



# ELLON HILLWALKING CLUB

## Newsletter April 2015

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**Programme:**  
**Monday 13<sup>th</sup> April 2015**  
**Exploring in Bhutan; Heather McCabe**  
**Station Hotel Ellon 19:30**

**Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> April 2015**  
**Lochnagar**  
**Focal Pt Ingrid Taylor (Text: 07870469653)**  
**Community Centre Car Park 08:00**

### **Lochnagar via Left Hand Branch of Black Spout (OS Sheet 43)**

**Mike Taylor**

The April walk is an interesting ascent of a mountain familiar to most members of the club. The route starts in the usual way at the Spittal of Glen Muick. A rough private road goes 1.5 km NW to a burn, the Allt na Giubhsaich, beside a small shooting lodge. The path to Lochnagar starts at the bridge over the burn, goes through a plantation then curves above the dry gorge of Clais Rathadan to a col at 678m. A well constructed path goes west from here past a spring called the Foxes' Well to a col between the Meikle Pap and Cuidhe Crom. From here the views of the cliffs of Lochnagar are spectacular and the route diverges from the usual way up the mountain.

We head down into the coire picking our way through the boulders to a first aid box. From here the Black Spout is the largest gully on the cliff slanting up rightwards. (286 degrees from 1st aid box). It is described in the SMC Cairngorm Guide as a 'wide easy scree shoot which provides grand views of the cliffs'. The Left Hand Branch is a gully which diverges from the Black Spout and goes straight on to the plateau. In the SMC guide, it is described as 'an easy gully with a huge chokestone' and features in a Tom Patey parody:

*Of all the climbs on Lochnagar  
The Black Spout is the best by far  
While from the Ballochbuie  
You can always climb the Stuaie  
But the pitch to make the experts blanch  
Is the chokestone in the Left Hand Branch*

I am told that this is not a difficult climb. It is a route up the mountain through some very spectacular cliff scenery and is suitable for anyone with a reasonable head for heights who is not too large to go through the gap at the chokestone! If you are interested in taking part in this outing but are a bit uncertain about it, I suggest you speak to one of the members of the club at the meeting on 13 April. There will be an option of taking the more conventional route to the summit.

A minibus has been arranged for this outing which will leave the Ellon Academy Car Park at 7.30.

If you plan to go on the outing please text Ingrid Taylor (07870469653) by Thursday 16 April

### **Forthcoming Events**

May 16/17<sup>th</sup> Skye Weekend  
May 17<sup>th</sup> Clachnaben  
June 14<sup>th</sup> Beinn Bhreac and Beinn a Choarainn

### **Tyndrum Bunkhouse Weekend**

#### **Kayleigh Spence**

Gordon and I arrived at the By The Way Bunkhouse having had a fantastic day on Ben Vorlich and successfully making it to the top of Stuc a'Chroin (after a previously foiled attempt in 2013). Having arrived within minutes of one another, missing only Malcolm's crew, we set off to the pub for some well-earned grub.

There were three walks earmarked for the Saturday - Mike and Sheena set for Falls of Falloch, the larger group for Ben Cruachan and Stob Diamh, and Kenny for Beinn Mhanach.

The larger group started their ascent from the train station climbing steeply up through a wild forest of trees, eventually finding our way to a rather uneven stile but being rewarded with views back over Loch Awe and on towards the Cruachan dam. On our approach to the dam we noticed a workmen in a box dangling from the overhead power cables, who returned Susan's jolly wave, giving us all a giggle.

As we crossed and climbed the dam, making our way to the base of the first Munro, we meandered through the lesser of the boggy paths to find that snow covered much of the path thus providing our first dilemma of where to next and how. After a quick debate and final decision we made our way to the right of the hill and ascent through boulders, until we reached the summit of Ben Cruachan.

After a bite to eat, and a reward in the amazing weather and views, we started to make our way down the steep, at times quite challenging, walk to Stob Diamh. Once these precarious challenges were completed we proceeded to enjoy a pleasant walk along the ridge, with one more steep pull up to the summit of Stob Diamh, rewarded with spectacular views back to the peaked summit of Ben Cruachan; leaving each of us in awe of its sheer magnificence, enhanced by the bright, clear blue skies. From now on we enjoy a relatively easy meander down the grassy slopes, picking up the path back to the railway station and the start of the walk.

We got back to the bunkhouse to find that Mike, Sheena, and Kenny had had equally fantastic days. We all enjoyed an excellent supper in the local pub - apparently the fish is the food of choice - followed by some merriment back in the bunkhouse along with more food of cheese, crackers, short bread and of course the traditional cupcakes!

Adamant to make the most of the weekend, Gordon, Ingrid and I, insisted that Meall nan Tarmachan be walked on Sunday. We had high hopes for the rest of the group, only for them to bail out on arrival at the car park and my goodness, did they make a sensible decision! Tired legs, more snow and relatively high winds made the walk a challenging one, but I think it's safe to say we all felt pretty darn chuffed at having had a full weekend of walking. My large, angry blister had a different view though!

An absolutely cracking weekend, with fantastic weather and great company. One of the best weekends yet! For myself, another four Munros bagged - hoorah

### **Bhutan Talk – Monday 13<sup>th</sup> April**

The Monday evening meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> April sees a return from Heather McCabe to talk on her most recent adventure - a trip to Bhutan to explore the region around the highest unclimbed mountain in the world. Heather went with Mountain Kingdoms to the area around Gangkar Punsum, 7,550m/24,770ft, which sits astride Bhutan's northern border with Tibet and due to its remoteness has received very few visitors. In 1986 Mountain Kingdom's M.D. Steve Berry, was lucky enough to secure a permission to attempt the mountain by its south west ridge and it was he who led the trip that Heather went on. Heather has also managed to get some photos from Steve Berry's original climb to show to us. This will be a fascinating talk involving remote trekking, strange footprints and the King of Bhutan! Be there.....



*Photos of Ben Cruachan – Gordon Spence*