



Cioch Mountaineering Club (Dunfermline)

Established 1988 – 25th Anniversary year

Newsletter #53

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Meet Report: Mill Cottage, Feshiebridge 1st / 2nd November

Contributions from Neil Anderson

The 16 attendees at Mill Cottage meet were: Indoors: Dave P., Brian M., Jan, Sharon, Neil, Sam, Martin, Steve, Vicky, Jim D., Jess, Olly, Dave T. and John R. Camping: Joyce, Bill.

Friday night

Neil, Sharon, Sam and Martin took the indirect route to Feshiebridge by included a curry stop at The Royal Tandoori, Aviemore before the drive back to Mill Cottage. A fine curry was enjoyed by all.

Saturday Day

Sharon provided the lift from Mill to Roughburn for Sam, Martin and Neil and around 8:20 the group headed north through the forest with intentions to bag Beinn a'Chaorainn and Beinn Teallach.

Once out in the open hillside walking conditions were reasonable and rain wasn't forecast till the afternoon. Apart from occasional soggy underfoot at low level and a stiffening breeze as altitude was gained, conditions were fairly acceptable and steady progress up the lower slopes of Beinn a'Chaorainn was achieved. At around the 900m mark, with the wind now fairly strong, visibility diminished as the cloud was entered and there was now soft snow underfoot. The south top was soon found and with further navigation through thick mist by map and compass, the group trudged through deeper snow for the last half kilometer to the summit cairn. This was not a pleasant place for a lunch stop, so the group carried on due north, traversing the west side of the north top to eventually turn NW and drop down into the glen between the two munros before dining.

A fairly steep route due west took the group up from the glen onto the north ridge of Beinn Teallach. Now turning S, heading for the second munro summit, high winds on exposed parts of ridge made progress difficult with an occasional need to be on all fours to avoid ending up falling over. However, Beinn Teallach being only 915m, had a cloud free summit and the party pressed on to reached the cairn at 1 pm.

As forecast, the gently falling summit snow soon turned to driving rain as the party descended southwards and those who had earlier donned waterproof trousers were grateful; and those who hadn't realised they were already too wet to bother. The car was reached around 3pm after the wet miserable walk out (including a paddle across the burn) and the notion of a big open fire in the Suie Hotel at Kincaig, with steaming trousers was discussed. As it happened, this was a forlorn hope, since at 4pm the hotel was not yet open for business. Thankfully the warm shower at Mill Cottage was waiting.



Saturday Evening

As usual, the Mill Cottage meet falls pretty close to Dave P's birthday and not being a club to miss the opportunity for a party, plans were afoot for an evening of fun. Although Joyce and Bill had to head home early, Joyce left a big cake. Sharon provided a big cake, Vicky provided big cake and we all dined on cake like royalty until Brian's 10pm Hot Dog and Fireworks extravaganza.

Sunday

Not sure if anyone did anything other than stop for snacks at truckers cafe in Ballinluig on way south.
[What still room for food after all that cake?!].

Jess's first impression of being on a Cioch meet:

I arrived at Mill Cottage for my first Cioch meet with a mixture of fear and curiosity as to what I had let myself in for. I am a complete newbie to staying in bunkhouses and was aware that I was amongst seasoned campaigners. However folk were friendly and generous with banter, food and drink. Saturday started overcast but by lunchtime had turned to heavy rain. We followed Bill and Joyce up Creag Meagaidh. By the time Jim and I got to the window it was windy and was snowing heavily making for poor visibility. We turned back, though doubtless Jim would of continued. Great Saturday night with all, was last to leave due to being outside.

email contributions to newsletter@cioch.co.uk

Five go adventuring to the Spar Cave

Iain and Thomas were enjoying a late summer break along with Maureen, Walter and Richard, all friends, and in an outdoor club, The Cioch. Club members, (numbering about 40 all told – sorry no dogs - so George got left at home), liked to journey to little huts away out in the wilds, where they ran about in the countryside, climbed mountains, looked at the wild animals and birds and generally had a jolly good time. They especially enjoyed meeting the local people and socialising in wayside inns and local hostelries.



The five had come to the island two days earlier and had hoped to have many exciting adventures, before the rest of the club arrived on Friday evening. However, the weather had turned really nasty! The wind blew and blew and nearly bent the few trees that were around, right to the ground. The Belted Galloway cows in the fields spent all their time sitting down, a sure sign of really dismal weather, and the days were very, very dark. The rain drummed down ceaselessly, creating a dark, dank impenetrable mist, which seemed to pervade everywhere.

So the five found that they spent countless hours confined indoors and although they tried exceedingly hard to cheer themselves up and have a jolly time, they couldn't help feeling sad and depressed every time they looked out of the window at the incessant rain.

"There won't be any time for adventures these hols", said Iain regretfully. "Look at the rain! Its f***** lashing down".

"Never mind", said Thomas, "I'm sure we can find other things to do".

"Other things to do!" exclaimed Iain, "We've been to f***en Portree five times and the supermarket twice and we've even been to that pub over yonder! What else is there to f***** do? I'm fed up! We should be having a wizard time, but instead we've got to stay here indoors! I wish the b***** sun would come out! It always the F***** same....."

"Shut up!" said Thomas sharply. "Listen, before Walter went fishing this morning, we were having a chat in the kitchen and there might just be something really spiffing to do!"

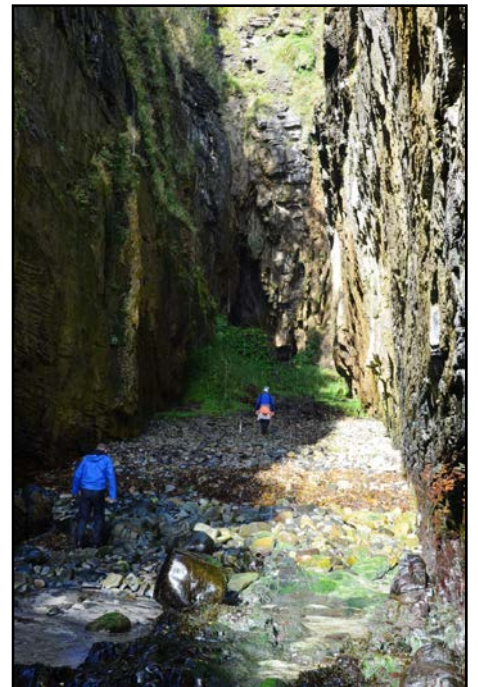
"Oh", said Iain, "that would be F***** wonderful. What is it?"

"Well", said Thomas, "as it happens, we could go somewhere where the rain won't be a bother. We'll go to see the Spar Cave, at Glasnabille!"

"That does indeed sound like a spiffing wheeze", said Iain, excitedly, "What ho - let's get going!"

"Hold on!" said Thomas, (by this time quite exasperated with the boisterous Iain), "We'll have to wait for low tide, and that's not for a few hours yet."

"Whoopee!", exclaimed Iain, "Even better I've got plenty time for breakfast then", (this would be breakfast number four, Iain had cooked and discarded three already as being unpalatable).



Thomas smiled, "Your some boy Iain, I don't know", he said, shaking his head ruefully.....

Sometime later, Richard, Maureen, Thomas and Iain, (who was now feeling somewhat unwell after all those breakfasts), set off in Richard's jeep. They planned to meet up with Walter, who should have finished fishing by now, at the old bridge on the road to Elgol,

"I hope Walter caught plenty fish! I'm looking forward to a good supper this evening", giggled Iain.

"Is food all you ever think about?", Thomas retorted.

Richard, seeing the glaring looks that Iain and Thomas were exchanging, and being a quiet, amenable and nice kind of boy [*the fee is in the post Maureen but you obviously haven't seen me at work*], tried to direct their attention away from each other by asking Thomas all about the Spar Cave.

Thomas began:-

"The entrance canyon is about 60M (200 ft), long and up to 30M, (100ft, high, resembling, "some deep cathedral isle", as John McCulloch described it. The entrance itself lies at the landward end of the canyon, guarded by a 3M (10 ft) high broken wall. The wall, complete with locked door, was built by an early 19th century proprietor, to prevent visitors robbing the cave of its long pendant stalactites (spars). Unfortunately, the wall did not serve its purpose, eventually demolished by a shot from an offshore gun boat. Today, the cave is bereft of the stalactite formations, for which it was once renowned.

The main passage is on the left. It is muddy for some distance, but then develops into a fantastic flowstone staircase some 50m, (160ft) long, rising like a frozen marble cataract into the darkness of the roof high above. Floors, walls and roof are encrusted in a creamy calcium carbonate (spar), which develops fine formations as it flows down the walls. The place has the aura and dimension of a gothic cathedral. There are no great stalactites left, and the roof is blackened from the smoke of ancient candles and torches, but it remains an awesome sight."

"Whoa, Thomas" said Iain, "where did that come from, sounded great, but, I've never heard you talk like that before. Are you alright?"

"Sounds a bit scary to me!" said Maureen, as Thomas finished the story. "Are you sure this adventure is going to go without a hitch?"

"It'll be a dawdle!" exclaimed the excited Iain.

"How many times have you said that Iain, and it always ends up different!" said Maureen.

Just at that, the jeep arrived at the old bridge and found Walter waiting. He was wet through, but happy, as the fishing had been good and he had three trout.

"I knew it!" grinned Iain, "There'll be frying tonight", he said, as he rubbed his hands together in glee.

In two shakes of a lambs tail, the five set out once more on their journey to the cave, but they hadn't got far, when around a bend in the road they came across a little red car. It was Alexander and Samuel, two other club members who had just arrived on the island and had intended going climbing. The weather however had precluded their expedition and they were now sitting in their car, wondering what to do, just as the jeep came around the corner.

"You really must come and see this magnificent cave", said Thomas to Alexander and Samuel.

"Yes come on!" said Iain, "the more the merrier!"

So Alexander and Samuel decided to accompany the five on their adventure; the little red car set off, following Walter's car which was in turn following Richard's jeep.



Not long afterwards, the friends found themselves at the top of a very steep cliff, but the soon found a twisty - turny narrow, dirt path which would take them right down to the rocky shoreline and the cave. They had arrived with good timing as the tide was just going out. Thomas, Richard and Walter set off immediately with Iain and Maureen behind, the others following on at the rear of the little group. Maureen could hear the three chums crashing through the undergrowth at a terrific pace. Iain, ahead of Maureen was tackling the steep descent at a slower rate, groaning now and again and letting out yelps of pain, "f***** cave!, f***** doctors!" as his knees were very painful. Years of running about in the mountains had taken their toll on Iain's old bones and he had already had to go to hospital twice, seeking medicine to help him cope with the pain. Nonetheless, the party soon arrived on the rocky coastline, but there was some debate as to whether the cave was on the right or the left.

"It's on the right", said Iain. "No! It's on the left", said Thomas,

Will you listen to me", said Iain, "it's on the right! You're going the wrong way!" (which was one of Iain's famous sayings)

Thomas exclaimed angrily, "I will not listen to you, who do you think....."

"Boys! Boys!" shouted Richard, (unusual, as Richard very rarely lost his temper) [another fee is in the next post.....] "I'm fed up with your bickering! I'll decide! We'll go left, OK!"

"OK!" said Iain, "sorry about that, we'll follow you then"

The group then trooped along the shore behind Richard, and were pleased, when minutes later, the entrance to the cave could be seen a short way off, up a small rocky inlet, close to the shore.



The cave entrance was indeed behind a broken down wall, but once this was circumvented, the entrance beckoned.

Maureen tried to look nonchalant, but she was a bit worried, the cave was dark, head torches were required, and she didn't want to be left behind. The floor looked very slimy and slippery too, with water running over white rock. However, once actually inside, Richard and Walter were the first to report that in fact the white rock actually gave a good grip, even when it was wet. It was really an amazing place. There was a rock ramp ahead which everyone climbed, only to find the way ahead barred by a deep pool.

"Well, that's a shame, we can't get any further", said Thomas.

"Not unless Iain jumps in and swims across", said Walter,

Everyone laughed at that, but seconds later, a huge scream rent the air.

"That was me", said Maureen in a panic. "I think there is something in this cave with us, and I don't think it's human! Look Walter! There beside you - turn around, there's two little red things moving around about shoulder height! I'm getting out of here"

"I can't see anything" a surprised Walter exclaimed, "What about you Thomas?"

"I'm looking but I can't see.... oh wait a minute," said Thomas, "there is something. Iain, move away from Samuel will you?"

"What's the matter, what is it?" exclaimed Iain with a quiver in his voice. "What can you see?"

Thomas replied, "The light from the torches is reflecting onto your face Iain, and making you look as if you have luminous, red eyes. Either that or it may be something to do with all the lashings of ginger-beer [*aka whisky*] you've been drinking of late".

"My God", said Maureen quietly, "I'm sharing a cave with the devil. That would explain a lot about you Iain!"

The boy's all laughed, although Iain was less than pleased to be the butt of everyone's jokes.

"We'll check him for the mark of the beast later", said Thomas,

"That'll be the numbers 666, usually found on your head, under your hair," said Walter.

"Well that won't be too difficult, Iain's hardly got any hair", said Thomas.

And it went on like this, much to Iain's chagrin and discomfort until the group exited the cave



Samuel and Alexander, who had been very quiet throughout, were first up the steep path through the trees, back up to the road, with Walter following. Thomas and Iain moved more slowly, because of Iain's poor old knees and their focused conversation about Iain not being able to take a joke.

Maureen brought up the rear of the procession, listening to the banter, punctuated with a lot of swearing from Iain and mused, "It's great being in the Cioch! - I can't wait until the next adventure!"

Trip to the Spar Cave, Skye circa 1995 written by Maureen Ramage - with a little bit of poetic license.

Club based at "Skyewalker", Portnalong, for a weekend meet. Main characters: Maureen and Wattie Ramage, Richard Christie, (current Cioch members). Tom Paton, Iain Smith, Sam Sinclair, Alic Williams, (past members).

Visit www.cioch.co.uk for the newsletter online

Some photos from the archive looking back over 25 years



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2014 Meet Dates	
Jan 10 th /11 th	Strathspey Hostel, Newtonmore
Feb 7 th /8 th	Tulloch Station
March 7 th /8 th	Ochils MC hut, Crianlarich
April 4 th /5 th	Ariundle Centre, Strontian
May 2 nd /3 rd /4 th	Gwern Gof Isaf, Capel Curig, N Wales
June 6 th /7 th	Skywalker Bunkhouse, Portnalong
July 11 th /12 th	Ling Hut
July 25 th / 26 th	Lake District
August 8 th /9 th	Sail Mhor, Dundonnell
September 5 th /6 th	Invergarry Lodge
October 3 rd / 4 th	Inver Croft, Achnasheen
November 7 th /8 th	Mill Cottage, Feshiebridge
Decmber TBC	Christmas Meet Inchree, tbc

Winter Slide Show Programme 2013 - 2014

Date	Show	Date	Show	Date	Show
24/10/13	Richard Christie Only a Munro away from the top of the world? Everest North Col	14/11/13	Chris Butcher Austria	21/11/13	Winter Safety Talk By Mick Tighe Pitbauchlie Hotel Starts at 19:30 [In conjunction with Mountain Aid]
23/01/14	Bill Gray World tour part 2	20/02/14	Wattie Ramage Last Twelve Months	20/03/14	Karen Fotheringham D of E in Morocco