



Cioch Mountaineering Club (Dunfermline)

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Meet Report: Skywalker Bunkhouse, Portnalong, Skye, 6th & 7th June.

Contributions from Steve Gray and Richard Christie



The Club last visited the Skywalker Bunkhouse a number of years ago just around the time the then owners were considering selling up and it was perhaps getting a bit 'tired'. Since then there have been visits to the Old Inn Bunkhouse at Carbost, the Slig Bunkhouse and then last year the SMC Hut in Glen Brittle. It therefore seemed appropriate to go and try Skywalker again to see what it was like under its new owners, judging by its website there had certainly been a bit of a revamp. In the end 17 club members ventured up to Skye with Richard making a last minute decision to go on the Thursday when Kenny and Cath had to call off. Some lucky people such as Sharron and Neil were able to take the Friday off so had an extra day on the island. The weather on Friday was good and made for a scenic drive up with all but Olly and Steve G arriving by mid-evening – Olly was a wee bit

later but as usual probably travelled up in the shortest time. The Bunkhouse has certainly had an excellent make-over with a new fresh colour scheme and interesting pictures hung around the walls. Although the Kitchen had also been redecorated and refitted it still had the familiar long and thin layout requiring some neat dance moves to get from one end to the other at busy times. There was a good sunset on the Friday which was best viewed from inside the large geodesic greenhouse protected from midge attack (with a small libation). The Club was booked into a room of eight and two rooms of four. The main drawback for those in the eight (apart from the increased chance of being exposed to snorers) was that it got quite hot in the night – giving the choice: cool down by opening the window or get eaten by the midges that would come in through the open window....

Steve Gray tells the story of his Saturday:

Mags, me and Steve Gadd climbed Sgurr Alasdair via the Great Stone Shute route. Conditions on the way up to Corrie an Lagan were stifling to say the least - there was no wind and we were in full blazing sun. Even Steve G stopped to put a hat on! On the way up the main path we three passed Iain Hay who was in fine fettle and taking it easy. We pushed on and up into the Corrie where there were several tourists taking in the views. We appeared to be the first ones to attempt the Great Stone Shute route that day as there was no disturbed footmarks in the rubble. After trying (struggling) to get up the main path it was evident that the best approach was to either side of the Shute path as it was more stable and contained larger stones than the rubble on the Shute. The views of the Inn' Pinn' were outstanding and we could see several climbers on the summit. As we approached the top of the Shute the cloud came over but it was still above the summits and hence gave us a bit of respite from the glaring Sun. We even got a few 'dots' of rain! We all left our rucksacks at the top of the Shute and pushed on to the summit a few minutes later - here we met a guide with two novices who described us as "un-roped people" another chap who had come up from the Corrie A Grunda side who completed his Munro round on Sgurr Alasdair. Within a few minutes it was like a bus trip had arrived on the summit and with the tight space up there we decided, after a couple of photos, to descend to get some lunch.



Having had lunch we donned our kit and headed for the descent of the Shute but spied Neil and Sharon approaching the top so we held on a bit. As Sharon topped the Shute she stated that no ***** way was she ever doing that or any other scree shutes again (especially after her exposed adventure on Sgurr Du Mhor and Sgurr

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Nan Eigg the day before), one other gentleman stranger said 'nice to meet you too' as she said this and we all had a laugh, mostly at Sharon's expense. We headed off shortly after and met up with Iain Hay about 150m from the top of the Shute. He said that he'd been feeling "a bit dizzy" and asked if we had some water. Steve Gadd gave him a fill-up from his own spare bottle and we sat with Iain for a while. We set off once we were happy that he was ok albeit a bit dehydrated. After the descent the 2 Steves suggested climbing up the opposite shute to do Sgurr MiConnich - this was rejected as a bad idea by Mags and being the men we are, we backed down. Later Mags stated that she probably should have done MiConnich as well - why state this in the Pub, I don't know??? After reaching the Glen Brittle campsite we three went for a paddle in the frigid waters of the bay - this had some healing effect on Steve G's pulled calf muscle which had been bugging him all day. We then all had ice creams to finish off our afternoon at the beach. All in all quite a good day despite Maggie's refusal to do Sgurr MiConnich. We all met up at the Old Inn in Carbost and had a well-deserved pint.



hour crossing. On arrival in Tairbearit it was a case of bikes off last which at least meant the road was clear for the scenic 4 mile cycle round to the chosen starting point beside an old whaling station at Bun Abhainn Eadarra. Despite saying he had a cycle lock with him it turned out Richard had left it in the car so it was just a case of planking the bikes out of general view and assuming they would be ok. Although thinking about it they should have been safe on Harris. As they were lifting the bikes over a fence to hide them a Gaelic voice could be heard – first thought that came to Richard was that someone was complaining however the gentleman changed to English and explained the trick of how to open the adjacent gate and offer an assurance that the bikes would be safe.

Time to start walking, initially there was a path marked on the map - but a Grade A stalkers path it wasn't - and soon it was time to venture off across rough ground aiming to climb Mulla-Fo-Dheas first. After a short rest it was time to tackle the steepish slopes of the hill itself which allowed Richard to surprisingly build up a bit of a lead by the time the summit cairn was reached. Although some cloud had built up there were still excellent views across Harris as they stopped at the summit to have lunch. There was a split decision on which route to follow down to the col leading to An Cliseam.



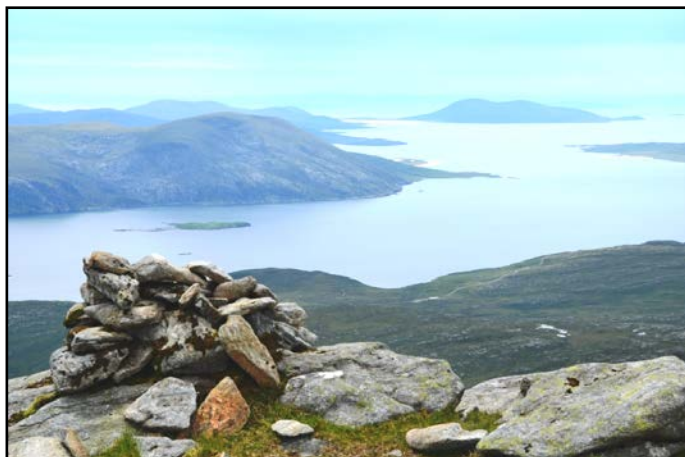
Richard looped round by a traversing descent path – Olly went for the direct descent to the col which proved to be the trickier option involving a bit of scrambling. The ascent to the stony summit of An Cliseam and its large circular shelter enclosing the summit trig point was straight forward. Three other walkers arrived from the standard Easterly ascent route as Olly and Richard stopped for another short rest before tacking the steep descent Southwest back towards the whaling station. Half way down Richard heard an oath behind him as Olly slipped and broke one of his walking poles – not that great a loss since the poles had enjoyed a long life and now required a pair of pliers to make any adjustments. [Olly subsequently managed to buy a replacement pair on ebay for £15 which included delivery to Dunfermline.....] Once off the slope there was still a reasonably long tramp across the moor to get back to the bikes. The original though had been that there would be loads of time to get back to Tairbearit and have an evening meal before the return Ferry left at 20:00. In the end there was only time for a couple of badly needed pints before



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Richard chickened out and decided he better head down to the harbor. Ollly hung on a bit longer and in the end made the right decision since the Ferry was running half an hour late and it was just starting to drizzle as loading began – this time cars first. Although the return crossing was still flat calm it rained heavily all the way. The restaurant on the Ferry did a reasonable plate of fish and chips which hit the spot on the way back. Unfortunately it was still raining back in Uig which meant a wet cycle back along the pier and a slow drive back to Portnalong over rain soaked roads, arriving around 23:00 when only the diehards were still up. A long day but very enjoyable and Richard has vowed to make a longer trip to explore Harris properly in the not too distant future.

Others out on Skye on the Saturday included Jim, Jess and Margaret who climbed up to look at Sgurr Dearg and the In Pin via an interesting route of Jim's design – it was perhaps a bit more interesting than Jess and Margaret would have chosen themselves. Brian, Jane, David Currie and Dave Paton were also out and about but I can't remember what they did....and I think I've forgotten to mention someone else entirely? The only other worthy point from the Saturday evening was that Jim found a new place for one of his infamous late evening power naps.... fortunately he did wake up.



Again it is not known what was done on the Saturday apart from Richard who bagged another Corbett on the way home – Beinn Loinne, cycling in from beside the Cluanie Inn.

The majority on the meet agreed that the revised Skyewalker Bunkhouse is a great venue and worth a return visit.

Un-Meet Report: Ling Hut, Torrindon, 11th & 12th July

Ollly relates the tale of woe as follows:

I'm sending you the Ling Hut Meet report from an unusual perspective in that I wasn't on it! Vicky and Steve went up on Thursday afternoon to stay in the excellent Torrindon Youth Hostel that night and drop their luggage at the Ling on the Friday morning to be followed by a day's hillwalking as the Saturday forecast was none too promising. However as I was at home cleaning a sales car (yes I do have to work sometimes) I got a phone call from Vicky at about 10.30 am to say that Steve Gadd – henceforth to be known as Guy the Gorilla – had snapped the key off in the lock. Calls to both the mobile and land line phone of the hut custodian (who lives in Elgin – the

best part of 100 miles from the Ling so ideally placed – not) produced no response. Jim Donald drove up from Dunfermline on Friday morning so was almost there when I called him. Kenny and Cath were already in the area as were Steve and Vicky obviously. David Currie and Stuart Malpas weren't setting off till about 2 pm. David arrived to pick up Stuart about 2 pm but as the issue hadn't been resolved returned home about 3.30 pm. I wasn't due to set off until after 8 pm and as we'd received no response from the errant custodian I decided I'd be cutting the hedge this weekend instead. Kenny, Cath and Jim returned home on Friday evening. Vicky and Guy, I mean Steve, decided to seek overnight accommodation locally. Bit of a disaster really, hopefully the potential attendees will be refunded.....





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	Skyewalker Bunkhouse, Portnalong
July 11 th /12 th	Ling Hut
July 25 th / 26 th	Lake District - Cancelled
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
December TBC	Christmas Meet Inchree

