



ELLON HILLWALKING CLUB

Newsletter April 2016

Secretary: Alan Murray, 2 Batchart Steadings, Aberdeen, AB12 5YQ. Tel: 01224 865515 email: alnj.murray@gmail.com

Programme:
Monday 11th April 2016
South Africa – Allan Brown
Station Hotel Ellon 19:30

Sun 17th April 2016
Cairn Bannoch and Broad Cairn
Focal Pt Dan Carr: Text 07772120558
Community Centre Car Park 07:30

Cairn Bannoch and Broad Cairn OS Sheet 44 **Mike Taylor**

To the west of the well-known, spectacular valley which contains Loch Muick, the valley floor rises to a smaller upper basin holding the Dubh Loch. Cairn Bannoch (from *Carn Beannach - Peaked Hill*), lies to the west of this and Broad Cairn (from *Carn Braghaid - Hill of Upland*) to the south.

Our walk will start at the Spittal of Glenmuick car park and will take us first along the west side of Loch Muick passing Glas Allt Shiel, one of the royal residences. West of here, after leaving the loch, a good path climbs up to the Dubh Loch via the Stulan a waterfall in the stream that tumbles down from the hidden Loch Buidhe. A huge slabby wall of granite cliff rears above the Dubh Loch which keeps out much of the sun - hence the name.

A path is followed which peters out at the end of the loch. The route continues upstream for a while until the north west end of Creag an Dubh Loch is passed when a route up to Cairn Bannoch can be found. From this point head SSE to Cairn of Gowal before heading due east to the summit of Broad Cairn. Descent is via the east ridge to Alan's Hut at 256808 then down to Loch Muick - there is a choice of tracks - and on to the Spittal of Glenmuick.

This is quite a long walk, 23km with about 700m of ascent, which is likely to take 9-10 hours. If those who turn up on the day fancy a shorter walk, Broad Cairn on its own would be a very pleasant walk.

If you're interested in joining this walk, please let Dan Carr (07772120558) know by Thursday 14 April.

Forthcoming Events

May 15th The Convals
Jun 19th Beinn a'Ghlo
Jul 17th Angel's Peak and Devil's Point

Fungle and Firmouth Walk Report

Mike Taylor

Ten of us met up in the Aboyne car park on a very sunny, spring like morning. We agreed that a 24km walk was a bit more than we wanted to undertake and decided on a shorter route going up the Fungle, across to a little of the Firmouth then back to finish where we had started.

It was a lovely walk up through the woods to The Guard, where we turned right towards Baudy Meg. This name has nothing to do with a lady named Meg. It is an anglicisation of the gaelic, Badan Miaghiche, which means thicket or grove of the hares - which were nowhere to be seen. To the east of Baudy Meg on the slopes of Duchery Beg we spotted two pyramids with balls on top. Some of us knew these were memorials to the shooting of a stag but couldn't remember the name of the story. It is the 'Haunted Stag'. It's told that one William Cunliffe Brooks, the laird of Glen Tanar, had been hunting an elusive stag for a long time but had been unable to get his sights on it long enough to get a shot off. Then, on the 9th of October 1877 he finally managed to bring it down with a shot of 267 feet. In those far off days this was considered a remarkable feat of skill and the gentleman, not known for his modesty, had two memorials erected to himself: one where he stood and one where the poor beast fell. Apparently there is a faded inscription on them that reads 'The Haunted Stag. The stag is dead. Sure bullet to its fatal mark hath sped'.

The same William Cunliffe Brooks had many inscribed stones put around the Glen Tanar estate, particularly at springs and wells. We passed a few of these. Some are very poetic, others didn't make a lot of sense to us and are generally described as 'enigmatic in sentiment' in Glen Tanar guides. (See *postscript - Editor*)



We had a very pleasant stop at the viewpoint above Glen Tanar House. The estate is clearly well-managed and very welcoming to walkers. We wondered who developed the estate and about the current owners. The Estate itself was formed in the nineteenth century, when part of the lands of the Marquis of Huntly was leased, and then bought, by Brooks (see above), a merchant banker and MP. He brought many changes building houses and bridges, the Tower of Ess, the Victorian Ballroom and the landscaped gardens. In 1905, Glen Tanar was bought by George Coats, later Lord Glentanar. The present owners, Michael and Claire Bruce, are the fourth generation of the family to own Glen Tanar.

We followed the river down for a while and then walked through the woods over the shoulder of Craigendinnie back to the start. There is a great deal of tree felling going on here and we had a bit of a struggle up the track left by the logging machines. We passed one of these amazing creatures. It was a factory on wheels, capable of converting a living tree into a log in a few easy moves. As we rejoined the Fungle, we noticed that the path we had followed over the hill was closed because of logging operations - there was no sign at the other end!

We finished with refreshments at the Boat Inn in Aboyne. According to the technology carried by some of the group, we had walked just under 20km - another fine day out.

Editor's Postscript: Following a further bit of research I was lent a book by Dr Pierre Fouin in which he recounts his childhood growing up in Glen Tanar where his father was butler/valet to the Lords Glentanar from 1914 to 1956. In this book (Glen Tanar Valley of Echoes and Hidden Treasures, Leopard Press, 2009) Pierre catalogues the many stones and relics to be found on the Glen Tanar Estate; of particular interest are two stones on the Firmouth which we found and whose inscriptions we puzzled over - Marker Stone 1 "inscribed with the figure 803 which appears to indicate altitude." and Marker Stone 2 "A similar stone, but with an indication that we are perhaps two miles from the mansion house, is just a few hundred yards further on. It stands proudly on the left bank, at the junction where a road branches off to the left up the east bank of the East Burn of Drum to Baudy Meg". Puzzle solved.

(Pictures above taken from Pierre's book)

By The Way Bunkhouse, Tyndrum

Sheena Taylor

Torrential downpours on the journey to Tyndrum made it easy to ditch the idea of climbing Ben Lui in favour of the nearer Beinn Dubhcraig and Ben Oss. Bridges providing access over the water courses, seemed a more fruitful option for the climbers: Ingrid, Susan, Kenny, Neil and Malcolm.

The day dawned calm and dry, the remains of clouds offering to clear from the hilltops. Michael and I made a leisurely start chatting to the caretaker about recent upgrades to facilities and his long service as lifeboat crew member in his home town of Scarborough, one of the earliest stations established in 1834. From Victoria Bridge car park tranquil Loch Tulla spread out beyond its usual bounds in unruffled serenity, its surface resembling a metal mirror of yesteryear. We ambled along the easy gradient of the neat small-cobbled surface of the amazingly intact Telford Parliamentary road begun in the late 1790s, opened in 1805 and used by ordinary traffic until 1933.

The comparatively few travellers on the West Highland Way, whether from overseas or local people, but including a near neighbour from my teenage days at Highland Park houses in Kirkwall, mostly exchanged a few words in passing.

There was scarcely a nod, however, from those folks wired from the ears into man-made sounds. If they caught the tangy scent of pine or the earthy odour of moss in mature woods around Black Mount House, they most certainly missed the whisper of wind through the trees, the calls from a variety of small birds revelling in the warm sunlight after so much rain and probably even the cheerful tumult of bracken-coloured burns careering through the wonderfully engineered culverts tumbling towards the loch.

Just before we lost the signal a text came in from Ingrid telling us of the high level group's changed plan to climb Beinn Chabhair from Beinglas.

In the evening we learned, since the bridge had been washed away, Kenny had made a fairly precarious burn crossing. As some of the others did not fancy following suit, the remaining foursome continued upwards to the east of the burn to cross higher on the hill. There they met a high metal fence with a new padlock on an eight foot gate carrying a notice announcing shooting was in progress. Some had been willing to shin over the obstruction, but the consensus was they would have 'scarce a leg to stand on', so to speak, at any court case seeking compensation for injury! Kenny eventually got their phone calls and recrossed to join in the new plan.

Meanwhile, after an early lunch stop, Michael and I, having turned for home, saw Ben Lui standing magnificent in clear sunlight with a generous white topping of corniced snow. A fast-moving group in formation heading towards Kingshouse - a young couple in bright yellow running gear, followed by two on bikes in a blue strip accompanied by an alert black and white collie and a lighter-coloured mutt of more mixed parentage, made a strange sight - possibly a triathlon team in practise.

While we took refreshment in Inveroran Hotel exchanging reminiscences of Knoydart with the new owner and his wife, a former manager of the Bridge of Orchy Hotel, Kenny and Susan had tired of being bogged down in soggy terrain and, pre-warned of the large grizzly bear at the reception desk, had repaired to the Drovers Inn. Ingrid, Neil and Malcolm continued upwards for a while, and since it was judged too late to reach the summit, returned via the route they'd intended to take on the ascent, frightening a resting stag into flight over the slopes.

In dim light amid the stuffed animals leaking formaldehyde fumes with woodworm chomping at the window frames and doors - the building's been there since 1705 - while enjoying libations of their choice, they had time to reflect on how and where their navigation went adrift and to appreciate the comic aspect of events, which resulted in no more harm than a small dent to the navigators' pride.

I'll spare their blushes by drawing a discreet veil over how Lochan Beinn Chabhair became further away over boggy terrain on a different bearing than expected. Their claim to have been "traumatised by the ugly scar of a new (hydro power) road carved across the hillside to the detriment of the environment" plans and tools scattered around the area, was probably an accurate enough assessment of what caused the lapse in route finding. Whatever threatens to put them 'aff their stot' another day, compasses will come out sooner to check direction. But those following without using the good brains on their shoulders are not exonerated. No-one's map or compass is any blinkety-blank use in the rucksack.

I am not being holier than thou. My own error of judgement was more serious. So eager in my failed attempt to sit once more at Ba Bridge watching and hearing the swollen river rushing towards the level expanse of Rannoch Moor, I ignored signs my so s-l-o-w-l-y recuperating ticker was toiling badly. On the verge of collapse by the time I got out of the no-vehicle zone, in spite of Michael carrying my small day sack, the nadir of my trip was when the triathlon group, svelte and scarcely ruffled, swept past Inveroran, cheered briefly and continued only a little less rapidly over the hill towards Bridge of Orchy.

Nowadays, for this veteran of long walks the 14km I'd struggled to complete, was too far. I thought I'd been lucky enough to get off with it completely, but sadly I'll take a while to recover.

Although in the whole group only Michael had achieved his well-chosen weekend objective of spending time in the open, with the added bonus of splendid weather, we all enjoyed convivial meals in the refurbished Tyndrum Inn and refreshments brought for sharing in the bunkhouse. How lucky we are.

Sunday was judged 'foosty' rather than outrightly 'dreich'. I don't know if Malcolm climbed one of the five Corbetts round Tyndrum, as four of us set off early to fry other fish - in our case so that the Gaelic-singing Geordie could join the choir in the afternoon.

"Why no tak peace on theesels?" I hear the old Orkney folk say. Hey! Wait a minute. These days I'm one of those old Orkney folk myself. And that's another stroke of luck, by the way!

