



# Cioch Mountaineering Club (Dunfermline)

Established 1988 – 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary year

## Newsletter #49

### August 2013



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#### Meet Report: Strawberry Cottage, Glen Affric, 12<sup>th</sup> / 13<sup>th</sup> July

Contributions from David Currie, Cath Guest and Richard Christie

All in all an excellent meet with everyone climbing at least one munro – which was interesting in Richard's case since he set out to climb corbetts.....

#### David Currie starts off the report on the Glen Affric meet:

I opted for the 8km walk-in along Glen Affric on the Friday afternoon with some of my gear (Richard kindly brought the rest in later) and I met Kenny and Cath at the car park - they were cycling in with all their gear. The weather was very warm and partly sunny, so I took it reasonably easy. A very welcome cuppa was quickly supplied by Kenny & Cath upon arrival.

Strawberry cottage is a fine, well-equipped bothy (with a flush wc!) situated in a remote and lovely location. Shortly after checking out what was behind every door (which everyone seemed to do on arrival), a very tired and red looking Jim Donald arrived having walked in via several Corbetts and Corbett tops. The rest of the members arrived later in the 4x4s.



A 9am start on the Saturday saw Vicky, Olly and myself head west along the track to the YH, then head up Coire Ghadheil to the bealach - a steady if not particularly fast pace, allowing time to admire the small orchids and the strikingly purple heather as well as the wider views. Since Beinn Fhionnlaidh was the main target for the day, we



decided to do that first by contouring round below Mam Sodhail & Carn Eighe. Olly opted to contour at a lower level, while Vicky and I climbed higher to take advantage of the stalker's path for a bit longer before heading leftwards. It was still a long, uncomfortable and at times tricky traverse - would not recommend it!

On the summit slope of BF we met up with Steve (Gadd) and Jim (Davidson) who had started earlier and had come up over MS and CE. Olly was already at the top and had been there for half an hour, but he also had had a not very pleasant traverse. He did however spot a golden eagle on the slopes of CE, above him, but probably below Vicky and me.

After some lunch it was then off southwards, over and up to CE. I was quite slow by now, but happy to let Vicky and Olly forge ahead. After the cloud of earlier in the day had dispersed, the weather was good with fine views all around, albeit with a cool wind on the more exposed parts (picture the contrast: Olly in T-shirts and shorts; Vicky in jacket, hat and gloves). We reached the summit of CE about 15:00 hrs, then a straight forward descent then climb up to MS. Again there fine views all around, even Ben Nevis was clear. I was quite sore and weary by now, but doing better than I'd expected.

email contributions to [newsletter@cioch.co.uk](mailto:newsletter@cioch.co.uk)



A descent was made SW to the bealach where Olly decided to go directly down via the Creag a Chaorain ridge. Vicky and I opted for the longer but potentially easier (ie a path) route down Coire Leachavie. This was for the most part a good path, Vicky often a good bit ahead of me, but once near the main loch-side path we fell into step. A short cut saw us go off-path briefly, but nicely, through a lot of pleasantly scented bog myrtle. It was a fairly long walk out, but we made steady progress. A highlight was meeting a couple of young females who were en route to camp somewhere. Both attractive, one with a low cut top and very impressive..er... assets. Even Vicky could hardly keep her eyes of them! We eventually

got back to the cottage about 18:30. Olly had only been back about 15 mins and had had a terrible, extremely steep descent off the nose of the ridge.

Since there were no showers at the cottage I went for a quick dip in the river to refresh before dinner. Olly did as well while Cath I think had a wee paddle in the fairly chilly water.

It was 5 to midnight before Steve and Jim got back from their epic day. No-one was overly concerned about their lateness with only Jim Donald doing the decent thing by staying up and keeping the kettle warm until they got back!

Sunday dawned more overcast, but with chores done we all set off about the same time. Kenny and Cath cycled back out, while the rest of us got lifts from Olly and Richard. A sudden realisation that I'd mislaid my mobile phone (thankfully just before we set off) saw me rummaging through all my gear while Richard and Jim (Donald) searched the bedroom where they did indeed find it (thanks guys!)

Whilst most folks headed straight home, I stayed over Sunday night at the Tomich Hotel (very nice) and climbed Tom a'Chionich and Toll Creagach on the Monday. A hugely enjoyable week-end (made all the more so due to the excellent company) and in a part of Scotland I'd never been to before.

David has mentioned everyone who attended the meet apart from Iain Hay who was a late addition after being on the reserve list. Iain benefited from Steve Gray's misfortune when Steve tweaked his back crawling out from under a desk at his work earlier in the week. This forced Steve and Mags to call off from the meet so that Steve's back had a chance to recover before they went off on their summer holiday. They were both fed up at having to miss the meet since they had a grand plan to walk in over the Affric munros and Richard was organized to ferry their gear in. This meant that Richard felt a bit guilty as he drove into Strawberry Cottage all by himself with only David's small bag and Jim Donald's kit for company. Everyone kindly helped Richard ferry the gear across the bridge to the cottage when he arrived and there was a welcoming fire lit in the stove. The cottage benefits from solar powered lighting nowadays but this was not really



necessary thanks to the glow coming from Jim Donald's face after his walk in over two corbetts and their three associated tops which had required quite a bit of toing and froing. Jim was especially relieved when Richard arrived since he was bringing the restorative bottle of Leffe. Olly brought the remainder of the attendees, Iain, Jim Davidson, Vicky and Steve G in using the 4x4 specifically purchased for the purpose – hopefully he managed to sell it for a profit after the meet?



Fortunately the weather was not quite as warm on the Saturday as Jim had experienced on the Friday. It was pleasantly warm down in the glen with, as David reports, a cool / sometimes cold breeze higher up. Richard's target for the day was the two corbetts, Carn a' Choire Ghairbh and

Aonach Shasuinn, which Jim had climbed the day before. Richard followed Olly's suggestion and climbed up the stalkers path which leads South from the West end of Loch Affric. Although a bit overgrown the path was an excellent way of gaining height and offered good views down the loch and back towards Strawberry Cottage. There was time for a quick stop on the summit of Carn a' Choire Ghairbh and admire the wave of cloud that seemed to be flowing in from the West to break over the munros immediately to the West and North. He passed a substantial round cairn on his way down to the col Cadha Riabhach before it was time to climb once more. Since it was a fine day it seemed silly not to go for a short diversion and head south to climb the munro Sail Chaorainn with a lunch stop on the munro top on the way back. From there the next Corbett seemed some distance away but the ground underfoot was dry and made for quick walking with a pair of Golden Plovers and a number of Ptarmigan for company. After reaching Aonach Shasuinn Richard discounted the idea of carrying on to bag the Corbett tops – a case of two tops too far – and headed back the way he had come. Again following Olly's advice *[there is a worrying trend here!]* he crossed the valley floor and climbed back up 250m to the col East of Carn a' Choire Ghairbh which allowed an pleasant descent back down the stalkers path and avoided the long detour to near 'White Cottage' and a walk along the forest track. Mind you if he had opted for the longer route he might have come across the two young ladies David and Vicky met.... enough fantasizing - Richard instead ended up going for a refreshing swim in an inviting river pool between Strawberry Cottage and Loch Affric. Only problem was that his feet softened up during the swim making for an uncomfortable final walk back to the cottage once he had squeezed his boots back on.



#### Cath sums up her and Kenny's weekend as follows:

Kenny & I cycled to Strawberry Cottage, or should that be cycle & push as the track is very rough in places. We hadn't been there before so the first half hour was spent locating various stopcocks, switching on buttons and searching for keys. This was done before anyone else arrived.



On Saturday Jim Donald, Iain H, Kenny and I set out to the Youth Hostel at Alltbeithe. After a little refreshment we slowly made our way up the path to Sgurr nan Ceathreamhnan. On arrival at the bealach we settled down for a lazy bit of lunch in the sun. One of our number who will remain nameless *[let me guess – Jim?]* had a little snooze. We slowly edged our way along the ridge towards the Munro. I decided against continuing and waited with Iain before going back to the bealach. Kenny & Jim continued on to the summit before back tracking and rejoining us. All four of us then climbed An Socach before descending back to the cottage.

Back at the cottage Dave C and Olly braved a swim the chilly River Affric. I had a paddle up to my knees. We speculated at what time Steve and Jim Davidson would return from their epic day out. Many were in bed when they returned just before midnight. Jim Donald remained downstairs ensuring that the fire was still burning and the kettle boiled to warm tired those tired bodies.

On Sunday morning I loaded the bikes for the cycle / push out. Half way along the track the bolt came out of the pannier rack on Kenny's bike - never to be found. He was dispatched back to the car with his rucksack and a few items and return back to me. I managed to strap both kayak bags on my bike and cycle the rest of the way out much to Kenny's relief as he had barely left the car



park to see me freewheeling down the hill. It looks like Kenny will be making tea one night while I use my bike mechanic skills in the garage!

As Cath suggests, Steve G and Jim Davidson win the 'epic walk' prize for the Strawberry Cottage meet. As David reports above, the pair climbed Mam Sodhail, Carn Eighe and Beinn Fhoinnlaidh. They then descended steeply from there all the way down to Loch Mullardoch before climbing back up to Mullach an Dheiragain and then on to Sgurr Ceathreamhnan. They had hoped to then head back towards the Cottage via An Socach but time and daylight were against them – even so quite a day!

As David says there was the normal clearing up to do on Sunday morning which Olly supervised as usual – apparently he really admires Richard's floor sweeping technique. With Cath and Kenny having their own 'transport' the other eight people on the meet easily fitted into the two 4x4's for the slow drive out. The track is quite rough in places having lost its top covering to reveal the underlying larger stones below. Once his passengers were delivered to the car park, Richard turned up into Glen Cannich and climbed Sgorr na Diollaid before heading back down the road. Unfortunately the summit was encased in low cloud so there were no great views from the top but the sun came out on the descent.

### **25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Challenge**

Chris Butcher has issued a 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary challenge for members who attended the AGM and received a Cioch 25 Logo Button Pin from Dave Paton (thanks Dave). Who can take their Pin the furthest, highest, deepest etc. As a baseline Chris has taken his to Vienna and has been to 2463m – both should be fairly easy to beat!

Now if only Richard had had a Pin when he was in Tibet!

### **Speedy Recuperation**

Speaking of Dave Paton, he has undergone a successful hip replacement operation – so successful he managed to climb Bruach na Frithe only six weeks after the op.

### **Cioch 25: The Darwins**

Nominations are now being accepted for Cioch's 1st Darwin awards.

Entries are invited in the following categories:

- Most geographically challenged award
- Most politically incorrect
- Worse for wear
- Most fashionable faux pas
- Most disastrous meal

Both photographs and stories will be considered for each category and entries should be submit between now and 31<sup>st</sup> October 2013 to Sharon Rankin. Winners will be announced at the Christmas meet.

### **Cioch 25: The Tales**

To mark the 25th anniversary we are keen to put together a selection of tales and anecdotes (factual and not so factual!) from down the years. If you have any such stories we'd love to hear them, be they in prose or poetry. Entries should be no longer than 1000 words. All stories submit will be published in a one-off special edition newsletter in Dec.

All entrants should be submitted, electronically if possible please, to Richard Christie between now and 31<sup>st</sup> October 2013, a small prize will be available for the best overall tale.

### **2013 Meet Dates**

Aug	24 <sup>th</sup>	BBQ, Dunfermline
Sept	6 <sup>th</sup> /7 <sup>th</sup>	Glenbrittle Memorial Hut, Skye
Oct	4 <sup>th</sup> / 5 <sup>th</sup>	Muir of Inverey, Braemar
Nov	1 <sup>st</sup> / 2 <sup>nd</sup>	Mill Cottage, Feshiebridge
Dec	6 <sup>th</sup> / 7 <sup>th</sup>	Christmas Meet, Onich

