



ELLON HILLWALKING CLUB

Newsletter June 2010

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Programme:

Monday 14th June 2010

Navigation Exercise Kirkhill Forest

Meet at Car Park off the A96 19:00

Ben Avon via Fairy Glen 19 /20 June

OS Sheets 36 & 43

Mike Taylor

This is in the programme as Ben Avon via the Fairy Glen but a few members are considering making a weekend of it and climbing Beinn a Bhuird as well.

Day Walk

Ben Avon is a noteworthy mountain for a number of reasons: it has many granite tors dotted along its skyline; it has more ground above 900m than any other hill in Scotland; all routes to the summit are long; it has a wonderful name for its summit – ‘*Leabaidh an Diamh Bhuidhe*’, bed of the yellow stag.

It is obviously named after the river which runs below it. Avon is the archetypal British word for a river but according to Drummond (Drummond, 1991) its use here is the result of the OS surveyors, familiar with the many River Avons further south, writing down the nearest equivalent to *abhainn* – the gaelic for river. Why it is pronounced Ben A’an is less clear. The suggestion in most of the literature is that it comes from *ath fionn* meaning bright or fair one after a legend in which Fingal’s wife was swept away and drowned in the river whereupon he named the river in her memory. The gaelic pronunciation of *ath fionn* is close to a’an.

Mitchell (Mitchell, 1998) believes that the most likely first ascenders of Ben Avon were the Cairngorm miners who, from the mid-eighteenth century climbed the mountains in search of ‘pellucid stones’, the semi-precious Cairngorm stones-hexagonal quartz crystals of great beauty. Ben Avon was a favourite area for the search and there are still remains of mining works on its southern slopes which were active around 1800.

The route to Ben Avon starts at Keiloch on the Invercauld Estate and goes via the ‘Fairy Glen’, *Gleann an t-Slugain*. This includes a visit to ‘The Sneck’ from where there is a fine view down one of the wildest corries in the Cairngorms, *An Slochd Mor* – the great pit. The total trip is 34 km long with 1004m of ascent – between 9 and 11 hours of walking. A long day!

Camping option

There is a plan to camp in the Fairy Glen on the Saturday evening, which would reduce the distance to be walked on Sunday. Folk who are free on the Saturday could set off early and climb Beinn a Bhuird, another wonderful mountain. This is Scotland’s table mountain (from *Bord* - gaelic for table). There is 3km of plateau between the South Top at 1177m and the North Top at 1196m which provides a wonderful high level walk giving some of the finest views in NE Scotland. The west and north slopes fall gently into peaty glens whereas the east and north east fall in spectacular cliffs to wild corries. One of these, *Ear Coire an t-Sneachda* (East Corrie of the Snow), holds snow late into summer. There is a legend that if this snow disappears the Farquharsons will lose their Invercauld estate. It often does but the Farquharsons are still there!

The walk to the Fairy Glen from Keiloch is about 8km. It is a further 8km to the North Top of Beinn a Bhuird via Carn Fiaclach and the South Top. This makes a total of 16 km with 980 m of ascent - probably 5 - 6 hours to the top but a little longer if time is taken to put tents up. It is then 8km – a couple of hours at the most - back to the Fairy Glen, the tents and a fine evening camping in one of the nicest camping spots in the Cairngorms. On Sunday, the walk from the Fairy Glen to Ben Avon would be 9km and then 17km back to Keiloch – a mere 26km!

Sat / Sunday 19th / 20th June 2010

Ben Avon via Fairy Glen (Various Options)

Focal Pt Gordon Spence (01651 806669)

Community Centre Car Park 07:00

Low Level Option

For those wanting a nice easy day out on the Sunday, the walk to the Fairy Glen and back -16km- is a very pleasant day out, through pine woods, birch woods and the open hillside.

If you are interested in any of these options please get in touch with Gordon Spence 01651 806669 by Thursday 17 June, at the latest. The walks to the summits of Ben Avon and Beinn a Bhuird are demanding and therefore only suitable for members with a good level of hill fitness. The low level walk is suitable for any reasonably fit member of the club.

Drummond 1991: Scottish Hill and Mountain Names, Peter Drummond, SMC

Mitchell 1998: Scotland’s Mountains Before the Mountaineers, Ian Mitchell, Luath Press

Forthcoming Events

Jul 12th Evening Walk – Hill of Barra

Jul 18th Derry Cairngorm

Aug 9th Evening Walk – Brimmond Hill

Aug 15th Ben Wyvis

May Alternative Walk – Loch Muick Area

Irene Jamieson

We didn’t dachle lang anywhere on our walk up the zig zag path to Broad Cairn. The five of us left the car with jackets on but before long they were in the packs. We enjoyed great walking weather the whole day. A number of people obviously thought the same and the hill was busier than we have seen it in a long time. The dry ground, despite the extensive snow melt since last month, made for easy walking and it was a unanimous decision, to continue to Cairn Bannoch. After some photographs and a while to savour the fantastic views of Lochnagar beside us and the snowy higher peaks in the distance, we enjoyed the challenge of finding the best route and keeping our feet dry as we crossed (and crossed again!) the fast flowing water on the descent to the Dubh Loch. The sun shone as we continued round Loch Muick and we felt sorry for the hundreds (thousands?) of tadpoles stranded in slowly evaporating puddles.

It was a hot, tired but very happy group who returned to the car park around 5:15p.m., so it was on to the comfy seats of the Kinord Hotel for some well deserved refreshment and to reflect on a most enjoyable day.



Picture George Jamieson

Skye Walk Report

Alan Murray

I have to admit that it is with mixed feelings that I start to write this. I always enjoy the Club trips to Skye and have had some of my most enjoyable and exhilarating days on the hill on these trips. However, this year the walk into the Skye Cuillin ended sadly with the death of John MacIver's collie, Kiera. The objective had been to climb the Inn Pin and we persuaded Margaret to come up on to the ridge to watch those who were aiming to do the climb. The route up wasn't by the An Stac screes from Corrie Lagan as some of us anticipated but a slightly more "interesting" route following our guides, John and his friend Donnie – Margaret will never trust us again! The weather was less than welcoming with strong winds, rain and low temperatures. When we reached the base of the Inn Pin we decided that the climb would be too risky with the wind blowing across the edge and it really would not be fun. The decision was made to leave the Inn Pin for another year and head along the ridge to Sgurr na Banachdich before heading down a straightforward route back to the cars.

In the mist our guides had to do quite a bit of route finding and it was during a descent of a gully to regain the path that Kiera was injured when I stood on a rock that dislodged and clattered down the gully hitting Kiera as it reached the bottom. Given the discomfort that she was in and her inability to walk we decided to descend via Coire Banachdich, initially with John carrying Kiera in his rucksack and then, when it became apparent that this was too uncomfortable for her, using a stretcher improved from walking poles and jackets. It was a long and hard descent taking over 3 hours but we eventually got back to the cars and were encouraged when Kiera got up and managed to walk a few steps to John's car. It was quite a gloomy group in the pub that night, made worse by the service, which was even slower than usual. However, John called to say that the vet had examined Kiera, he thought she wasn't too badly injured – hopefully, just bruised ribs but perhaps some fractured ribs; she had been given painkillers and he would examine further in the morning.

Unfortunately, we received further news from John on the Sunday to say that Kiera had died the next day following a heart attack.



Kiera

Speaking to others who were in the party that day, Kiera had made a great impression on us all. She was a loyal, keen and enthusiastic dog, with a trusting nature and a lovely temperament. She will be sadly missed by John and Christine.

John asked that his thanks be passed on to everyone who helped bring Kiera down the hill; it was a difficult carry over very rough and steep ground. Given that Kiera only weighed about 12 – 15 Kg, it only served to prove how extremely difficult it would be to stretch a person off the hill.

It was also a salutary lesson for all of us on how easily a day on the hill can go wrong. By default, we all accept the inherent risks in hillwalking but can forget the reality of those risks as we get familiar with the environment.

I am sure that we will all go back to the Skye Cuillin but with a sad memory amongst all the happy ones.



Scramble up to the Inn Pin



The Inn Pin