considering the weather conditions:

I had two goals for the Xmas meet at Onich - 1) enjoy the festivities and 2) have a go at Stob Coire Sgreamhach. No. 1 was easy - comfortable (and compact!) accommodation, good food, good company, and well organised too!



No.2 was not so easy. My apprehension of a wintry ascent was not eased by the terrible forecast for the Saturday and the fact that no one else was daft enough to join me. The conditions at the car park in Glen Coe however were not too bad so I headed off, deliberately leaving my (very old, very heavy) crampons in the boot: if it got too icy I'd simply turn back. Sounds a bit wimpy I know, but I knew I'd be happy even to get up into the Hidden Valley as I'd never been there before.

The going was easy until, too intent on following a group ahead, I missed the river-crossing point and ended up having to climb a scree slope then traverse through the little moss-covered, rocky-floored woods on the west side

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of the river. Fairly unpleasant, but the gravel beds at the foot of Coire Gabhail were soon reached and once the view opened out the muttering and cursing ceased immediately.

Call it the Hidden Valley or the Lost Valley (I prefer 'Hidden' - we know where it is and the valley itself couldn't care less) - it is a strange place, made more so by the wintry light. Bleak, yes - but not in a God-forsaken way. Eerie, yes - but not in a scary way. Beautiful, yes - but a hard-edged beauty.

Onwards and upwards into the snowline - the headwall of the Coire looming ahead. There was a lot more snow on it than I'd hoped for, but while the going was fairly easy I decided to keep going. Further up, as the slope steepened I fell in behind two guys who were doing a fine job of making footsteps in the soft-ish snow. Their offer of letting me past was politely declined! The last 50 metres or so to the ridge was slow, but with no ice underneath the snow, the lack of crampons was, so far, not a problem.

The calm conditions of the Coire were obliterated on gaining the ridge. I was expecting the change, but was still surprised at the brutality of it. The wind was strong, blowing snow and ice all round. Big decision time... the ridge up to the left, towards Sgreamhach, didn't look too icy, the gusts seemed manageable.. ok let's go, but lets go quickly!

The buffeting was indeed manageable and I carefully picked my way round the icier parts and at about 1.15 made the summit. The return to the col was easier than I thought it would be as the wind/snow/hail had eased slightly. The col itself seemed a different place to the one I'd left about 30 minutes previously. About 15 people - all part of the same group I think - were milling around, either deciding whether to go on, or prepping to head back down. Worryingly for me, the drop off into the Coire seemed a hell of a lot steeper and snowier than when I'd come up. Now I really wished I had brought my crampons! There was nothing for it but to take a really deep breath, jump the queue (well, I wasn't part of their group and there was no way I was going to wait for all of them to get their feet in crampons or their arses in gear!) and head down.



Using existing foot holes where I could and my axe for security, slow but steady down-climbing saw me safely clear of the steepest part. The lack of ice underfoot was a huge bonus and I even seemed to be moving faster than some of those with crampons. It was slow and tiring though and I now started to think about the time - even though I had my head-torch, I did not relish the prospect of stumbling through the lower valley in the failing light. So I pushed on, gained the path heading down the east side of the river to the crossing point where the stepping-stone were meant to be... and saw nothing but cold, fast water. No options again. Content with having dry feet so far, I ploughed straight across. With the wind and rain now fairly incessant it was a soggy, but thankfully fairly short, trudge back to the car.

A short, tough day that along with all the festivities and entertainment made for a hugely enjoyable week-end.

In addition to the exploits mentioned above, some people opted for walks in the woods local to Inceer whilst others chose to scale the climbing wall at the Ice Factory or the north face of Fort William High Street - what's left of it.

After a wash and spruce up it was then time for the festivities to begin with pre meal drinks in some of the chalets and then down to the Four Seasons for an excellent meal - as usual. Olly managed to spruce himself up as only he can.... During the meal the voting for the overall winner of the photo competition was held with the results as follows:

- 🚩 Overall & Winter Category Winner: Wattie Ramage.
- 🚩 Summer Category Winner: Dave Paton.
- 🚩 Nature Category Joint Winners: John Warnock & Wattie Ramage.
- 🚩 People Category Winner: Olly Simpson
- 🚩 Open Category Joint Winners: Steve Gray & Richard Christie

Copies of the photos can be viewed on the Club Website.

email contributions to newsletter@cioch.co.uk

After Dave's Chairman's speech, which was suitably short, it was time for the Ceilidh part of the evening's entertainment. The dancing was as enthusiastic, and at times as misdirected, as usual but everyone was enjoying themselves. After Richard's swan song as Ceilidh disc spinner John Warnock took over with an excellent choice of music for the rest of the night. The time sped by and all too soon it was 1am and time to head off to bed or find out which chalet the party was in.

No one seemed to be in a great hurry to get up on the Sunday morning since the weather was no more inviting then it had been on Saturday. Most, if not all, headed for home, which in itself presented a bit of a challenge. The temperature had dropped overnight and the road was covered in a thin layer of icy snow requiring some careful driving. At various places over Ranoch Moor other road users had fallen foul of the conditions with a number of cars lying on their side, in ditches or down embankments. Thankfully no one seemed to have been hurt and all those on the meet made it home safe and sound. Despite the disappointing weather another great Christmas meet.

2012 Meet Dates

13 th / 14 th January	Strathspey Bunkhouse, Newtonmore	Full
3 rd / 4 th February	Lagangarbh, Glencoe	Full
9 th / 10 th March	Aite Cruinnichidh, Roybridge	Full
13 th / 14 th April	Inver Croft, Achnasheen	Booking opens: 19 th Jan
4 th / 5 th / 6 th May	Strontian, Ardgour	Booking opens: 9 th Feb
8 th / 9 th June	Sligachan Bunkhouse, Skye	Booking opens: 15 th March
6 th / 7 th July	Ling Hut, Torridon	Booking opens: 19 th April
10 th / 11 th August	Causewayfoot Farm, Keswick	Booking opens: 10 th May
7 th / 8 th September	Invergarry Bunkhouse	Booking opens: 14 th June
5 th / 6 th October	Sail Mhor, Dundonnell	Booking opens: 12 th July
2 nd / 3 rd November	Mill Cottage, Feshiebridge	Booking opens: 15 th Aug
7 th / 8 th December	Onich (Christmas Meet)	Booking opens: 13 th Sept

Cioch Winter Slide Show Programme 2011 – 2012

Date	Show	Date	Show	Date	Show
15/12/11	Wattie Ramage: Same Old - Oct 2010 - Sept 2011	05/01/12	John Warnock: Cioch the Infotainment 2011	26/01/12	Richard Christie: Dolpo - Nepal's trekking secret
16/02/12	Jim Donald: Atlas Mountains	01/03/12	Dave Paton: Elements – Live TBC	22/03/12	Chris Butcher: Picos de Europa

