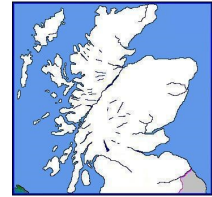


Nor' West News



The NeWSletter of the Nor' West Sgurramblers

Issue No. 177 – January 2019



MEET REPORTS

INIMITABLE INVERARAY: Meet No 327 (Saturday 15 – Tuesday 19 September 2018)



Saturday September 15th sees four of us gather at Inveraray Hostel as rain slices steadily down with supreme sufficiency. By only a short margin I am ahead of a resplendent Roger Reeves driving a diligent David Douglas. [For this report “I” means the writer - a nonplussed and normally nugatory Nigel.] Having come by train to Glasgow and then by City Link to the not insignificant Inveraray, I am at the hostel by 15.45. It is not at all long before the competent Chris Knowles makes up our Quixotic quartet, having climbed Garbh-bheinn on Skye. Yes we are an eclectic group but fells fix us in purpose. Is it possible to climb hills with purposelessness? It was W.H. Murray who said “*The human race is composed of just two distinct species, those who climb mountains and those who don't. All light and wisdom lie with the former. The latter dwell in darkness.*”

Masses of rain descended in the night. During breakfast on the Sunday Chris tells us he will commit to climbing Cruach nam Muilt alone, a Graham set above the Gleann Beag or Hell's Glen. Robust Roger drives distinguished David and me to Corryghoil which cringes inconspicuously on the A86 between Dalmally and Tyndrum. It is 10.20 as we set off in rain

along an estate road, although hope springs eternal when a moment of sunshine radiates through a myriad of gleaming water droplets on grasses beside the track. After about 2k - and just before Succoth Lodge - we pass



beneath the railway to Oban then rise up amid forest plantations for another 3k to cross upper reaches of the Allt Coire Lair. It is now time to leave the estate road and climb through trees for a short distance southeast to a deer fence. Then it is up up steeply through the usual rough footing that epitomises Grahams. We are not far from the

rushing upper waters of the Eas a' Mhadaidh.

At 600 metres we turn northeast to rise at a less severe angle to reach the very windy summit of Meall nan Gabhar - luckily just below the cloud. It is 13.22, so we are spared metronomic resonance in regard of the time our walk began. The summit of this Graham is at 2,437ft – readers forgive the fossilised writer who thinks and operates in imperial with regard to heights of hills – and, as we brace ourselves against the wind, we have views of a watery landscape with all hills above 2,500ft cloaked in a thick, shifting sash of cloud. Having reached the summit, we reverse our outward route, restored partially by a welcome diminution in the frequency of rain showers. The car of the non recalcitrant Roger reappears out of the forest at 15.50 and we use it to return to Inveraray - this method is much preferred to cycling. Once there, I join David as he shops at the Co-op. Back at the hostel salmon with potatoes and green beans at 7.00 pm are much appreciated.



On the Monday morning I join resourceful Roger and rarely disconsolate David to climb Cnoc Coinnich with consistent Chris' for whom this is his final Corbett. Remarkable Roger drives us all through heavy showers to gain Lochgoilhead by means of narrow roads. We arrive to be the only car to be left in a large car park and set off at 9.50am. To our advantage, it has now stopped raining. For quite a distance we follow a section of the Cowal Way which leads us up to woods and then through the trees to a bridge

close to the Donich waterfalls. The Cowal Way continues up steeply to the tree line, and we then leave this long distance route to make a steady climb SSE through long wet grass. We enter the cloud well before gaining the summit cairn of Cnoc Coinnich at 12.45. It is windy up on the top, and, of



course, views are non-existent. But the wind is not too strong to enable us to take photos to commemorate Chris' considerable achievement.

We reverse our outward route and drop out of the cloud to have views down to tree lined Loch Goil and then north to the nearby bulk of cloud wrapped Ben Donich. Soon heavy rain sets in and we are

glad to make it back to Lochgoilhead by 14.50. Rarely reluctant Roger drives us back to Inveraray where we stop to shop at the Co-op and re-enter the hostel at 4.00pm. This evening we do not cook for ourselves but walk out (in heavy rain) to the George Inn for warmth, excellent food, company and beer. The motive behind this audacious act is to celebrate Corbett completion by Chris. Stair-rod rain slams down as we go back to the hostel.

On the Tuesday it is low cloud and heavy rain again. Added to that, Roger 're-activates' an old back injury. Within the context of this 'current reality', congenial Chris drives non-disagreeable David and me to the cemetery at the mouth end of Glen Shira. Setting off about 10.30 the two of us walk about 6k up the west side of the Glen whilst Chris convinces Inveraray of his cerebral acuity. During our walk up the west side of Glen Shira, the dominant themes for dynamic Dave and me are water, trees and solitude. From the slopes above us streams in spate surge in flood filled frenzy along our path – such as it is. One huge tree delights us with its magnificence. At Elrigbeag we cross the River Shira by bridge and walk back along the road - which is half the effort and much quicker. We enjoy watching a cormorant which is on a 'lookout log' to enable it to scan the windswept waters of the Dubh Loch. We rejoin Chris at 14.45 and go to shop at the Co-op in Inveraray. It is pizza for the evening meal.

On account of an AMBER weather warning for strong winds tomorrow, Chris decides to go back to Morecambe: so I join him. We leave our two friends and make it back before the full force of storm "Ali" arrives on Wednesday 19th September.

Nigel Saxton

A CLOUDY MEET IN NORTH WALES: Meet No 328 (Friday 19 - Sunday 21 October 2018)

As the October Meet and 2019 Norwest Sgurramblers AGM were to be held at the Snowdon Ranger hostel (last visited by me back in 2005), I had



decided to travel to Snowdonia fairly early on the Friday morning so that I could do a walk before the Meet proper started. After browsing through my guide book to the peaks over 2,000 ft in Wales, it seemed that Moel Siabod would be a good choice. A quick look on the Walk Highlands website, indicated that there was a path all the way up the southeast ridge, and that I could

descend the northeast ridge. This was a hill I had not climbed for over 25 years. Hopefully, the navigation would go more smoothly this time. On the previous occasion an error descending the southeast ridge led to three of us arriving back at the accommodation very late, and to the phrase – “society of lost navigators” - being coined (which I have never managed to live down).

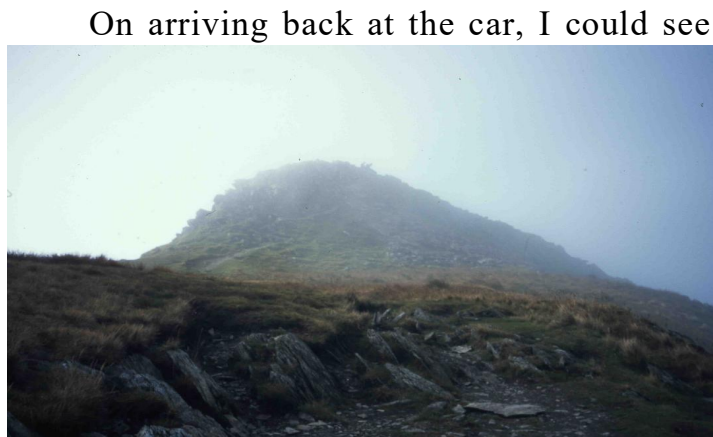
My approach this time started from a lay-by about a mile from Capel Curig and, after a short walk, I picked up a track which - to aid the navigationally challenged - was sign-posted to Moel Siabod. The Mountain Weather Information Service forecast for the day was not too inspiring, with low cloud on the hills predicted, although at least it was expected to be dry. The views improved slightly as height was gained, and shortly after a detour to avoid a house, the track ended, to be replaced by a path which wound its way up towards a quarry. It was at this point that I met a couple with a dog who had stopped for a break. They said they were also heading for Moel Siabod, and had acquired a written description of the route from the hotel where they were staying. I



thought that this was a rather amateurish way of doing things as they did not seem to have a map. These thoughts were later going to come back and bite me.

According to the map, the path did not go beyond the quarry. Admittedly, some of my maps are pretty ancient; so I had checked on 'Bing on-line' OS maps before I came away and they showed the same detail. As outlined in Walk Highlands, the path continued beyond this point towards Llyn-y-Foel. Eventually, as the path climbed, I found myself following one of the streams which drained into the lake. The path appeared to head directly for the summit, which would take me through very steep ground. I surmised that this must be a path not mentioned in the Walk Highlands description, possibly a scrambling route or leading to climbs. So, losing some hard gained height, I headed down towards Llyn y Foel which I could just see through the mist, intending to pick up the path onto the southeast ridge. Shortly after picking up the path I should have been on I overtook the couple I had seen earlier, which was rather embarrassing to say the least.

The route disappeared in a couple of boulder fields closer to the top but, eventually, I arrived at the large summit cairn. It was not a day for lingering - cold and windy with no views. So I headed down the north-east ridge for a short distance, eventually dropping down to the left of the ridge line to avoid the jumble of wet greasy boulders which made up that part of the mountain. At about 600 metres I emerged from the cloud to be treated to a very pleasing view of the Glyders, the lower summits just starting to shed their mantle of cloud. I took the opportunity to eat a belated but rapid lunch, with just time to a note a grandstand view of an improving vista. It was nice to see the hills of Snowdonia again. This part of the world used to be a regular walking area for me when I lived in North Staffordshire bur, since I moved to North Lancashire; I only seem to visit it every three or four years for Sgurramblers' AGMs.



On arriving back at the car, I could see that the summit of Moel Siabod was completely clear of cloud. Maybe one day I'll come back and get a view from the top.

When I reached the hostel it was still only 3.30pm, 90 minutes before opening time. Happily, Paul Cassell and Chris Horne arrived shortly afterwards, and we repaired to the nearest pub in Rhyd Ddu, where we spent a convivial half hour

or so catching up on last year's events and hearing about Chris's trip to Kazakhstan.

When we returned to the hostel, Brian Billington had just arrived from the Midlands, having relied on public transport. Later that evening Roger Reeves and Val Bailey arrived, followed much later by David and Kerina Cheesman who had had what sounded like a very trying journey from Stevenage. David Douglas was already in northwest Wales staying with Colin Bradley (a former Sgurramblers member) and they were due to arrive early next morning, which would complete our complement of people to attend the 2018 AGM.

Next day, as part of his Marilyn bagging campaign, Roger was set upon climbing Moel Ddu, a hill just south of Beddgelert. David Douglas and Colin planned a traverse of the Nantlle ridge and I recalled that doing that walk on a previous occasion had been a strenuous experience. So I opted for Moel Ddu, hoping for quite a short day - with maybe a visit to the pub in the afternoon and then plenty of time to relax before the evening meal.

Chris Horne decided to go with Colin and David, whilst the rest of us drove in two cars to our start point for the ascent of Moel Ddu. After a short road walk, we picked up a path which ran up the side of the Afon Goch in well graded zigzags through pleasant woodland. When we eventually emerged from the trees, it became apparent that we were on a path that was not marked on the map. In fact we should have crossed the Afon Goch a short distance from the road. This meant that we were now quite a distance away from our intended route. To get back on track we had to traverse some very rough, trackless terrain. Eventually we found a path which followed a fence heading towards our intended hill.



Even though Moel Ddu has a fairly modest height of only 553m, the top was hidden from view in the cloud. But, for a while, we were in the clear below the cloud. So when, after crossing a rock wall, we arrived at the bottom of a very steep slope disappearing into the clag, it seemed a good point at which to stop for lunch to stoke up with fuel.

As we gained height we reached the cloud level and lost the view. Finally we arrived at a subsidiary top of Moel Ddu from which a short descent and re-ascent led us to Moel Ddu's

summit cairn. It was not the sort of day that encouraged hanging around, but we stayed just long enough for Brian to set the timer on his camera for a group shot of the six of us.



Then we re-traced our steps back along the fence which we had used on the ascent, and eventually came to within sight of a derelict building which we had spotted on the way up. While David, Kerina, Val and Roger, decided to investigate the building and take a path from there back to the valley, Brian

and I took a more direct route. When we all finally arrived back at the cars, we were amazed to find that it had taken over eight hours for our supposedly short, easy day. So there would be no afternoon visit to the pub, and no relaxing before the evening meal.

Returning to the hostel, we found that David Douglas, Chris Horne and Colin had got back there quite a long time earlier, and Colin had left as he wanted to get back home before dark. It transpired that the three of them had done a shorter version of the route than they had originally intended, as the longer walk was a linear one and would have necessitated having a car at each end. The evening meal was followed by the AGM and the viewing on my laptop of photos that some members had taken during the previous year.

The following day David Douglas, Roger and Val planned to climb Moel Hebog, another one of Roger's unclimbed Marilyns. It was a dull, drizzly day but they made it to the summit in very poor visibility. The rest of us were not as motivated and were content to head home.



Thanks go to David and Kerina for organizing the Meet and everyone else for their company.

Chris Knowles

FORTHCOMING MEETS

MEET No 329: Galloway

Dates: Friday 18 – Friday 25 January 2019.

Area: Galloway.

Accommodation: Newton Stewart holiday let.

Programme: An opportunity to enjoy the hills in Galloway in winter.

Transport: If coming by car, please advise the Meet organiser how many passengers you can take and your approximate route and time of journey.

Maps: to be advised.

Equipment: **Crampons and ice axe essential.**

Food: Those asking the Meet organiser to reserve rooms should let him know in advance what meals they require. Those who prefer self-catering will need to bring and cook their own food.

Bookings: Those wishing to make reservations should telephone or e-mail the Meet organiser **immediately** to ascertain whether he can assist. No more than two places are likely to be available.

Meet organiser: Chris Knowles.

MEET No 330: Southern Highlands

Dates: Saturday 2 – Sunday 10 March 2019.

Area: Southern Highlands.

Accommodation: Holiday let.

Programme: An opportunity to climb a variety of high mountains whilst they are snow capped.

Transport: If coming by car, please advise the Meet organiser how many passengers you can take and your approximate route and time of journey.

Maps: to be advised.

Equipment: **Crampons and ice axe essential.**

Food: Those asking the Meet organiser to reserve rooms should let him know in advance which meals they require. Those attending will probably need to self cater for the second half of the Meet.

Bookings: Those wishing to make reservations should telephone or e-mail the Meet organiser by no later than **20 January**.

Meet organiser: Chris Knowles.

MEET No 331: Easter in the Cairngorms

Dates: Thursday 18 – Tuesday 23 April 2019.

Area: Cairngorms.

Accommodation: Cairngorm youth hostel (Loch Morlich).

Programme: Climb some of the many splendid Cairngorm mountains in early Spring.

Transport: If coming by car, please advise the Meet organiser how many passengers you can take and your approximate route and time of journey.

Maps: to be advised.

Equipment: **Crampons and ice axe essential.**

Food: The Meet organiser will provide food from an evening meal on the Thursday to breakfast on the Tuesday unless requested otherwise. Those who prefer self-catering will need to bring and cook their own food.

Bookings: Those wishing to make reservations should telephone or e-mail the Meet organiser immediately to ascertain whether accommodation is still available. A deposit of £112.50 is required from those for whom he can provide accommodation.

Meet organiser: Chris Knowles.

MEET No 332: North West Highlands

Dates: Sunday 19 – Saturday 25 May 2019 – **NB: Delayed start date because the cottage is not available on Saturday 18 May.**

Area: North West Highlands.

Accommodation: Self catering cottage near Durness.

Programme: Many attractive hills are readily accessible.

Transport: If coming by car, please advise the Meet organiser how many passengers you can take and your approximate route and time of journey.

Maps: OS 1:50,000: 9, 10, 15 & 16.

Food: Those asking the Meet organiser to reserve rooms should let him know in advance which hostel meals they require. Those who prefer self-catering will need to bring and cook their own food.

Bookings: The number of beds available is limited and will be allocated on a “first come, first served” basis. Some places have already been booked. Members wishing to make reservations should telephone or e-mail the Meet organiser immediately.

Meet organiser: David Douglas.

MEET No 333: North East Highlands

Dates: Saturday 29 June – Saturday 6 July 2019.

Area: North East Highlands.

Accommodation: Helmsdale hostel.

Programme: Many attractive but seldom visited hills are readily accessible.

Transport: If coming by car, please advise the Meet organiser how many passengers you can take and your approximate route and time of journey.

Maps: OS 1:50,000: 16 & 17.

Food: Food will be provided by the Meet organiser from an evening meal on the first Saturday to breakfast on the last Saturday unless requested otherwise. Those who prefer self-catering will need to bring and cook their own food.

Bookings: The number of beds available is limited and will be allocated on a “first come, first served” basis. Some places have already been booked. Members wishing to make reservations should telephone or e-mail the Meet organiser by 31 January.

Meet organiser: David Douglas.

MEMBERSHIP

A revised **membership list** is available from the Membership Secretary.

Subscriptions for 2019 are unchanged at **£15** per person (see AGM Minutes) and are now **due**.

Membership numbers have been dwindling slowly in recent years and, because there has been a poor response to advertising for new members via the BMC website, affiliation has been transferred to “Mountaineering Scotland” (formerly known as the “Mountaineering Council of Scotland”).

In addition, Norwest Sgurramblers hill walking club was registered as a “group” on **Face Book** last year.

To date these measures have not been effective in attracting new members.

So it would be helpful if – yet again - all current members would make a personal effort to help the club acquire a small but steady flow of new members by:

a. finding a way to display an advertising poster - Chris Knowles can provide copies.

b. making a further effort to interest friends, colleagues and other people in their communities in joining NWS.

When discussing the club’s activities with potential members it may be helpful to explain that:

a. It is open to individuals to attend a Meet before deciding whether to become a member.

- b. Members and potential members are encouraged to discuss their preferences with the nominated Meet organiser before deciding whether to attend a Meet.
- c. Those attending a Meet are free (on their own responsibility) to walk where they please and with whom they please (or alone, if they prefer) during the Meet.
- d. Before each annual Meet programme is determined, members are encouraged to advise a committee member which areas and hills they wish to visit so that the programme can provide (as far as practicable) the opportunities they desire.
- e. Members are encouraged to contact each other directly if they wish to arrange to walk together at times and in places outside the formal programme. [The NeWSletter editor suggests that news of these more independent activities would be of potential interest to all members and would be pleased to include accounts of such trips in NeWSletters.]

Wishing all Sgurramblers an enjoyable and successful
New Year.