



ELLON HILLWALKING CLUB

Newsletter June 2014

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Programme:

Monday 9th June 2014

Bennachie – Colony Trail

Community Centre Car Park Ellon 19:00

Sunday 15th June 2014

Cairngorm and Ben Macdui

Focal Pt Ingrid Taylor (07870 469653)

Community Centre Car Park 07:00

Cairngorm & Ben Macdui OS Sheet 36

Mike Taylor

This walk was planned for September last year but called off because of bad weather. Let's hope the weather is fine this time.

On a good day, this must be one of the best walks in Scotland. The views are spectacular and the route crosses the arctic wilderness of the *Cairngorm Plateau*. There are good paths onto and off the plateau but the walk across requires good navigational skills in poor visibility.

Cairngorm (blue hill) used to be one of the easiest Munros to climb, as the top of the ski chairlift at the Ptarmigan restaurant came to within 160m of the summit but since the funicular railway was built, there is no access to the summit from this point. *Ben Macdui* was for many years thought to be the highest mountain in Scotland - especially by the locals - but is now known to be the second highest. There are a few suggestions for the origins of the name but the favoured one among the writers is *Mhac Dhuibhe* - hill of the sons of dubh, the black one. The Duff family owned much of the mountain until the middle of last century and 'Duff' is a common anglicisation of dubh.

Our walk starts at the ski centre car park from where we head west down some steps and over a bridge. The path crosses below the northern corries. The first corrie is *Coire Cas* (Steep Corrie) which carries snow far into the summer called *Cuidhe Crom* (Crooked Wreath). The next is *Coire an t-Sneachda* (Corrie of the Snow) in which there is a great mound of glacial debris high up on the east side. Separating this corrie from the next one, *Coire an Lochain* (Corrie of the Lochans), is the *Fiacail Ridge* (Tooth Ridge). This stony ridge is one of the few narrow rock arêtes in the Cairngorms and is an interesting ascent involving some easy scrambling - which becomes difficult in winter. Some members of the club plan to use this ridge as their way on to the plateau. The non-scrambly route will keep to the lower paths and then, after crossing the stream coming out of *Coire an Lochain*, go up the ridge of *Miadan Creag an Leth-choin* onto the plateau. The path continues above the steep slopes down into the *Lairig Ghru* on to *Lochan Buidhe*. The route across the tundra to the large cairn on the top of *Ben Macdui* can be difficult to follow when the mist comes down. If it does, watch out for *Am Fear Mor Liath* (the big, grey man) who (which?) frequents this mountain - especially when walkers are tiring!

The route to *Cairngorm* starts by retracing our steps to *Lochan Buidhe* but keeping to the right hand path which passes closer to the lochan. It crosses the headwaters of the *Feith Buidhe* which runs into *Loch Avon*. The rim of the northern corries is then followed on to *Cairngorm*. If your energy is running out the *Fiacail a'Choire Chais* provides a way back to the car park without climbing *Cairngorm*. If *Cairngorm* is climbed the return goes first to the Ptarmigan Restaurant then down the *Sron an Aonaich* to the car park.

The walk is about 18km with 930m of ascent - 6 to 8 hours depending upon conditions and mood of party. It is a demanding walk which should be within the capabilities of fit members of the club. It could require the use of some navigational skills, depending on conditions.

If you're interested in taking part in this outing, please let Ingrid Taylor (07870469653) know by Thursday 12 June.

Forthcoming Events

Jul 20th The Eag

Aug 17th Lairig an Laoigh & Bynack Mor

Sep 14th Carn Ban Mor and Sgor Gaoith

Oct 19th Cairnwell Munros (x3)

Oct 25/26th Ledgowan Bunkhouse Weekend

A Weekend on Skye - Allan Brown

The weather forecast for the Saturday was not very promising. The BBC said it would rain all day whereas Mountain Weather delayed the rain until after lunch. So it was up and away promptly to our chosen destinations. The largest group were bound for Munros Ghreadaidh and Mhadaidh from An Dorus. The next group were hoping to find an interesting way up Glamaig. The third group drove to the north of Skye and walked out to Rubha Hunish, the most northerly point on Skye.

Group 1 made it to An Dorus and a few of them tried to continue on to Ghreadaidh but were forced to turn back due to the rain. Group 2 made it to the top of Glamaig but failed to find an interesting way up. Group 3 achieved their aim and remained more or less dry all walk. As I was half of group 3 I will describe what Les and I did.

The walk description warned of a boggy start but fortunately it was out of date. A new path had been created. The going was easy even after the new path ran out. We reached the summit of our higher hill, Meall Tuath (117m), within the hour. The top was occupied by a hut which had been used by the Coastguards from 1928. It was renovated and extended to make it into a cosy wee 3 berth bothy in 2006. Naturally, the views across the Little Minch to Harris were spectacular. Even a school of minke whales appeared on the scene. Rubha Hunish is a grassy point extending northwards from the base of the 100 metre high basalt column cliffs. To reach the point we had to scramble down a short rocky bit then on down a rough path to the grassy headland below. Although otters can be seen along the shore we saw none. What we did see were a double arch and a couple of sea stacks with ropes around the tops, evidence that they have been climbed. We returned up the cliff and onwards to the top of our second hill, Meal Deas (100m), then down the other side to Tulm Bay. A kilometre from the car we suffered light rain but not enough to wet us. It was a short walk but very interesting with good views. The only down side was the hotel marked on the map was shut.

The evening activities consisted of animated conversations, cheese and biscuits and a fine selection of wines, whiskies and cup cakes.

Monday Evening Walk – Colony Trail

This month's Monday evening meeting takes the form of a short walk from the Bennachie Centre along the Colony Trail. The Colony was a group of 19th century squatters who set up a community on the foot of the North-East's most famous peak. This trail allows visitors to explore the Colony, including the remains of a croft which was excavated as part of the Fetternear Research Project in 1999. It is about 4km in length and should take about 1 - 1.5 hours to complete. Meet at the Community Centre Carpark at 19:00 or at the Bennachie Centre for a 19:30 start.



Rubha Hunish (Photos Allan Brown)



Bennachie Colony Trail – No. 6 in orange

