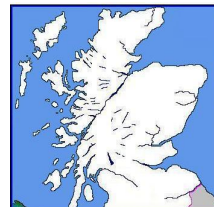


# Nor' West News



## The NeWSletter of the Nor' West Sgurramblers

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### MEET REPORTS

#### Long Sunny Days: Meet No. 285 (Saturday 7 – Sunday 15 July 2012)

Stephen Bass picked me up at Stirling railway station at 4 o'clock on a lovely, sunny Saturday afternoon. If the weather stayed like that, we could look forward to a good week of walking. The first mountain of the meet was the mountain of food purchased at Tesco in Blairgowrie. Unfortunately the A93 from Blairgowrie was closed, which meant following a slower, diverted route.

We arrived at Gulabin Lodge (in Spittal of Glenshee) at 8pm to find Paul Cassell just returning from a nearby hotel. He had waited for us for some time but, becoming hungry as time passed, had gone to the hotel for a meal. Paul had travelled up on the Thursday, taking advantage of the lovely, summer weather. He had stayed at Glen Clova bunkhouse that night and climbed Mayar and Driesh on the Friday. Then he had driven across to Spittal of Glenshee on the Saturday but had not climbed any hills that day.

It was quite handy that Paul was settled in at the Gulabin Lodge bunkhouse as he was able to show Stephen and me where everything was. And it was also helpful that this bunkhouse was quiet as there was limited space for food and we had to leave some of our provisions in the car. Once we had settled in, we tucked into a salad followed by strawberries and cream, which I thought would be appropriate food for the summer weather.



Paul was first to rise on the Sunday morning, setting off early to climb Glas Maol and Creag Leacach. Stephen and I had a more leisurely start to the day, leaving the bunkhouse at 10am to climb Glas Tulaichean and Carn an Righ. It was an enjoyable walk along Glen Lochsie to Glenlochsie Lodge, a former deer-stalking lodge but now in ruins. From there we followed a

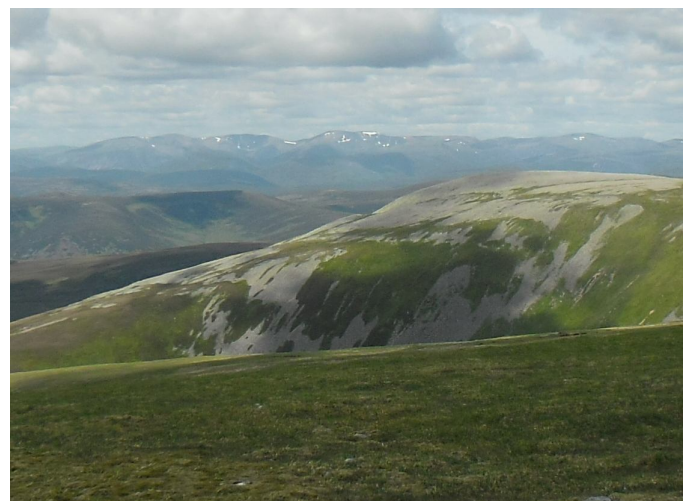
good track which led us up the south ridge of Glas Tulaichean (translated as meaning Green Hill). On the way up we overtook a group of three walkers who were moving slowly. It took us just under three hours to reach the summit which we had to ourselves. There was no sign of the group we had passed earlier. It was very enjoyable to sit there basking in the sun with good views of Beinn a' Ghlo not too far away. We could make out other big hills in the distance but struggled to identify them. It would have been easy to linger at the top but, with another hill to climb, we headed off after having lunch.



We followed the north ridge of Glas Tulaichean for a kilometre before descending into Gleann Mor. Normally this would have been a very boggy glen but this time it was dry underfoot, indicating that there had not been any rain for a number of weeks. In the glen we picked up a path leading us to the foot of Carn an Rìgh and then up a rough and rocky slope to its summit. Carn an Rìgh is translated as meaning Hill of the King – which is what Stephen and I felt like when we got to the top in glorious afternoon sunshine. Again we had the summit to ourselves. Stephen considered taking in Beinn Iutharn Mhor but then thought that we would not have enough time. I was happy enough to agree as it would have been a very tough addition to the first day's walking. And it was a long walk back, following a track along Glen Taitreach which seemed to go on forever. We got back to Gulabin Lodge at 8pm having walked 19 miles and climbed 4,000 feet. But it had been an enjoyable day's walk in ideal summer weather and good start to the week's walking.

Monday saw us travelling to Braemar to spend the rest of the week at Braemar youth hostel. It made good sense to climb hills which were en route: so Glas Maol, Carn of Claise and Carn an Tuirc were to constitute Stephen's and my walk that day. Paul opted to have a rest day which he spent visiting Braemar Castle. Stephen and I started our walk from the car park at the summit of the Cairnwell pass. We followed a track which climbed up alongside the tows and other ski-ing paraphernalia and found that, despite man's intrusions, the hillside is not completely blighted. Its natural, green, grassy appearance prevailed in the good, mid-summer weather. Soon we were at the summit of Glas Maol where we were joined by a fell runner who did not stop but sped off in the direction of Carn of Claise. From the map it looks as though the most scenic approach to the latter is from Glen Isla where a steep-sided corrie rises at the head of the glen. We thought it worthy of a look and dropped down to the path which runs along the top of the corrie.

We followed this path up the rocky slopes of Carn of Claise to its summit, marked by a large cairn, from which we had views across to the Lairig Ghru. Here we met another walker who was following a linear route from Creag Leacach to Carn an Tuirc, which would entail cycling back up the A93 to where he had left his car.



Our final Munro – Carn an Tuirc – was easy walking, following gentle, grassy slopes between the two summits. The disadvantage of this walk, if you do not use two cars, is that either you have a steep walk (or cycle) along the A93 or you have to walk back the way you came. A walk along the tops seemed the better



of the two options and one that I enjoyed, given the lovely, sunny afternoon. As we were driving down to Braemar we spotted to whom the walker we had spoken whilst on the summit of Carn of Claise. He was cycling uphill in the opposite direction. It looked like a slow, torturous ascent and one of which we were not envious! We joined Paul at Braemar youth hostel and settled ourselves in. Chatting with the hostel manager, he confirmed what we had been thinking – they had not had any rain for three weeks.

Paul must have been resuscitated by his rest day for, by the time Stephen and I were up on the Tuesday morning, he had breakfasted and set off to climb Carn an t-Sagairt Mor and Carn a' Choire Boidheach. Somewhat later Stephen and I drove to the car park at Linn of Dee, which we left at 9.30am (not the earliest of starts for a long day's walk). We made quick progress along the track to Derry Lodge and then headed along the track up Glen Derry through some fine Caledonian pine forest. We were puzzled to meet a walker, who was also staying at the youth hostel, coming along the track in the opposite direction. A slight, tanned, elderly woman, she was walking very purposely: so we did not stop to chat. We surmised that she might have followed the wrong track from Derry Lodge and was heading back to correct her mistake.

Before long we reached the end of the woods and came out into a flat open glen. The path then climbed up to the Hutchinson Memorial Hut and thence up to Loch Etchachan (translated as meaning Green Hill). This is a beautiful, remote loch, 2,000 feet above sea level, protected by the cliffs of Ben Macdui. We were seeing the loch at its best, sparkling in the summer sunshine. Ben Macdui looked good as well, rising grandly above, and still with the odd patch of snow. It was well worth the long walk in to this remote part of the Cairngorms. The path up Beinn Mheadhoin lay ahead and we pushed on, eager for more views.



Soon we reached the barren plateau which had a number of granite tors scattered on it. The furthest away and the largest proved to be the highest. When approaching it, you wonder how you will climb to the top but, round the back, it was an easy scramble to the summit.



There was a bit of a wind blowing so we found a sheltered spot at the bottom of the tor for a late lunch as it was already past 3pm. Over lunch Stephen rehearsed the options available to us. The first was to go back over Ben Macdui. The second was to go back over Derry Cairngorm. The third was to take in both Ben Macdui and Derry Cairngorm! I was learning that Stephen's preference was to stay up high for as long as possible. My original thought had been to climb Beinn Mheadhoin

only but now we were looking across to Ben Macdui and it did look very compelling. Even so, I thought that climbing both Ben Macdui and Derry Cairngorm would be a bit much – for me anyway – so I concurred with the second option.

We retraced our steps down from the summit to Loch Etchachan and then made a steady ascent of Ben Macdui. It was well worth the effort for we were rewarded with fine views of Cairn Toul and Braeriach with their fantastic cliffs and corries. Wouldn't it be great to stay the night and wake up to those views?! Indeed, one walker had this in mind and he was pitching his tent in a sheltered spot just below summit as we were heading down. However, the views were not over as we could see Lochan Uaine nestling in the corrie below. We followed the path down the Sron Riach ridge into Glen Luibeg and then on to Derry Lodge. The walk back from Derry Lodge seemed a lot longer than the walk to it that morning!

It was 9.50 in the evening when we got back to the car. And at that moment a very concerned Paul drove into the car park. He had learnt our likely whereabouts from the walker (staying at the hostel) whom we had seen at the beginning of our walk. A "black mark" for the meet organiser for not leaving Paul a note of our intentions for the day and my apologies for the worries caused. It had been a very big day with 25 miles of walking and 4,100 feet of climbing. I was pleased to find out that Paul had had a successful day climbing his two Munros.

After the long excursion of the previous day, Stephen and I decided to have an easier day on the Wednesday. An Socach is one of the relatively easier and straightforward Munros in the area: so we opted for it. Having bagged two more Munros the day before, Paul opted for another rest day and went off to visit Castle Fraser near Inverurie. Stephen and I started our ascent of An Socach from Baddoch, following a track alongside the Baddoch Burn. We left the track after a couple of miles to walk along a path indicated by a cairn. But we made the mistake of staying too low and what we had thought was a path petered out in the heather. However, we regained the path by heading up to a large cairn on the ridge above. It was then quite a steep ascent to the east top of An Socach (which was the original summit until it was replaced by the west summit in 1974). After the climb we had an enjoyable walk along the "sausage-shaped" ridge to the west top summit.



An Socach and all the hills to the west were clear of cloud but the hills to the east were not – which afforded a very interesting contrast. There was no sign of the cloud moving as there was no wind whatsoever. But we were happy that our hill was clear and the conditions bright. On the way back we stayed high for as long as possible by heading along the plateau to the east top and then following the ridge which encompasses Coire Fhearneasg. By then the sun was breaking through everywhere and the cloud which had been obscuring the hills to the east had dispersed. We climbed up to a minor top (Sgor Mor) and then followed animal tracks through the heather to Baddock.

On the Tuesday morning Paul headed for home, settling for bagging six Munros on his first lengthy return to the Scottish hills. Stephen and I decided to climb Beinn a' Bhuid from Linn of Quoich. It was a baking hot start to the day as we headed up Glen Quoich and through an old Caledonian Pine forest which offered some protection from the sun. After walking four miles along the glen we crossed the Quoich Water and started to climb steeply. Thankfully a gentle breeze prevented us from overheating. As we got higher the gradient eased and, eventually, we reached the plateau with only another mile to walk to the summit. We reached the summit of Beinn a' Bhuid at the same time as another walker who had followed the usual



routine of cycling up Gleann an t-Slugain, climbing Ben Avon and then Beinn a' Bhuid. He seemed surprised that we were not going on to Ben Avon which loomed nearby. Stephen and I



had more aesthetic aspirations and took our time on the way back to admire the views looking down into the series of corries which make up the eastern side of the mountain. This walk would not have been complete without taking a slight detour to visit the rocky outcrop which forms the summit of A' Chioch. With a climber's instinct Stephen scrambled directly up to the top of A' Chioch, whereas I found an easier way round the back.

On the way back we had to cross a rough boulder field before picking up the path alongside the Allt an t-Sneachda. We

followed this path for a short distance but left it as it headed off into Gleann an t-Slugain. Instead we headed for Glen Quoich which would take us back to the Linn of Quoich where the car was parked. It had been an excellent walk with lots of variety. Having spent 10 hours walking 20 miles and climbing 3,400 feet, I was quite pleased that we had not chosen to take in Ben Avon as well.

Next day, Stephen and I, following in Paul's footsteps 3 days earlier, made our way up Glen Callater to climb Carn an t-Sagairt Mor and Carn a' Coire Boidheach but also going that bit further to take in Lochnagar as well. Stephen suggested that we follow the path which winds its way below Carn an t-Sagairt Mor and Carn a' Coire Boidheach to reach Lochnagar. So Lochnagar, which we could see in the distance, was our first Munro of the day. As we approached Lochnagar we met various other parties of walkers but when we reached the summit we had this very popular mountain all to ourselves. We had good views in all directions and used the view indicator to identify the many summits we could see. Beinn a' Bhuid and Ben Avon looked like one enormous plateau as, from that angle, the glen between them was hidden. After a relaxing half hour at the summit, we retraced our route along the path we had followed earlier, leaving it to climb the short distances to the summits of Carn a' Coire Boidheach and Carn an t-Sagairt Mor.



Saturday - the last day of the meet – arrived. On our way south we only had time to fit in Creag Coinnich, a small hill (1,765 feet) overlooking Braemar and a great viewpoint.

It had been a lovely, sunny week of walking in which Stephen and I had walked 110 miles and climbed 20,800 feet. This averaged out at 18 miles and 3,466 feet a day. Moreover, the mountain of food which had been acquired at the start of the meet had been whittled down from a “Ben Macdui” to a “Creag Choinnich”. My thanks go to Stephen for his good company and ideas in planning the walks. I would like to have seen more of Paul who was often away in the mornings long before Stephen and I had even got up!

David Douglas

## GLENCOE: Meet 286: (Friday 6 - Tuesday 10 September 2013)

A report on this meet will be published in the next NeWSletter.

### FORTHCOMING MEETS

#### MEET No 287: AGM

Dates: Friday 18 - Sunday 20 October 2013.

Area: Northwest Wales.

Accommodation: Kings youth hostel, near Dolgellau.

Programme: The AGM will be held on the Saturday evening, followed by a show of photographs taken during the year (if members care to bring them).

Transport: If coming by car, please advise the Meet organiser how many passengers you can take and indicate approximate route and times of journeys.

Maps: To be notified.

Food: The hostel can cater for breakfasts but not evening meals so those attending:

- a. will need to make their own arrangements on the Friday evening.
- b. are asked to advise the Meet organiser whether on the Saturday evening they would prefer to self-cater, cook a shared meal or eat out.

Bookings: If you will be attending, please confirm by e-mail and send the Meet organiser a deposit for £22 for the overnight accommodation. The cost of meals, as applicable, will be settled during the Meet.

Meet Organiser: Dave Cheesman

#### MEET No 288: January 2014

Dates: Friday 10 - Wednesday 15 January 2014.

Area: Southern Uplands.

Accommodation: Moffat holiday let.

Programme: An opportunity to begin another year's hillwalking by visiting Hart Fell and the other attractive hills of the Southern Uplands. A wide variety of walks are readily accessible from Moffat.

Transport: If coming by car, please advise the Meet organiser how many passengers you can take and indicate approximate route and times of journeys.

Maps: To be notified.

Food: Please consult the Meet organiser.

Bookings: Only one place remains unbooked. Anyone who wishes to attend but has not informed the Meet organiser should telephone or email him without delay.

Meet Organiser: Chris Knowles.

## Season's Greetings

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