



# Cioch Mountaineering Club (Dunfermline)

Established 1988

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### Meet Report: Sligachan Bunkhouse, Isle of Skye, 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2011

With contributions from Neil Anderson, Dave Paton, David Currie and Richard Christie

Jim D, Vicky, Sam, Sharon, Neil, Alison & Bruce all managed to escape the lowlands on Thursday to arrive at the Sligachan Hotel before reception closed at 11:30 pm which was good since this meant they could pick up the keys for their rooms in the Bunkhouse. One or two even managed a last minute refreshment before the bar closed.

On Friday morning Jim D headed off early on his own to climb the Corbett Garbh-bheinn and then carry on to traverse Clach Glas and Bla Bheinn. When he returned to the bunkhouse late in the afternoon he had a smile on his face but described this day as interesting having got himself into some challenging situations.

Alison and Bruce opted to leave the main island and took the ferry to Raasay. Alison decided it was high time Bruce had some navigational practice so handed him the map, compass and a copy of Ralph Storer's 50 best routes on Skye and Raasay which contained a description of how to get to Dun Caan. Some to-ing and fro-ing then ensued until they realised that there was a fundamental problem which was nothing to do with Bruce's navigational expertise – since Mr Storer wrote his book £12m has been spent building a sparkly new pier on Raasay a couple of miles north of the original ferry landing point. With the problem identified the rest of the day went well with great views from the top of Dun Caan. They rounded the day off with a pint at the Slig where they found Bill and Joyce sitting watching the Wimbledon coverage to see if Andy Murray could progress to his first final. Joyce was in celebratory mood having officially taken early retirement earlier in the day and came equipped with a cake she had been given to mark the occasion.



Sam, Sharon, Vicky and Neil decided to climb Sgurr na Banachdich since they reckoned that neither Sam nor Sharon had been there before. Starting at the Youth Hostel in Glen Brittle just before 11, they followed the path E passing the various waterfalls on Allt a' Choire Ghreadaidh in pleasant sunshine. By this time Sharon realised she had been there before - but both the weather and the company were good making a second ascent a pleasurable experience. The route became a little boggy after the branch right to head SE beside Allt Coir' an Eich, but soon dried out again as the rising grassy ramp to An Diallaid was ascended. After an early lunch stop, the group were soon picking their way up the rocky path to Banachdich. This is a fairly even gradient all the way to the summit and requires none of the notorious scrambling that the Cuillin offers elsewhere. Unfortunately the mist rolled in at the summit, so the party were denied clear views to other Munro summits on the ridge as they enjoyed a second lunch. Descent

through the mist was initially aided by the odd compass inspection while reversing the ascent route before dropping out of the mist and finding an alternative, more direct and dryer path returning W to Glen Brittle to reach the car before 5 pm.

Pamela had left Dunfermline early on Friday morning and bagged Glamaig from the west on the way to the bunkhouse. The ascent included a bit of a standoff with a herd of cows and a bull so the descent route was varied slightly to avoid a re-encounter. Richard was the next person to arrive having left Dunfermline a bit later after a dentist's appointment (the resulting filling lasted all of 22 hours!). He stopped off en-route and climbed the Corbett Meall Dubh east of the road between Invergarry and Loch Cluainne. There were good views to the west on the way up which were only spoilt by the wind farm which suddenly came into view just east of the summit. The full Cioch attendance list of 18 was: Pamela, Jim D, Neil, Sharon, Olly, John R, Dave P, John W, Kenny, Vicky, Sam, David C, Bill, Joyce, Alison, Bruce, Ian Hay and Richard.

Fortunately for those who did not manage to enjoy the good weather of Friday the weather on Saturday was ever better. Having turned back from Sgurr Alistair on a previous Skye meet, Ian Hay decided on a different hill and did a solo climb of Sgurr na Banachdich. Jim D and Kenny set out ascend the ridge via An Dorus but Jim felt ill and turned back. Fortunately Kenny managed to hook up with other walkers they met along the way, and climbed Sgurr a Mhadaidh and

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Sgurr a Ghreadaidh without Jim. David C went via Coir' a' Ghrunnda to do Sgurr nan Eag and Sgurr Dubh Mor – see his report later in this Newsletter. Alison and Bruce tackled Bla Bheinn (Bruce's first Munro) using Ralph Storer's suggested southerly approach route – this time the instructions remained accurate. They enjoyed a great day made even better by having a close fly by from a Sea Eagle.

This time it was Sam, Sharon, Vicky and Neil's turn to take the ferry to Raasay and climb Dun Caan. Armed with the knowledge that the new £12m ferry terminal had been relocated a few miles further north, near Raasay House, the hike from ferry to Dun Caan is a lot shorter than it used to be. Sam, Sharon, Vicky and Neil caught the 9:25 ferry from Sconcer, had landed on Raasay and were already heading E then NE through Inverarish soon after 10am. Conditions were glorious and the picnic tables by the abandon mine buildings, just up the hill from Glen Lodge, proved too inviting to pass without an impromptu cuppa stop. Following the Burmah Road from here initially, the path was soon signposted for Dun Caan. This is a long meandering path on relatively flat ground alongside small streams. The first mile or two of this path are quite boggy, while the latter part of the path rises slightly and becomes drier as Dun Caan comes into view. The final slope of Dun Caan was ascended in beautiful sunshine and 360 degree panoramic views were enjoyed during the extended duration lunch break on the summit. The alternative dry path heading W looked far more inviting on the way off the hill. This shorter path joined the tarmac road near Loch Eadar da Bhaile, where they strolled southerly to the ferry terminal via Oskaig. As the ferry terminal came into view, there was a sudden realisation in the group that the 3:30pm ferry could be caught instead of waiting till 5. Neil reports that the stroll quickened to a purposeful walk and then a wee canter for the last few 100 yards down the pier to reach the ramp before it was pulled up. The ferry man had a smile on his face as they galloped the last yard or two - they had only delayed the ferry by 2 minutes to let them board.



David C describes his weekend as follows:

For the second year in a row the club meet was blessed with weather that would be good for Scotland in general, but for Skye could be considered as especially fine. The Friday evening saw an unsuccessful attempt at lighting the fire (man make fire, no work, go to pub), followed by the usual mixture of chat, argument and banter back at the bunkhouse.

I had come to the meet with the intention of doing the 2 southern Munros of the ridge, but no one else was doing them. I did contemplate a change a plan: Cuillin ridge, on my own - a bit dodgy? But went for the "Nah, it'll be ok" approach.

A beautiful morning start from Glen Brittle was only slightly spoiled by the denial of a quick comfort break at the campsite loos - the doors are now locked (combination available from site shop).



The route I took was up and into Coir' a' Ghrunnda, around the NW side of the loch, onto the ridge via some rough and often bizarrely-weathered rock formations, then up to Sgurr Dubh an da Bhein. The traverse to and from Sgurr Dubh Mor was the trickiest part of the day and involved a few "ain't going that way" moments and several rhetorical questions like "Is this really a path?", "I can get up, but how on earth will I get back down?" and "Where did I leave my Will?". These were often posed out loud using the generic "Ohferfu\*ksake" mantra. All turned out fine though and a well-earned lunch was taken over-looking the Caisteal a' Garbh-choire. The ascent to Sgurr nan Eag was straightforward enough and the descent back to the loch was a lot easier that I had been anticipating.

The Cuillin as a whole must be one of the most sociable ranges of hills - when people are met there tends to be more conversation than the usual Nice Day / Where have you been / Where are you going. I suspect it's the more challenging nature of the place that brings out a greater sense of camaraderie with fellow walkers. I must have

spent over half an hour in total during the course of the day simply talking to the few people I met. Several were from foreign shores - the pullin' o' the Cuillin I suppose.

It can also at times be a desolate place - dark and grey, lonely, hard and unforgiving. Yet even when it seems like this, there is life and colour: ravens; the pale blues of the sky, the sea and the lochs; the red moss; the green and yellows of rose-root; the purple heather..... and thanks to a heavy tumble in the lower part of Coir' a' Ghrunnda, I soon had a right knee and left chest that matched all these colours - Ouch!

Back at the bunkhouse and a few of us headed to the pub for dinner and some entertaining stories (the poo-related ones were, thankfully, kept for after dinner. Members do indeed have some decorum!) [????]



On the way back from the pub the soft fading light made those hard hills look quite benign. More chat, argument and banter back in the bunkhouse, plus some fine music and tales of the day.

Scary, challenging, beguiling, awkward at times, exhilarating, stunning - yes, I could certainly be describing some Cioch members, but also of course the Cuillin hills.

Either way, not a bad environment to spend a week-end.

Bill, Joyce and Pamela opted to climb the horse shoe of Belig and Garbh-beinn starting from the road just above Loch Ainort. Like everyone on Saturday they had a good day. Once back down Pamela drove off into the sunset to meet up with husband Jonathon at Spean Bridge for a Sunday ascent of Leum Uilleim and a Monday cycle out from Corroul Station back to Spean Bridge. Pamela reports the cycle was good but did involve a few miles pushing the bikes.

Dave P gives the low down on [Sgurr Mhic Choinnich](#):

It's always difficult to decide what to do on Skye, there are many things I would do again and again and a few things I have yet to do. However, this time we opted for Sgurr Mhic Choinnich with Dennis as it was the last 'Skye' Munro he had to bag.

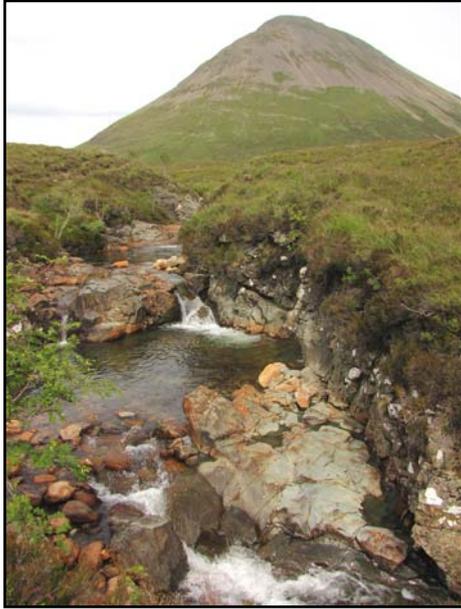
The forecast was excellent so we planned to take our time to make the most of the weather and rather than head for the An Stac screes we headed for Sgurr Dearg (not intending to do the In' Pin'). It's been a while since I had been there and I was pleasantly surprised to find that a lot of work has been done improving the path, even to the foot of the Sgurr Dearg spur. After a short but steep pull up the first part of the ridge we sat down for our first extended rest of the day, enjoying the views and the sun. A short time later, and with a further rest, we arrived at the In' Pin' and sat down again (it was just that sort of day). Surprisingly it was very quiet and there were no queues to climb it, in fact there was no one on it at all!



Next the easy bit. Only it wasn't. I remember the climb down past the In' Pin' being a bit awkward, but it was awful! A lot of loose stones and steep and slippery rock, with nothing to hold on to. Getting down was tedious and hard work. John tried to lighten the mood by dislodging a boulder the size of a basket ball and I needed some quick footwork to avoid it. However, we eventually made the coll, and guess what, we sat down again. This time I got a bit bored and set off first for the summit ridge, hoping to get some shots of the others coming up after me (this was the only time I was in front all day). Sgurr Mhic

Choinnich is a great scramble along a fairly narrow ridge, but on a dry almost wind free day like we have is pretty straight forward, but giving a great sense of exposure. There were a couple of guys at the, very small, summit who took the group photo and after a while enjoying the view it was time to head back along the ridge and down the An Stac screes.

With one more stop at the lochan in Coire Laggan to enjoy 'just being there' and to fill up our now depleted water bottles we headed back to the car and to the bunkhouse to enjoy a bottle of ice cold cider (I would recommend this after a hot day on the hills).



One last note. To all those who have not been to Skye and think of it as a wet, dreary place, I can only say that I have had many more good weather days on Skye than bad ones. The last two club meets there have had brilliant weather. The 'Misty Isle' - BOLLOCKS !

On Saturday Richard opted to give the black Cuillin a miss this time and headed for Glamaig walking straight from the back of the bunkhouse. He had only gone 50m before he managed to 'do a Marion' by stepping into fresh air and ended up kneeling in the bog. On the steepish climb up Glamaig Richard was accompanied for some of the way by a Wheatear which flitted from rock to rock. The going was steady with only a couple of sections of scree slowing progress. Once at the summit half an hour was spent having first lunch and admiring the superb 360° views. The descent south west down to Bealach na Sgaire was steep and more extensive sections of thin scree meant

that care had to taken. The day was too good to stop there so it was on and up to Beinn Dearg Mhor where a sofa shaped rock awaited invitingly for second lunch and another half hour chilling out. Then on out to the last top of the day, Beinn Cearg Mheadhonach, where he chatted to the only other people to be seen all day. On the way back to the bunkhouse the various pools in the Allt Daraich proved to be too inviting and Richard stopped off for a swim before joining Bill and Joyce for bier, crisps & dips outside the bunkhouse. They soon were joined by various other satisfied walkers as they trooped back in off the hills.



On Sunday the weather was great again and Loch Duich was like glass as Richard drove home. Too good a day for just driving so he stopped off at Shiel Bridge to climb Sgurr Mhic Bharraich. The approach walk up Gleann Undalain was on the hot side so some clouds were welcome to break up the sunshine during the climb to the summit. A more direct descent line was followed back down to Shiel Bridge where an ice cream was waiting with Richard's name on it.



#### Foot Notes:

#### Meets Secretary Oilly has so far booked the following Meets for 2012:

13 <sup>th</sup> / 14 <sup>th</sup> January	Muir of Inverey, Braemar
3 <sup>rd</sup> / 4 <sup>th</sup> February	Lagangarbh, Glencoe
9 <sup>th</sup> / 10 <sup>th</sup> March	Aite Cruinnichidh, Roybridge
13 <sup>th</sup> / 14 <sup>th</sup> April	Inver Croft, Achnasheen
TBA May	TBA
8 <sup>th</sup> / 9 <sup>th</sup> June	Sligachan Bunkhouse, Skye
6 <sup>th</sup> / 7 <sup>th</sup> July	Ling Hut, Torridon
10 <sup>th</sup> / 11 <sup>th</sup> August	Causewayfoot Farm, Keswick
7 <sup>th</sup> / 8 <sup>th</sup> September	Invergarry Bunkhouse
5 <sup>th</sup> / 6 <sup>th</sup> October	Sail Mhor, Dundonnell
2 <sup>nd</sup> / 3 <sup>rd</sup> November	Mill Cottage, Feshiebridge
December TBA	Onich (Christmas Meet)

[Note if you are reading this and have not rejoined yet then you have failed to beat the surcharge by paying before the end of July!](#)