



Cioch Mountaineering Club (Dunfermline)

Established 1988

Newsletter #59

September 2014



Published by Cioch Mountaineering Club (Dunfermline)
Unless indicated otherwise, Copyright Richard Christie

Meet Report: Sail Mhor, Dundonnell, 8th & 9th August 2014

Contributions: words from Richard Christie and Olly Simpson, photos from Richard.

After a couple of call offs there were 14 attendees at the Sail Mhor meet: David C, Richard, Wattie, Neil, Sharon, Sam, Martin, Karen, Ollie, John R, Steve Gadd, Dave T, Jim D and Jess. David C was the first to arrive on the Friday evening and was relaxing after his tea by the time Richard and Wattie rolled in. Everyone was well settled in by the time Olly and his three passengers (John, Steve and Dave) turned up – although Olly may not have to suffer regular '9 to 5' working hours, the need to attend the Friday evening car auction does make for late arrivals at meets. With a fairly benign weather forecast for Saturday everyone was planning to do something worthwhile.



Richard and Wattie were first out the door aiming to advance Richard's Corbett bagging quest by climbing Beinn an Eoin and Baosbheinn northwest of the main Torridon trio. The drive round the coast past Aultbea, Poolewe and Gairloch was suitably scenic. There was not a breath of wind as they parked beside the 'Red Barn', which is actually painted green, and the lack of a breeze meant for an unpleasant midge infested time putting on walking boots. Relief from the feeding frenzy was soon gained as they set off across the footbridge and along the track leading through Bad an Sgalaig Native Pinewood which was planted as part of the Millennium Forest Project to restore the Caledonain forest. The walking along the track was a pleasant 5km up and down meander with views slowly opening out. After a run of dry weather the stepping stones over the Abhainn Loch na h-

Oidhche presented no problem and then it was time to leave the track and head off towards the start of Beinn an Eoin. The end of the long ridge was climbed quite easily in a number of stages with good views over Loch Maree and back out to sea. Once on the ridge the walking was straight forward and it did not seem to take that long before the summit was reached. Although all the Torridon summits were clear, higher cloud meant that they were in shadow and quite dark for most of the day.

Having enjoyed a straight forward ascent all was to change as Wattie lead the way aiming to descend towards the Poca Buidhe bothy. The initial descent was ok winding its way down between rock outcrops but it then steepened and deteriorated into a zig zag of route finding to avoid the worst of slab-y steps, hidden holes between boulders and much squidgyness. The descent took all of an hour before the bothy was reached. Sadly the bothy is no longer available for public use but there was a bench outside where Wattie and Richard sat to eat their lunch and reflected on the fact that only half the walk had been completed. They picked their way between a number of small lochs before starting to climb

once more. The ascent of Baosbeinn involved going over two intermediate tops and after a slow ascent of the second of these neither Richard nor Wattie were looking forward to the steeper final climb up to the main summit, Sgorr Dubh. As it turned out however there was a reasonable zig zag path and the summit cairn was reached somewhat more easily than expected.



It was then time to choose: carry on along the rest of the ridge, involving two more climbs, or head down into An Reidh Choire and take a chance on being able to cross the outflow from Loch na h-Oidhche – a report on Scottishhills.com having indicated that the bridge mentioned in the Corbett book was no more. Although continuing along the ridge was possible the more scenic option, Wattie and Richard agreed that enough climbing had been done for the day and there was still a long walk out to do - which would be easier on the track. The descent in to the chorie was straight forward and they overtook a family who had climbed just Baosbeinn. Again thanks to the dry weather the outflow of the loch was crossed without difficulty and then there was the 'simple' matter of the 5km walk out. This was made a bit more enjoyable

email contributions to newsletter@cioch.co.uk

as the cloud gave way to late afternoon sunshine but it was still a relief to finally cross the footbridge and reach the car after an eight and a half hour day. Thankfully there was just enough breeze to keep the midges away.



An Teallach was the chosen target for five people on the meet and all enjoyed a sunlit day. Sam and Martin climbed the two munros directly from Dundonnell. There was some discussion about whether they could have parked nearer the start of the walk rather than at the Dundonnell Hotel – but it was handy to call in for a refreshment once the walking was over. Karen and Jim / Jess separately followed the traditional circular route starting and finishing at Corrie Hallie. All three eventually meeting up as they attempted to find their way back through the woods to the road.

Sharon and Neil set off from Inverlael and climbed Beinn Dearg and Cona'Mheall. Sharon decided that bagging two tops was enough for one day. They shared the first part of their route with Olly, John, Steve and Dave who were heading for Seana Bhragh and a minor epic as Olly relates:

I, together with Steve, Dave T and John R decided to tackle Seana Braigh as it's on Dave's to do list and the rest of us were happy enough to accompany him. A problem arose though in that Dave was recovering from a pulled calf muscle and something less ambitious would have been more advisable. Anyhow we set off in cloudy but dry weather and most of the tops were clear, leaving Inverlael at 9.25 am. It was obvious Dave was going to struggle a bit and he was limping quite badly by the time we left the forest and headed for higher ground but if nothing else he's quite game and determined to do the hill. We made slow but steady progress towards and north of Eididh nan Clach Geala before stopping for lunch. We then headed north and rather annoyingly considerably down-hill to the col then headed northwest to the summit of Seana Braigh.



Steve and I went on ahead and John and Dave appeared about 20 minutes later. It had taken us almost 6 hours! Last time I did Seana Braigh in 2005 on my own I came back a different way by heading off down the North West ridge to the col before Creag Dhubh and as my recollection was that this was a shorter way back we elected to go that way then dropped down into the glen on our left crossing the River Douchary in the process. From there we climbed in a south westerly direction across a featureless plateau to meet with a road (shown as a path on the OS map) which emanates in a north easterly direction from the glen at Inverlael. The only problem was I didn't remember so many (or even any) peat hags on the plateau that made progress really slow. Perhaps we were too far to the north (or south) but we picked up the road exactly where I had anticipated and eventually dropped down into the glen and arrived back at the car at 9.10 pm. Indeed a long and quite hard day. We rushed along to the chippie in Ullapool which closed about 2 minutes after we arrived. Back at the bunkhouse for half ten we were out on the hill a good 4 hours longer than we'd reckoned. Severe cramp meant I spent most of the night hopping round the lounge in the small hours....:-)

The final meet attendee also achieved his chosen summit with David C climbing Am Faochagach, the last munro he had to climb in the area. David had a bit of fun crossing the Abhainn a' Gharbhraim but had gone equipped with sandals. So for a pleasant change everyone managed to get out and climb their chosen hill(s) – a 100% successful meet!



What a difference a couple of days would have made with torrential rain arriving on the Sunday night. In a letter Olly received from Sail Mhor thanking us for leaving the bunkhouse clean and tidy [big thank you to those who did the cleaning / tidying] the owners, Lynda & Dave, explained as follows: *the weather really turned on us on Sunday night into Monday & the Ardesie waterfall burst its banks & began to flood the house below. It was all hands on deck to help them. We had other landslides, blocked roads & guests stuck here unable to move. Our water supply comes from the falls & was all swept away, so we had no water (including toilets)!!! So it's been a terrible hectic week.*

Ad-hoc Meet Report: Skye Camping, June 2014

Words and photos from Dave Paton

The club's second visit to Skye within a matter of weeks was not technically an 'official meet', but was open to anyone who wanted come along. It was all very informal and people could come and go as they pleased. The idea for the meet came when Dave Thomas told me he was thinking of hiring a guide to complete the six Munros he still had to do on Skye. This, to me, seemed a bit daft as there are plenty of club members who were more than capable of helping him out (and for nothing!). So the idea of a camping meet arose. It had the added bonus for me as I could now do the Red Cuillin on the June club meet and still have the chance to go up onto the ridge a couple of weeks later.

Here follows a short report of that trip, as I forgot to submit it to Richard in time for the last newsletter.

The Red Cuillin are a great day out by the way and something I had wanted to do for a long time. So if you have 'done' all of the ridge and are looking for something different I would recommend them. With only one car, to make a circuit of them, I started at the Slig'. The pull up to the summit of Glamaig was something else, but the reward of the views at the top was worth it. From there it was a very steep decent to the Bealach na Sgairde and another steep pull up to Beinn Dearg Mhor, again with great views. The next drop and final pull to my last top, Beinn Dearg Mheadhonach was by comparison a doddle. Here I was able to sit for a while enjoying the weather and the views.

Anyway, back to Skye II.

Dave and I set off on the Saturday afternoon, Steve and Mags, Bob C. and Steve G. had gone up on the Friday night to give them an extra day. Mags and Steve had an epic journey but it's better if they tell about that [Steve spills the beans later in this Newsletter]. The weather on Saturday was great and we enjoyed a bit of a barbecue in the sun and some light refreshments at base camp before bed.

This is Dave and I's story. I'll leave others to tell what they did.

Day 1

Dave, Steve, Bob and myself headed up towards Coire Laggan. That was Bob's target as he is still recovering from an op'. Dave, Steve and I headed for the Sgurr Sgumain Screes to gain access to Coire Ghrunnda, our targets were Sgur Dubh Mor and Sgurr Alasdair. From the top of the screes, with only a short drop we were able to contour virtually to the low point between Sgurr Alasdair and Sgurr Dubh na da Bheinn (that inconvenient top you have to go over just to get to Sgurr Dubh Mor!).



As usual finding the easy way up Sgurr Dubh Mor proved elusive but the top was gained fairly easily where we stopped for some pics. The path from the top is always more obvious and the descent was straight forward and it wasn't long before we were reunited with the packs we left on Sgurr Dubh na da Bheinn. From there we traversed under the Thearlich-Dubh Gap to the coll between Sgurr Sgumain and Sgurr Alasdair and after a scramble up a short chimney we were able to reach the summit of Sgurr Alasdair quite easily. The weather was now quite glorious and we had another stop for pics before descending by the Great Stone Chute into Coire Laggan and back to the camp site.

The weather continued to be kind and we ate al fresco in the evening sunshine. Mercifully there was just enough of a breeze to keep the dreaded midges at bay!

Day 2



No sunshine! Steve, Dave and I set off on the short drive to The Slig' to do Am Bastier. The walk up to Coire a'Bastier was pleasant as it was calm and warm, perfect for midges but we didn't stop to let them bother us. I had boasted that you couldn't get lost in Coire Bastier. However, the cloud got pretty thick and it started raining and, yes, we got lost! In my defence it is pretty hard to find the path from the little lochan if you don't know exactly where it starts, further up it is obvious but we couldn't see that far. Fortunately the cloud lifted briefly and allowed us to get our bearings and get back on the path and reach the coll. Steve decided he would wait there (he was planning to do the whole ridge later that

week) and only Dave and I went on to the summit. Still no views, but at least there was no wind and it was warm. It seemed to take ages to get up and down and Steve was wondering where we had got to. However, it was another tick for Dave.

By this time Bob had gone off home but Jim and Jess had arrived. Another good evening was had, all comfortably seated in the big tent, enjoying a couple of glasses of wine.

Day 3

Some may say it's being a bit lazy but we actually drove from the camp site to the Youth Hostel to start the next walk. The targets for the day being Sgurr a'Mhadaidh and Sgurr a'Ghreadaidh. We were again very lucky with the weather and it proved to be the hottest day yet, with brilliant sunshine. The route up towards An Dorus is a bit of a plod and it was hot work and we stopped only to top up on water and I soaked my sunhat to keep my head cool. We also picked up a couple of passengers. We had passed a family on the way. They were a bit unsure of going up top but the father and son asked if they could join us. It transpired that these would be the father's 99th and 100th Munros. From just below An Dorus we scrambled up to the top of Sgurr a'Mhadaidh and again enjoyed fabulous views. Our new companions decided that one top would do, he had promised his wife that she would be with him on his 100th. Steve also decided on just the one, he would do the other on his traverse of the ridge later in the week.



Dave and I carried on to Sgurr a'Ghreadaidh without incident, where we met more people on top than we had met before on the previous two days put together. Still 5 down 1 to go! The descent was straight forward and we caught up with Steve who had waited patiently for us. In the sun I was conscious of staying one step ahead of the clegs (I do react rather badly to them to say the least).

That night we were again able to dine al fresco as our luck with the weather continued. In fact things got better as it was suggested that we have a picnic on the beach. Jim, Jess, Mags and Steve had bought logs so we had a bit of a bonfire as well. We were able to sit until well after



midnight enjoying the fire, wine and company.

Day 4



The forecast for the day was not good. The tops were already clagged in a bit when we set off. However, the conditions weren't too bad and sometimes the forecasters can be a bit pessimistic. Just because it's not good for sunbathing doesn't mean that it will be that bad for hill walking. With that in mind Dave and I set off to do his last top. After half an hour it seemed that we had made the right decision, the wind had even dropped, although the tops were still not clear. However, by the time we reach the lochan at Coire Laggan it was apparent that we would not be reaching the top today and after stopping in a sheltered spot for lunch we headed back to the campsite. Still 5 out of 6 wasn't too bad. By the time we got

back to the camp site we saw that everyone else had gone and the weather had taken a real turn for the worse. It was now raining heavily and it was very windy. I made a decision to take down the tent and just head for home. However, in the wind that was easier said than done. A big tent's great in good weather, in the wind it was like a giant sail, but after a struggle we got packed up and after stopping at the Slig' for lunch, headed for home.

Despite the disappointing end it was a great trip and everyone had a great time. I think it would be well worth trying to organise something like this next year, if anyone is up for it.



Skye, Harris and Lewis – Trailers, Cuillins & Camping

Words by Steve Grey

Having failed to convince Maggie that we should do Sgurr Mhic Choinnich when we visited the Skyewalker bunkhouse in early June, Dave Paton's invitation to Skye to go camping for a few days was grabbed with both hands. Our journey north started on Friday 27th June at around 11 am. Trailer loaded, tyres checked (with spare), car fuelled and we were off – well at least we thought we were, just past Kinross we had a tyre blowout on the trailer which meant having to unload everything to put the spare on, no problem just a 20 minute delay. Just after we left the Inveralmond roundabout to the north of Perth we were flashed down by a passing driver who alerted us to the fact that one of our trailer tyres was flat (again) so we pulled into Layby 1 to fix the problem. Having abandoned Maggie at the side of the road in her beach chair I returned to Perth to see if I could now get the offending tyre replaced. After three attempts managed to get it repaired and returned to the abandoned Maggie. Once we had the wheel refitted and the trailer reloaded we decided not to take any chances and have the other tyre replaced so we returned to Perth. An hour later and having reloaded the trailer again we were off but only as far as Layby 3 north of Perth as again we were flagged down by a passing motorist and behold yet another flat tyre on the trailer – this time it was the brand new tyre – what was going on? We managed to get the tyre fitter's mobile unit to come to our aid and he readily repaired the faulty tyre valve that had caused the problem and had us roadworthy within about 10 minutes. At this point I said to Maggie that I had lost all faith in the trailer so we returned to Dunfermline without any further hitches. We loaded up the Freelander and headed north again – the time.....6 pm! The rest of the journey was uneventful. We arrived at the Glen Brittle Campsite at around 10.45 pm and in a bit of a breeze, pitched the tent and got some well-deserved shut-eye.

We rose early on the Saturday to find that the breeze had gone and we had blue sky all around. Our assault on Sgurr Mhic Choinnich was via the An Stac screes which were slightly more stable than the Great Stone Shoot from a few weeks before, but not by much. Having reached the ridge we then traversed along until we got to some better scrambling. At one point I was unsure what route to take and finding no other obvious route we climbed down a chimney and along a well-defined ledge path. It didn't seem to rise until we got to a bad step and I then realised that we must be on Collies Ledge which was confirmed by a couple of climbers coming the other way. We retraced our steps and regained the ridge via the chimney we had climbed down a few minutes before. Still no obvious route was in sight so we clambered over a

email contributions to newsletter@cioch.co.uk

prominent boulder at the top of the shoot to regain the ridge path just over the other side. Careful negotiation of some well-exposed slabs revealed the summit – which wasn't big enough for us and the other two climbers we had met on Collies Ledge, but we managed anyway. The views were great from the summit as Skye was still a totally blue-sky zone with no real breeze to speak of. The return was by the same route we had taken on the way up with some fun on the screes on the way down. In all a brilliant day with some exposure we weren't quite ready for, none of my research on this mountain had said much about exposure.....but it did mention lots of airy bits on Sgurr nan Gillean - Sunday's challenge!



We arose on the Sunday to find blue skies again but a wee bit breezier than the day before. After the short drive round to the Slig' we started on the main path to Am Basteir which later divided towards the South East Ridge route for Sgurr Nan Gillean. It was a bit of a long walk in but there was plenty of wildlife around to distract us on the way including some meal-sized brown trout in the Slig' River. My greatest worry as we approached Gillean was the wind as it hadn't dropped at all since we arrived and with the forecast of some airy and exposed bits I was a wee bit concerned, but needlessly so as it turned out. We met up with a Geordie on the way up and it was plain once we started the real scrambling onto the ridge, that he was much happier in exposed areas than the two of us, however we picked our own (and much safer) routes to gain the south east ridge. Ahead of us lay a fragmented ridge

with the odd chimney and veins of basalt. The path (of which there were many lower down) was well defined and not at all exposed....or so we thought! The ridge once gained offers an easy approach to the summit however a bit higher up there needs to be much more care in selecting grips and footholds. We did a fair bit of scrambling when at one point we reached a bit of a buttress which looked unassailable without gear but after further 'routing around' we found an easier route via a chimney which was crumbly underfoot but which did not have the exposure of the other less obvious routes. We traversed over a few slabs near the summit and a final and careful scramble brought us out onto the summit ridge. Maggie and I approached the summit up to a wee 'bad step' where Maggie said that was enough exposure for her and so I (being the gentleman I am) left her where she was and joined our Geordie friend and one other at the summit cairn. The views from here were stupendous and again we had clear skies and the odd wisp of cloud forming over distant tops but without the wind that we had experienced on the lower slopes. This was our final and possibly toughest Cuillin. The return was again via the route we had taken to the summit which meant very careful negotiation of some of the more airy bits. The final chimney negotiated we landed safely on the main south east ridge and took one of the numerous paths down to the corrie we had come up. I had very sore feet once we got back to the car and, as ever, it seemed a much longer walk out than the walk in. After a couple of well-earned beers watching Holland beat Mexico 2 -1 in the football World Cup we headed back to 'camp' to join the rest of our merry band of campers.

Monday brought yet another lovely day but Maggie and I were going to do the touristy bit this time and headed for the village of Dunvegan and true to form just as we arrived I got the munchies and as I am like a bear with a sore head when I get hungry we tried to find a decent eatery. 5 restaurants later, having been ignored, been turned away, closed for lunch or just a bit too rustic we settled on a tiny wee bakery cum take-away cum diner where we were charged £17.00 per head for a plate of home made goulash – it was nice but I doubt if it was worth the thirty four quid for lunch even if their season is only for the summer! Later that day we ended up at a Mountain Bothies Association bothy near to Duntulm on the northern most tip of Skye at Rubha Hunish. The bothy (The Lookout) a former HM Coastguard lookout (now extended) sleeps 3 people in basic comfort and has un-spoilt views from the Hebrides to Wester Ross and the odd Vanguard Class Submarine. There aren't any mountains nearby so don't book unless you like cliffs.

Jim and Jess had planned to take the trip to Harris and Lewis so Maggie and I followed them over on the Wednesday (or I should say led them over as they hadn't booked a place on the Ferry?). It was lashing down with rain by the time we got near to Uig and Jim and Jess managed to get on the Ferry as the last car (phew!). On the crossing we witnessed an HM Coastguard helicopter practice winch onto the stern of the ship which was quite entertaining for about 20 minutes or so. When we berthed in Tarbert (23 miles from Uig) it hadn't even been raining and it was beautiful – such are the vagaries of Scottish weather. After a fair bit of scouting around for a decent campsite we decided that Stornaway offered the best facilities and so we booked for 3 nights. Over the next day we stuck together visiting some stunning beaches such as Bernera on Lewis and Huisinis on Harris (where Jess bumped into her neighbours – what are the chances of that?) along with a host of visitor sites on Lewis such as the Calanish Stones, Iron Age dwellings, and Brochs – well worth the visit. We eventually ended up at the Butt of Lewis where the Atlantic swell was rising steadily to the constant blast of the Hebridean wind which made some spectacular waves that crashed into the high cliffs near the



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

lighthouse. We returned to Stornaway and had a very pleasant dinner in one of the better restaurants that night but we were very lucky to get a table as all the restaurants were very busy.

The next couple of days we went our separate ways and Maggie and I opted for a drive round South Harris with its stunning beaches and turquoise seas which was the best part of our trip to the Hebrides especially the small (and extremely narrow) road from Roghadal back to Tarbert on the Golden Route. We even got caught up in the Harris Half Marathon for a bit – far too many hills for my liking though. We broke camp on the Saturday morning and headed back to Tarbert to catch the ferry to Uig arriving there at 10.30pm – luckily we had booked a B & B and had our last night in relative comfort. Jim and Jess had to leave from Stornaway earlier in order for them to be able to meet up with Jess' son on the Sunday in Oban.

All in all this was a fantastic week (and a bit) in the Hebrides and we both can't wait until the next opportunity to go and visit such a wonderful part of the World – we were very spoilt with the weather and we sincerely hope that we haven't yet seen it at its best.

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 - 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



2014 BBQ Photos

Brian Mitchell captures some of the goings on at this year's summer BBQ



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