



# ELLON HILLWALKING CLUB

## Newsletter November 2012

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### Programme:

**Monday 12<sup>th</sup> November 2012**

**Egypt – Gordon Spence**

**Station Hotel Ellon 20:00**

**Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> November 2012**

**Monamenach & Bar Supper**

**Focal Pt Irene Jamieson (01358 711242)**

**Community Centre Car Park 07:30**

### Monamenach (OS Sheet 43)

#### Mike Taylor

Monamenach (middle hill - GR 176707) lies between Glen Shee and Glen Isla and was spotted last winter when we visited Mt Blair. It doesn't look like a particularly interesting hill in itself but promises good views of the glens to the east and west and of the mountains to the north.

The SMC Corbett guide suggests a route from Auchavan in Glen Isla but it would only take a couple of hours to go up and down from here so we are planning to climb it from the west, which should provide a longer and more interesting walk

We haven't visited this mountain before and I haven't been able to find any suggestions for routes from internet searches. The following suggestion comes from looking at a map of the area and may have to be revised on the day when we see the lie of the land.

The proposed starting point is at Westerton of Runavey (GR 130691) which is at the end of the first road on the left a couple of kms past the Spittal of Glenshee. From here a Land Rover track goes east towards Monamenach. The track appears to come to an end in Gleann Carnach but it shouldn't be too difficult to gain the summit of the hill from here. From the summit we could go NW down to the Glack of Glengairney then up to Black Hill. I suspect there will be a line of fence posts here as it along a county boundary. From Black Hill there is a SW shoulder down over Carn Dearg back to the Land Rover track and our starting point. The walk is about 13km with 650m of ascent - about 5 hours - and should be suitable for any reasonably fit member of the club. It is November though, so bring plenty warm clothes and waterproofs.

We will stop at the Boat Inn in Aboyne for a Bar Supper on the way home.

If you are interested in joining this walk, please let Irene Jamieson (01358 711242) know by Thursday 15 November.

### Forthcoming Events

Dec 10<sup>th</sup> Christmas Party

Dec 16<sup>th</sup> The Buck and Tap o' Noth

Jan 14<sup>th</sup> AGM

### October Bunkhouse Weekend

#### Mike Taylor

On the Friday evening, twelve of us turned up at Sail Mhor Croft for the bunkhouse weekend. There was snow on the tops of the mountains and the forecast wasn't great for Saturday. A front was due in the afternoon, bringing rain.

Eight of us planned an early start for an attempt on Beinn Dearg. The other four would have a leisurely breakfast and set off for a round of Loch Kernsary near Poolewe.

The morning wasn't too bad. It was cool and there was a fair amount of snow higher up but it was dry and looked as though it would stay that way for a while. We were walking by 8.15 and emerged from the woods above Inverlael into Gleann na Sguuib at about nine, to

be met by the sound of a stag roaring. He was spotted on the hillside opposite but as we looked around we quickly realised that there were hundreds of deer all around us. We had walked into a major gathering with numerous stags bellowing away. There were deer tracks in the snow beside the path we were walking along and we noticed that musty smell deer leave behind them. We had probably disturbed them and caused them to rise earlier than planned! We had all seen deer on the hillsides before but this was more than any of us had seen together and was a very special experience.

One of our group recalled a notice on the gate at the start of the track which told walkers to be aware that stalking would be taking place between 15 September and 20 October. This was the first weekend for a while in which the deer would not be shot at. We decided that one of them had been down to the road, seen the notice and called the gathering to celebrate. They were getting together for a stag party on the Saturday evening!

We walked through these hundreds of very relaxed deer for quite a while until we started the climb to the bealach below Beinn Dearg. There was ice on the track and, as we climbed, an increasing amount of snow. There were one or two snow showers but also occasional glimpses of blue sky. The climb up from the lochan in the bealach, through the snowy rocks beside the wall, to the summit plateau wasn't easy. By the time we got there the clouds had closed in so we didn't get the view we had been looking forward to. We had to be very careful on the descent and when we got back to the lochan decided that there wasn't really time to climb any of the other, very close, Munros that day. Also, the weather had gone off quite badly. The snow was getting sleaty and it looked as though rain would close in soon. As it turned out, the rain didn't come to much and we had a pleasant enough walk back down the glen. The deer were not as evident, clearly having an afternoon nap in preparation for the partying in the evening. We got back to the cars just after five - a long but very satisfying day.

When we got back to the bunkhouse, we discovered that the other group had had a wetter walk than ours but a very pleasant day out.

We had found out on the Friday evening that the Dundonnell Hotel had not been planning to open on Saturday evening. Fortunately, not much persuasion was required for them to open for us so we had a very pleasant bar supper in the hotel followed by drinks, banter and Hallowe'en cupcakes from Gordon's wife, Susan, in the bunkhouse.

As always, Sail Mhor Croft Bunkhouse was very warm, comfortable and welcoming. The forecast for Sunday was very poor so we all set off for home. A few of us had a look at Corrieshalloch Gorge on the way, which was the best I have ever seen it - lots of water and magnificent autumn colours. A fine finish to a fine weekend.

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## Geal Charn

Irene Jamieson

The forecast promised a reasonably good day for our walk in the Abernethy Hills so we were relieved to see some breaks in the cloud on reaching our parking place, as rain had continued most of the journey. A minibus of elderly bird watchers was already there with cameras set up looking, they informed us, for black grouse.

It was overcast but reasonably dry as the five of us set off along the estate track past Dorback Lodge and some very loud and unwelcoming dogs, fortunately shut in behind sturdy wire cages. It was an easy decision to follow the suggested wet weather route as the burn looked quite deep and fast and ground either side was very boggy. We saw some Blackface sheep, deer and lots of grouse but commented that this was not a busy hill for walkers. A well kept, shooting hut was a welcome surprise at the point before we turned on to the hill and we stopped inside out of the mist and drizzle to have a rest and something to eat. It was very comfortable with bench seats all round and a large table.

The sun came out as we left the hut and we cut the corner, climbing steeply up through burned heather which caught at our boots, to rejoin the track and continue up Geal Charn Beag. As we climbed we admired great views over the surrounding hills especially to the North. Was that Ben Rinnes in the distant haze? Numbered shooting butts were both sides until the track ended and we headed off through heather and bog along the ridge.

The fog came down again and bearings were taken at intervals as we could not see the summit of Geal Charn. There was not much climbing between the two hills but the ground was sometimes very boggy with peat hags and lots of deep holes to be carefully avoided and we were glad to eventually reach the summit cairn. By now the fog had cleared and we enjoyed panoramic views almost all round. The fog still hugged the tops of the hills to the south but the weather remained fine for the rest of our walk.

Descending quite steeply we reached another hut, this one newer than the first, and we sat with the door open, and ate the rest of our lunch inside. After a discussion on how deep we thought the river might be, we decided to chance crossing twice for a more interesting route and save a long walk back on our approach road. The first crossing was no problem and we followed a good path along the side of the hill then down through some old farm buildings. Following the track to the ford we found it not too deep and successfully crossed again, remaining dry for the short walk back to the cars.

Over some refreshment in Cromdale, all agreed we had been lucky with the weather and it had been a very good walk over some less familiar ground.



*Geal Charn Photos - Irene Jamieson*

