



# Cioch Mountaineering Club (Dunfermline)

Established 1988

## Newsletter #68 July / August 2015



Published by Cioch Mountaineering Club (Dunfermline)  
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### Meet Report: Strawberry Cottage, Glen Affric, 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> July

Contributed by Cath Guest (and Kenny)

Strawberry Cottage proved to be the usual logistical challenge to get meet attendees and their belongings down the 5 mile track. Much appreciation must be given to Dave P for booking a van despite it scuppering his original plans.

Jim P, Kenny and I arranged to meet in Drumnadrochit to have an evening meal, Dave C joined us at the first hostelry of the evening for a most enjoyable and civil meal. Dave P & Stuart arrived with the van. They settled for a fish supper sitting outside which was fortunately midge free. Once replenished we relocated to the pub in Cannich for the second part of the non-alcoholic Highland pub crawl whilst we awaited Vicky and Steve's arrival from the world of work.

The Cioch then travelled in convoy to the final car park in Glen Affric. The Forestry Commission is now levying £2 per day charges but no options for multiday trips. Token gesture amounts were put in the machine to produce a ticket which would enable us to appeal any fine should that occur. Thereafter all belongings were thrown into the back of the van and the men piled in. Apart from myself struggling a wee bit with the padlocked gate, Vicky and I got the best part of the bargain in the front of the van while Dave P negotiated the potholes - although the track is much improved. Despite being in the back of a windowless van the boys seemed rather chipper apart from a few "are we there yet?!" I have no doubt the midges were delighted with a mobile can of human fodder arriving in the Glen.

Arrival at the bridge near Strawberry Cottage meant a grab whatever you can carry until the van is empty. After my initial jaunt up with stuff I resigned from portering duties and set about turning on the electric and fought a midgefest round the back to enable the water & gas and open up the outside facility. Vicky and I bagged the downstairs room for our ladies dorm. We left the men to fight over their bunks upstairs. A note for future visits - pillows are provided as are blankets for the colder nights. Very useful to put under your sleeping bag as the mattresses have plastic covers which are not known for their warmth.



The weather was scheduled to be rather wet and windy. Dave C set off first with an eye on the Munros at the west of Glen Affric. Early morning the sun had made an appearance. Dave P, Stuart and Kenny set off to do the 3 Munros to the north of the cottage. I set off with Vicky and Steve towards the Glen Affric Youth Hostel. Not rushing things as my feet were rather sore we spotted Stonechats, Meadow Pipits, Sandpipers and Sand Martins. The weather closed in and there were on and off showers for the rest of the day. We eventually parted company at the Youth Hostel where Vicky and Steve set off towards An Socach. That's after I'd used the facilities and stepped out to find a queue had formed.

I plodded on slowly towards Camban before realising I'd walked off all the paper maps in my possession. The feet were becoming very painful so a retreat was required. I was caught up by a couple of guys from Edinburgh who were doing the Cape Wrath Trail. Their conversation helped to distract me from my growing discomfort.

Although I would have eventually made it back I was pleased to see Jim P walk to the Hostel after exploring one of the many paths into the Glen Affric ridge. It was the slowest 5k in history back towards our base. We were joined by Dave C as he descended back down from the heights. That was when I discovered a fine selection of blisters on the soles of my feet - the Cottage was a welcome sight.

The accommodation is not known for the availability of luxurious washing facilities with 3 sinks and the river Affric. Dave C and I debated going for a dook. The river was absolutely freezing and neither of us went in deeper than the knees. I think I went from size xx to 00 in a matter of seconds.

Later after many manly protestations that it was warm enough I decided it was time to hone my skills at lighting and maintaining the wood burner. The rain had well and truly set in by the time Dave P, Stuart and Kenny returned from their adventures. They were properly delighted with Vicky for making an excellent brew and with the warming glow from the

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wood burner. Despite the earlier protestations the quantity of wet boots bred rather well around the wood burner during the evening.

Sunday morning was pack up time and pump up water from the river ready for the next occupants. Over an hour was spent with the pump whirring away at full pelt but not a drop of water was transferred to the tank despite utilising the best mechanical minds available. We can only assume that there was a blockage somewhere due to all the sediment in the river. This was duly noted as an issue in the book and arrangements to contact the custodian ASAP. All belongings were piled ready for the mass portage session down to the van.

The facilities were switched off as they were no longer required and the Cottage locked up. The back of the van sounded subdued and sat in the front I could mentally see the video from a Men at Work hit from the 80's..... We were delighted to note that all cars were still present and correct at the car park with no warning notices. Once the contents of the van were loaded into the cars and debts settled for van hire it was time to head home to the luxury of hot running water.



Kenny adds the following:

I set off with Stuart and Dave P in nice weather. Before long this deteriorated but that was not going to deter us. Both the summits of Carn Eige and Mam Sodhail were clagged in. As we approached Beinn Fhionnlaidh it cleared so we got good views of Loch Mullardoch and the Munros on the other side.

We discussed our return route and decided to contour around the high munros to the stalkers path near An Socach. The first munro was contoured without too much difficulty. The second one proved to be more interesting as we dropped too low. I slipped down the hill in the wet conditions and ended up wearing a considerable quantity of mud. Fortunately there were no rocks or crags to cause injury, or worse. We eventually managed to get to the bealach without further mishap and back down the main track through Glen Affric. We trudged wearily back to Strawberry Cottage where we greeted by a nice fire and an excellent cup of tea made by Vicky.

## Meet non-report - Glenbrittle Memorial Hut, Skye, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> August

After a full house for the 2013 visit to the Glenbrittle Memorial Hut, sadly it was a different case for the return in 2015 with only seven members going on the meet. Admittedly the 2013 visit had coincided with the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations but it was a surprisingly low turn-out. The weather forecast may not have helped but those that did make the effort to go did their best to get out. Cath and Kenny's plans to go to the Quiraing were a bit thwarted when Cath had to call out roadside assistance when the winding mechanism on one of her car windows failed with the window in the open position. She made do with a coastal path jog and Kenny ventured up towards Coire Lagan. Mind you the lack of Cioch attendees did mean that the hut custodian was able to sell two spare beds to a couple of people who turned up on 'spec'.

2015 Meet Dates	
Jan 9 <sup>th</sup> /10 <sup>th</sup>	Calluna, Fort William
Feb 13 <sup>th</sup> /14 <sup>th</sup>	The Pottery Bunkhouse, Laggan
March 13 <sup>th</sup> /14 <sup>th</sup>	Ling Hut, Torridon
April 10 <sup>th</sup> /11 <sup>th</sup>	Muir of Inverly, Braemar
May 1 <sup>st</sup> /2 <sup>nd</sup> /3 <sup>rd</sup>	Station Bunkhouse, Plockton
June 5 <sup>th</sup> /6 <sup>th</sup>	Ariundle Centre, Strontian
July 10 <sup>th</sup> /11 <sup>th</sup>	Strawberry Cottage, Glen Affric
August 7 <sup>th</sup> /8 <sup>th</sup>	Glenbrittle Memorial Hut, Skye
Sept 4 <sup>th</sup> /5 <sup>th</sup>	Sail Mhor, Dundonnell
October 2 <sup>nd</sup> /3 <sup>rd</sup>	Inver Croft, Achnasheen
November 6 <sup>th</sup> /7 <sup>th</sup>	Mill Cottage, Feshiebridge
December 4 <sup>th</sup> / 5 <sup>th</sup>	Christmas Meet, Onich