



Cioch Mountaineering Club (Dunfermline)

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Meet Report: Aite Cruinnichidh, Roybridge, 9th / 10th March 2012

Contributions from Dave Paton (and photos), Olly Simpson and Richard Christie

This meet turned out to be the best attended 'ordinary' meet for a long time with 30 people booked and 28 actually attending. Can't quite put my finger on why this meet was so popular but the bunkhouse is well located for going either west or east. The late Friday afternoon sunshine was turning the clouds golden as the early arrivers drove along the side of Loch Laggan - a good omen for Saturday's weather?

Dave P describes the Saturday as follows: The weather in the week before was great. Could it last? - Unfortunately not! For the second meet in a row the Saturday weather has been pretty bad - here's hoping for Achnasheen.

This time we set off determined to do something - Myself, Vicky, Lorna and Olly. This time we would do Gairich! So we set off (not too early) and drove along to Loch Quoich. Lorna was already feeling a bit grotty due to motion sickness on the undulating and winding road. After a couple of stops to let her get some fresh air we arrived at the end of the dam at Loch Quoich to take in the view. Only there wasn't one! The mist was down to the water and the rain was drumming against the car windows. It was pretty windy as well.



After a few minutes trying to get up some enthusiasm, we decided we couldn't. What to do then? A low level coast walk seemed to be the best idea. So we set off to the end of the road and Kinloch Hourn to do part of the coastal path to Barrisdale. If you've never been to Kinloch Hourn, it's worth it for the drive alone, the road's pretty spectacular and it's a smashing part of the country.

Before setting off we were able to remove some gear from the rucksacks to lighten the load. Olly decided that no rucksack was even better (a decision he would later regret).

Looking up at the tops around us it seemed that we had made a wise choice. It looked pretty awful up there. We were at least dry, in fact the walk turned out to be rather pleasant. Olly then suggested that we should go all the way to Barrisdale and make a day out of it.

The walk was uneventful but enjoyable. The only thing wrong was that we had to turn round and just come back the way we had come. Still, at least the view was different!

With about an hour to go I was beginning to struggle a bit and we were getting spread out, with me bringing up the rear. I could see Olly and Vicky taking an alternative path nearer the shore (Olly as usual looking for a short cut). To be honest I thought if anyone could get along there, that's where the path would be. I decided to stick to the official path. The short cut turned out not to be and I actually got back to the car before them! Olly meanwhile was hungry and dehydrated (remember he didn't take a rucksack). Five and a half hours without anything to eat or drink can do that.

After that it was back to the hostel for a snooze then a wee glass [*is there such a thing?*] of wine before bed. Apologies to Steve and Olly, it seems I kept them awake with some expert snoring (just one more thing I'm good at!) - but at least Olly had the joy of the double bed.

email contributions to newsletter@cioch.co.uk

And the same day from Olly's perspective: We set out from Roybridge at about 9am intending to do Gairich - a hill I had been forced to turn back on at the Invergarry meet last year with John Robertson because of high winds and deep snow.

When we arrived at the parking place beside the Loch Quoich dam the weather looked uninviting to say the least with thick mist, high winds and near horizontal rain. We sat for about half an hour and talked ourselves out of the intended target and took a slow drive down to Kinlochourn. I'd forgotten how dramatic the steeply descending road was - not to be tackled in snow and ice. We parked along near the road end - managing to find a space just off the road thus avoiding the punitive parking charges levied by the local farmer, after all a £1 saved is a £1 made and we are from Fife.



We decided to take a short walk along the coastal path towards Barrisdale as the weather had calmed down somewhat. I had previously walked this path back when I first joined the Cioch some 21 years ago, the date was 30th/31st August 1991. I walked in at night with Simon T with full camping gear to tackle the 3 Knoydart munros and I remember well the heat, midges and several steep ascents to arrive at Barrisdale at 2.30 in the morning and rising again at 7 am to tackle Meall Buidhe and Luinne Bheinn that day and Ladhar Bheinn and walking out the next day. The total ascent just to get to Barrisdale is almost 450 metres.

The weather was rather different today and I could have done with the fleece that was still hanging in my wardrobe back in Dunfermline. However we soon warmed up when we got moving and as we only intended walking for an hour before turning back I didn't bother taking any food or drink and left my rucksack in the car. There were a few other people on the path who'd decided like us that a low level walk was a sensible alternative. The walking was quite pleasant so we eventually decided to walk as far as Barrisdale. We stopped several times on the way with Dave P taking numerous photos and all of us enjoyed just soaking up the stunning scenery. We eventually arrived at Barrisdale which took us about 2 1/2 hours and we stopped at the roofless building (I think it's an old church) just near the landing point for half an hour before heading back. Again more stops for pictures and looking at the remote cottages dotted along the lochside.

Altogether it turned out quite an interesting walk and I'd certainly recommend it as an excellent alternative to a hill walk in bad weather. Loch Hourn is surely one of the most picturesque sea lochs in the whole of Scotland.

Neil and Sharon also chose to venture down the Kinloch Hourn road aiming to climb Sgurr a' Mhaoraich and Spidean Mailach - not the most obvious pairing but they had previously been forced to retreat from the summit of Gleouraich. Unlike Dave and co they were not so easily put off by the weather, driven on by the need to keep Neil's bagging timetable on track if possible. They managed to climb Sgurr a' Mhaoraich but the attraction of the car and heading back to watch the rugby overcame the urge to start all over again for Spidean Mailach.

Steve, Mags, Brian Mitchell, John W, Alison, Bruce and prospective new members Steve & Nancy all headed for Craig Meagaidh. The first four of this group having climbed the two adjacent munros, Carn Laith and Stob Poite Coire Ardair, on the Newtonmore meet but did not have enough time to add Craig Meagaidh. The walk in up Coire Ardair was well sheltered but it was a different story when they reached to top of the Window. Steve, Mags, Alison and Bruce opted for some crampon and ice axe practice on the snow covered slope up to the Window rather than face the onslaught above. Brian carried on a bit higher before he also turned back. This left John, Steve and Nancy to press on to the summit in very poor visibility - they reached the large cairn and happily turned for home. But which cairn had they reached - the summit cairn or Mad Meg's cairn?

Another large group, consisting of Kenny, Jim Donald, Cath, Dave T, Ian Hay, Brian Miller and Mary Taylor headed for the two munros to the west of Craig Meagaidh; Beinn a' Chaorainn and Beinn Teallach. They succeeded in reaching the top of Beinn a' Chaorainn but conditions were getting pretty bad so they made the sensible choice to about turn and head back down.

With strong winds being forecast Wattie and Richard decided to opt for a pair of Corbetts; Geal Charn and Meallna h-Eilde above the east end of Loch Arkaig. They decided to park at Achnasaul and walk in and out beside the Allt Dubh rather than parking at the Eas Chia-aig waterfall as described in the SMC Corbett book. Their clockwise route allowed them to keep the wind mostly behind them and to avoid a 2.5km walk back up the road at the end of the day. This turned out to be a good decision since the ascent route from the waterfall is now virtually impassable higher up thanks to felled trees and work in progress to build a new hydro-electric scheme – as Michelle and Pam found out a couple of weeks later. The weather was ok for the walk in but waterproofs had to be put on at the start of the climb up to Geal Charn. Visibility reduced to around 50m above around 550m but thankfully the wind only became a pain near both summits. There were no views to be had and the cameras had wisely been left back in the bunkhouse. The best that can be said about the day was that it was exercise!

Last back to the bunkhouse on Saturday were Jim Davidson, John Robertson and Steve Gadd who climbed two of the Grey Corries – (thought to be) Sgurr Choinnich Mor and Stob Coire an Laoigh.

Not satisfied with getting cold and wet during the day, a small band were gluttons for punishment and headed off to the Stronlossit Inn to watch Scotland getting beaten once more at rugby – made even worse if, like Richard and Mags, you were the elected drivers and could not drown your sorrows – however Mags was suitably impressed by the size of the pot of tea she ordered instead. Two thirds of those at the meet decided to self-cater and ate in the bunkhouse, the other nine walked across the road to the Glenspean Lodge Hotel for a very good bar meal. It was a bit of a squash in the common room / kitchen back at the bunkhouse but everyone enjoyed the various conversations that were ongoing into the small hours with some people eventually heading to bed complaining they had consumed too much.....

The only people who are believed to have ventured out on the Sunday were Neil and Sharon who trekked back along the Kinloch Hourn road to climb Gleouraich and Spidean Mialach. Although only Spidean Mialach needed to be bagged – the excellent stalkers' path up to Gleouraich made gaining height a bit easier compared with the bog trot they encountered on the descent from Spidean Mialach. The forgetful award for the weekend goes to Richard who managed to leave his small cool bag and contents in the fridge - never to be seen again, runner up was Jim Davidson who left his camera case in his bunkroom – but at least someone noticed and Brian Mitchell took it down the road.

EVENTS: An Expedition Invitation from Jean Turner

Hi all, this is for information, for any of my friends who may be interested. [Photo from the cover of Nepa Maps' 1:40,000 climbing map of Mera Peak.]

I've spent much of my time in the last few months putting together an expedition for some quite basic and simple medical research concerning the body's physiological responses to increasing altitude. There does seem to be a little bit of a gap in knowledge, despite all the high-powered research that has been done. (If anyone wants the medical details and literature review, I can e-mail them.)

The plan is to take a group of healthy adults of all ages, in November 2012, on a trek specially-designed to provide a long slow ascent from a very modest altitude to a significantly high one, on a non-technical Himalayan peak, while taking measurements (all of them painless and non-invasive, more details on request) at frequent intervals. To this end, KE Adventure Travel, a company with decades of experience in the Himalaya, are giving me a special rate as a "private group" on a combination of two of their regular treks: one hike through the Himalayan foothills from Jiri with a "low" of about 1600m, and one ascent of Mera Peak, which is almost 6500m, with fabulous views to Everest and neighbours. KE will do all the logistics, so it's all as safe and secure as all their holidays, with the same leader ratio, insurance and the rest. You can view either trek on their website.



To anyone scared off by the cost, even with our special rate (£1995 plus flights about £650 return), let me add quickly that I have an assurance from the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations that it is perfectly legal for volunteers to raise funds towards their own expenses as if for a charity, since this is a not-for-profit research project. Also, my fund-seeking appeals for the expedition have not borne fruit so far, but if any do in future the proceeds will be divided among volunteers to reduce the cost further. I also have two firm offers of discounts on kit for participants: one from the online retailer Summits (who may also give me limited sponsorship, but we all know times are hard for businesses), and one from manufacturer Montane; it's possible more may follow.

I realise that a 24-day trek plus flights will be difficult for many people's holiday quotas; necessary, I'm afraid, the whole point being to make the ascent so gradual that almost everyone is likely to reach the summit, and also to allow time for measurements to be taken. That being said, it may be the best chance lots of people will ever have of standing on a snowy summit in the Himalaya!

If you'd like to register preliminary interest, please let me know : jmacraeturner@btinternet.com

email contributions to newsletter@cioch.co.uk

Simon Yates Talk

Simon Yates has a new book just published: "*The Wild Within*" in which, as the blurb says, 'he recounts his experiences of teaming up with mountaineering legends Doug Scott, Andy Parkin and Joe Simpson and his perpetual quest to seek out the world's few remaining wildernesses'. In conjunction with the book launch Simon is currently on a lecture tour - promoted by Speakers from the Edge - which will be visiting the Carnegie Hall on Wednesday 9th May (Tel: 01383 602302)

Caption competition!

For the sake of something different for this issue of the Newsletter there is a caption competition with two bottles of wine to be won. The cartoon below is taken from an official Finnish National Park poster seen on the wall of a composting toilet cubicle beside a 'Lapp Hut' on one of the cross country ski tracks I was on in Finland last month.



There are two chances to win:

- 1) Write your own caption for the cartoon – what I think is the funniest, publishable caption will be the winner.
- 2) What do you think the actual text accompanying the cartoon was saying? The original text has been removed to stop you cheating by using Google translate – not that it helps that much!

Answers to be emailed to newsletter@cioch.co.uk or handed to me at a Club night on or before the 2nd of May.

The Editors decision is final!

The traditional Finnish 'Lapp Hut' complete with fireplace for grilling your sausage



2012 Meet Dates

| | | |
|---|--|---------------------------------------|
| 13 th / 14 th April | Inver Croft, Achnasheen | Full |
| 4 th / 5 th / 6 th May | Strontian, Ardgour | Full |
| 8 th / 9 th June | Sligachan Bunkhouse, Skye | One place available |
| 13 th / 14 th July | Ling Hut, Torridon (note date change!) | 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 |

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