

1,400ft as well as providing enticing views of Stuchd an Lochain just visible through the clouds. Jac, being a good 20 years younger than Chris and me, was out in front, with Chris a short distance behind and me at the back – a pattern which continued throughout the day. The views of distant hills were excellent at first but worsened as we reached the ridge above



Coire Ban, which we followed to Sron Chona Choirein, the Munro Top. By then we were in cloud and so deprived of the view of Lochan nan Cat. But it was a pleasant ridge walk to the top of Stuchd an Lochain. With no views to be had, we did not stay at the summit for long and returned to the dam the way we had come up.

The weather forecast had predicted a band of rain moving over the area; so we were grateful that this happened when we were at the dam and could shelter in the car while having lunch. The rain soon passed over so, re-energised, we headed up Meall Buidhe, enjoying good views of Loch an Daimh. The forecast had also predicted that it would brighten up later and we were pleased when the cloud started to lift as we reached the ridge above Glas Choire. Similar to Stuchd an Lochain, it was a pleasant ridge walk to the summit



of Meall Buidhe and we stayed longer as we could enjoy the views. Once everyone was satisfied with the pictures they had taken, we headed back down the way we had come up. By the time we returned to the car the sun had come out. It had been a good day and we had been lucky with the weather. Jac gained two new Munros. And Stuchd an Lochain was another Munro for me on my second round.

The plan next day was to climb Meall Glas and Sgiath Chuil, which can be climbed from Glen Dochart or Glen Lochay. The latter was chosen as it has by far the more interesting approach. As we parked at Kenknock we were joined by another walker who asked about the forecast and the hills we were doing. He had climbed Sgiath Chuil the day before and was keen to join us when he learnt that we planned to climb Meall Glas. Always on the lookout for new members, we were happy for him to join us. His name was Paul but, unfortunately, he already belonged to a club called “Wokandrice” (a pun on “Rock and Ice”) – funny names some clubs have! After 3 miles we reached Badour and a rickety old bridge across the River Lochay. Chris thought the bridge **was** a bit unsafe to cross and chose to wade the river, the water being only ankle deep. On the other side we were faced by

a deer fence. These are becoming somewhat of a scourge on the Scottish Hills. With no gate or stile in sight, Chris decided to abandon ideas of climbing Meall Glas and opted to go for Beinn Heasgarnich on the opposite side of the river to the position we had reached. Paul had not climbed Beinn Heasgarnich before and was happy to accompany Chris, leaving Jac and me to scale the fence in order to climb Meall Glas.

Jac and I had an uneventful walk onto the north ridge of Meall Glas, though there was a strong westerly wind near the summit. The best part was the walk from the summit following the ridge curving round the head of Coire Cheathaich to Beinn Cheathaich (a Munro Top). We stayed on the ridge for a short distance, then headed down to the wide col below Sgiath Chuil to face a 1,000ft climb up steep grassy slopes. Jac kindly waited for me on a few occasions and, once we reached the ridge, it was a short walk to the summit. Conscious that Chris would probably be back before us, we made quick progress down the north ridge to a small plantation and followed a zigzagging track down to Glen Lochay. Chris had got back only 15 minutes earlier. Having reached the summit of Beinn Heasgarnich he had returned alone whilst Paul had gone to climb Creag Mhor. We hoped that Paul got back to his car before it got dark!



There was an appalling weather forecast for the Tuesday - a very strong westerly wind accompanied by showers. Thoughts of climbing anything, let alone a Munro, seemed quite unrealistic. But, with it being the last day of walking, we were all keen to at least try to climb something. Chris suggested Creag Gharbh, a Graham located on the south side of Loch Tay. The approach would provide shelter from the wind and also had the advantage that it would be easily walked from Killin. Jac, showing the spirit of a true Munro bagger, set her sights higher and decided to try to climb Schiehallion.

Despite the wild forecast, there were occasional glimpses of sun to tempt Chris and



me out of the door. We went through the village along a minor road on the south side of Loch Tay to the bridge over the Achmore burn, then followed a road heading upwards through forest for a couple of miles, stopping only to put on waterproofs once an inevitable shower passed overhead. The road ended at the dam at the western end of Lochan Breaclaich and then became a track. After a mile we left the track and climbed 300ft to reach the top of Creag Gharbh in the brunt of the wind and crouched to minimise its effect. A

hasty retreat from the summit took us back into shelter from the wind and we walked back the way we had come, enjoying fine views cross Loch Tay to Ben Lawers and the Tarmachans. Back at the cottage we were surprised when Jac arrived shortly afterwards. We were even more surprised when she told us that she had got to the summit of Schiehallion. Protected by the lee of the hill, she had been unaffected by the wind for most of the time.



Thanks go Chris for organising the Meet and to both Jac and Chris for their company. After a lapse of eight years it was good to stay in picturesque Killin again.

David Douglas

GLENCOE AT EASTER: Meet No. 311 (Thursday 13 – Monday 17 April 2017)

As the February Meet had been postponed until mid March this year, it was only about a month since my last trip to the Highlands. I was hoping for better weather this time but the forecast suggested that I would probably be disappointed. I picked Brian Billington up from Lancaster station early on the Thursday so that we could get to Glen Coe youth hostel - the

venue for the Meet – in time to secure bottom bunks. We were surprised to find that Roger Reeves and David Douglas had already arrived - having bagged Meall Mor (a Graham) en route. They had had an early start as Roger had stayed at David's flat overnight (rather than at a youth hostel as he would normally have done).



it for the best day which, according to the BBC forecast, would be Monday. So I was quite happy to go along with what the others had planned for the Friday, knowing that it would be a Graham or maybe two. The latter proved to be true – the hills being Beinn Bhreac and Beinn Molurgainn in the Appin area. Andrew Dempster's Graham book suggested a third hill, Beinn Mheadhonach, as a possible addition. But we thought that this would be a hill too far, especially as the weather forecast was none too hopeful. I had tried to second guess the hills that Roger and David would be hoping to do as part of their Graham bagging campaign but I had not reckoned on these two. In consequence, I didn't have the map with the whole route on it; although I did have the two summits on one of the maps that I had brought. Luckily, I was quite happy to trust the navigation of the others who were better prepared.

We set off along the “all terrain” vehicle track which, although not on the map, we knew would be there as Roger had found a walk report for our chosen hills on the Walk Highlands website. The gentle rain, which had been accompanying us since we left the car, increased in intensity to quite a deluge, prompting us to put on waterproof overtrousers. Shortly after this we quit the track to head up over rough featureless slopes to a top at 708m shown as Beinn Bhreac on the OS map, although the highest point is nearly 2km away over more rough, trackless terrain. Even though below the summit, it seemed a suitable place for lunch. But we were very exposed to the wind, so stopped for only a short while.



After the brief stay at the summit Brian called it a day and left us to return to the car. We made our way over Mam Hael (a subsidiary), and dropped to a col from which the ascent to Beinn Molurgainn (690m) was only just over 150m (barely qualifying it as a separate Graham). About 50 yards from the cairn was another bump which looked to be a similar height. So we visited this in case a later survey found it to be the highest point. The way back to the car lay down the easy angled southwest ridge, following a

route set out in the Walk Highlands report. Eventually we dropped below the cloud and could see a deer fence which (luckily) had a gate through which we reached the Eas na Gearr. As we had to cross this very lively water course to get back to the road, we were extremely pleased to see a bridge (not shown on the map) and got across without getting wet feet. The amount of water in the burn would otherwise have made a dry crossing nigh on impossible. From there we made a short ascent and then a descending traverse (following the river Esgaran) back to the car where Brian was waiting for us.

Chris Knowles

On the Saturday the group split up. Roger and I were keen to bag Beinn Mheadhonach as this, together with the two we had climbed the day before, would complete our bagging of this group of three Grahams. Chris had his sights on Sgorr a' Choise and Meall Mor, two Grahams situated in Glencoe between two Munros (Beinn a' Bheithir and Sgor na h-Ulaidh). Brian chose to travel with Roger and me but would be doing a low level walk alongside Loch Etive. Our walk started at Blarcreen where we had a steep climb up onto the west ridge of Beinn Mheadhonach. Once we were on the ridge it was an enjoyable walk to the summit. Good views were had of Ben Cruachan and looking up Loch Etive and over to Ben Starav. On a bright sunny day it would have been quite spectacular but this time there was a lot of cloud and only the occasional glimpse of brightness.



Closer to view were Mam Hael and Beinn Molurgainn, the Grahams we had climbed the day before, With a drop of 700ft and a distance of 2 miles between us and them, we did not regret not climbing all three together. The rocky summit of Beinn Mheadhonach proved a



good place to shelter from the wind and have lunch looking at Ben Cruachan on the other side of Loch Etive. With no scope to vary the route of descent, we retraced our steps to Blarcreen.

David Douglas

On the Sunday morning we lingered in the dorm after breakfast not wishing to rush out into the rain. Eventually Chris and Brian decided to have a Nevis Sport day and then visit the Glencoe visitors centre on the way

back. I had in mind Beinn na Gucaig. David had done this hill before but considered it worthy of doing again. I drove to Inchree where there is a car park, mostly used for visitors to Abhain Rìgh Falls, where we waited as the rain seemed to be clearing from the east. It did so and we set off, visiting the Falls on our way. For those of you unfamiliar with the Falls I recommend a visit if you are passing. The Falls path continued up to a forest track which we left to follow the edge of a forest to the southwest ridge. The weather was by then much improved and we had excellent views of Loch Linnhe and the Ardgour hills the higher of which had fresh snow. It turned out to be an excellent day for a fine 4½ hour hill.

Roger Reeves

Blessed by a brighter start on Monday, Chris was eager to continue his Corbett bagging with a lengthy excursion to the western end of Loch Arkaig. Sgurr an Fhuarain would require a long walk over the pass into Glen Kingie before reaching the foot of the mountain; so it was expected to be a tiring day. Meanwhile, Roger and David decided on an ascent of the Pap of Glencoe (ie Sgòrr na Ciche) and I was happy to join them on what we assumed would be an easy Graham outing, a bonus being that we could walk direct from the hostel.

Thanks to its prominent location at the foot of the Glen, the Pap is one of the most popular tourist climbs in the area. So we agreed with David's suggestion to follow the alternative path described in the SMC 'Grahams and Donalds' book. Fortunately he had a copy of the details with him as navigation was to prove quite tricky in the early stages. Just short of Glencoe village, we turned right on the road signposted to Glencoe Lochan and in a short while spotted a faint path we'd been told to expect beside a burn. The



OS Landranger map showed neither path nor stream. Even with the help of my Harvey's 1:25000, we were soon confused by an extensive felled area and new extraction roads.

Fortunately, we spotted a wide ride with a double row of overhead electricity cables (mentioned in the book description) which helped to guide us out of the forest. But when we climbed the fence out of the forest, we were faced by a steep grassy slope ahead on which no trace of a path could be seen. So it seems likely that the SMC route is little used so far. Toiling higher we were helped by deer trails through the heather until reaching the foot of the final rocky cone which makes this hill so easily recognisable. Roger continued directly upwards but these days I have an aversion to mixed rock and heather. So David and I traversed on easier ground to join the upper part of the tourist path, a greatly eroded scar which (to be honest) was probably little easier than Roger's route.

There was no sign of Roger among the many walkers at the summit. Eventually,



David found him relaxing behind rocks on the leeward side having arrived there much earlier. Over lunch we enjoyed very fine views in all directions. The descent on the "tourist path" was far from easy (even lower down) with deep grooves worn in the peaty hillside. Back on the road at last, it was an easy stroll back to the hostel. I had found it hard going and couldn't help reflecting on my first ascent of the Pap in 1970. A friend and I were so ecstatic on reaching Sgòrr nam Fiannaidh (after completing the Aonach Eagach)

that we didn't want to descend and continued over the Pap to round off a glorious day. Oh to be young again!!

We intended eating out on this - the last - night of the Meet but we were getting worried when Chris didn't arrive back from his own successful day until 7.30pm. Aware that the Clachaig Inn was bound to be extremely busy, we hardly gave him time to catch his breath before rushing away down the road. It proved a sensible course of action as there were lengthy waits for drinks as well as food. Some first choice beers, as well as some of our favoured menu items, were no longer available. Despite these disappointments, it was good to relax in a different environment and to enjoy our final evening together.



After breakfast next morning Chris and I headed for home, leaving Roger and David who were travelling further north for a few more days in the Highlands. Our grateful thanks are due to David for organising yet another successful meet.

Brian Billington

EASTER ROSS: Meet No. 312 (Saturday 6 –Saturday 13 May 2017)

Normally the May Meet is held in the last week of May. But, due to difficulties in booking holidays at work, I was forced to bring it forward to the 6th May. This meant that it was only a few weeks after the Easter Meet. But, if the weather proved to be good, no-one was likely to complain. We certainly had a perfect start as Val Bailey, Roger Reeves and I headed north up the A9. The temperature reached a high of 22°C in Perthshire, though it dropped steadily the nearer we got to Inverness. We arrived at Conon Bridge and reached our holiday accommodation - Torgorm Cottage - at 4.45pm to find that Brian had arrived 15



minutes before us after a long journey by public transport from Stoke-on-Trent. Situated a mile outside Conon Bridge the cottage had a great view of Ben Wyvis and the Cromarty Firth. And it was very comfortable and had all the facilities we could ask for.

It had been a very long time since we had a Meet in Easter Ross. The last one was when Strathpeffer youth hostel was open and the members of the club were fixated on collecting Munros. This

time the walking would concentrate entirely on Grahams. On the Sunday for the first day's walk we headed west to Strathconon to climb Carn na Coinnich. John and Jeanette Fenwick (former members) joined us having made the short journey from Garve where they live. My sister, Anne, happened to be visiting them over that weekend and, being a keen walker, joined us as well. We parked just outside the village of Milton and walked along a track through the Dalbreac Lodge estate. We followed this track into forest and headed up steep, heathery slopes before gaining the ridge. The walking became easier and the ridge a pleasant and scenic route to the top of Meall Doire Fheara, a good viewpoint from which to survey the twin peak Corbetts of Meallan nan Uan and Sgurr a' Mhuilinn across the trench of Strathconon. We crossed the gap between two lochans then followed a short ridge up to the summit trig point of Carn na Coinnich. The route of descent was varied by heading along the ridge and dropping down to pick up a track leading back to the Dalbreac Lodge estate.



Next day we travelled east to Nairn and then followed the Carrbridge road, turning off to Dulsie. From there we took a small road along the north bank of the River Findhorn, which we caught glimpses of through the birch woods lining the road. The last mile of the road deteriorated with a thick strip of grass down the middle. But we reached the end at Dales Farm thanks to Roger's careful driving. From the farm we followed a series of tracks which ended just below the plateau. We climbed up to the plateau and through the peat hags

to the summit trig point of the Graham, Carn nan Tri-tighearnan. I would describe this as the highest point of an extensive plateau rather than a hill. We were grateful that there had not been any rain for weeks or we would have had a very boggy walk. To vary the walk back we linked channels of the peat bogs to reach the trig point on Carn an Uillt Bhric intending to descend to pick up the end of the track again. This did not quite work out and it was only after we had descended a good few hundred feet down some heather covered slopes that we joined the track. But, to compensate, the sun appeared and illuminated the lovely Glen Findhorn below us, giving a good end to the walk. On the drive back we stopped at Dulsie where there is a viewpoint of the River Findhorn gorge. It was very impressive.



On Tuesday Brian decided to have an “easy day” and visit Strathpeffer. Roger’s “Magical Mystery Tour” would be taking us along Loch Ness, over to Cannich and down Strathglass to climb Carn a’ Chaochain. The guide books suggest approaching the hill from Cougie to the north since routes from the south are long and tedious. The road up Strathglass ended at the Plodda Falls car park but, happily, we found that we could drive beyond this point along a forest track to Cougie. The surface of the track was in good condition and the only disadvantage was that it covered the car in dust. Cougie is a pony trekking centre situated in an area of woodland where native species (such as Scots Pine and Birch) are being regenerated. After the long drive we were keen to start walking, especially as it was a lovely, sunny day. Carn a’ Chaochain means “hill of the little streams”: so it seemed rather appropriate that the path through the woodland ran alongside the Allt na Fearnna. We followed the path through a gate to open moorland then to the Bealach Feith na Gamhna. From the bealach we climbed up the northeast spur of the hill, passing the trig point to reach the actual summit.

We had great views looking northeast to the Glen Affric Munros which still had small patches of snow on them. The northerly wind gave excellent visibility and we could see the unmistakable shape of Ben Nevis to the south. It was too good a day to head straight back down so we found a sheltered spot just below the summit, had lunch and relaxed for an hour. But we had a long drive back; so, eventually, we got up and returned by our route of ascent. On the journey back we stopped to look at the Plodda Falls. They are very impressive.



The next day we returned to Strathconon but this time to climb Beinn Mheadhoin and Meall na Faochaig. And we had the pleasure of John and Jeanette Fenwick’s company again. After parking at the start of the track to Inverchoran, followed it across the bridge over the

River Meig and circumnavigated Inverchoran farm. Fortunately, there was a good stalkers' path which took us high up the hill before eventually petering out. Then the occasional cairn indicated the route to the summit. From the top we had a great view over Glen Orrin to the four Strathfarrar Munros. I have still got those to do on my second round and they were tantalisingly close - a classic ridge walk of five miles to look forward to some day. After a lunch stop reminiscing about some of the NWS Meets of the past, we returned the same way. It would have been possible to vary the route but this was the quickest way down and we had another hill to climb! That was except for Brian who was happy with doing just the one hill and, instead, chose to amble to Loch Beannacharain at the head of Strathconon.

Helpfully, our second hill, Meall na Faochaig – situated on the opposite side of the glen to Beinn Mheadhoin - had a stalkers' path. But the path only went half way up the hill: so the toughest walking of the day was from the end of the path to the summit. However, the distant views of the mountains of Torridon and the Fannaichs made it worthwhile. We also had an excellent view down to Loch Beannacharain and over to Bac an Eich (a Corbett).



Going down the same way we had gone up, we were soon back at the cars and joining Brian again. We bade farewell to John and Jeanette who, despite living locally, had climbed new hills this day as well.

Roger's plan for the Thursday was to climb Meall Mor. I had been looking forward to climbing this particular Graham, not so much for the hill itself but more for its location. Our walk started at Eileanach Lodge at the end of the public road up Glen Glass. We followed a forestry track for a mile, looking up to

Loch Glass where we turned off and followed another track, steadily climbing the forested slopes of Meall an Tuirc. The track emerged from the forest near the extensive wind turbine development blighting Meall an Tuirc. If we had been bagging Graham Tops, we would have had to take a slight detour to the top of Meall an Tuirc. But, as we were not, we continued to the wide bealach between Meall an Tuirc and Meall Mor. Picking our way through the peat hags, we gained the broad south-east ridge of Meall Mor and moved up to the summit. By then the wind turbines were out of sight and we enjoyed great views, especially of Ben Wyvis across Loch Glass. Ben Wyvis is seldom seen from this side and now revealed its true character with complex ridges and fine corries. An extensive area of very remote and wild countryside and isolated hills lay to the northwest. With no urgency to leave this idyllic spot we took shelter from the wind slightly below the summit and basked in the occasional bursts of sun. With no feasible alternatives for a return route, we went back down to the bealach and the wind farm. It had been a day of contrasts.



Friday – and the last day of walking – dawned. Everyone was feeling the effects of a full week but Roger had in mind an easy Graham – Carn na h-Easgainn. Just as important, it would not be far for him to drive as the hill was situated near the A9, 12 miles south of Inverness. Brian, who was feeling the effects more than most of us, could not be enticed to join us and chose to spend a leisurely day at the cottage. So it was just three of us who set off from Lynemore on the opposite side of the A9 from Loch Moy. We followed a recently constructed track through some attractive woodland and onto open moorland. About halfway



up we met another three hillwalkers making their way down. They were the first hillwalkers we had seen all week so we were keen to stop and chat. Not surprisingly, they were Graham baggers and one of them had completed all the Grahams, all the Corbetts and four rounds of the Munros. It is interesting the folk you meet on the Grahams. They had a long drive back home ahead of them so we let them get on their way and we continued up. The track almost led to the trig point so we were able to head over to it quite easily. The SMC Guide advised that the summit was 50 metres to the southeast of the trig

point. But there was no cairn so we wandered over to what we discerned to be the highest point. We could have built a cairn but thought it better left to the more obsessive walkers coming up with theodolites. Instead, we found a sheltered spot out of the wind and relaxed in the sun.

Saturday arrived and so did the rain. We had been very lucky to have had a week's walking without any rain. Over the course of the Meet we had visited some remote glens and enjoyed an excellent variety of walking on both sides of the Great Glen. Thanks go to Roger for providing the food and for all his driving. Thanks go to Brian as well for doing a couple of dinners and bringing his Muriel Gray "Munro Show" DVD which kept us entertained in the evenings. Finally, thanks to everyone for their company.

David Douglas

FORTHCOMING MEETS

MEET No 321: Grampians

Dates: Saturday 9 – Wednesday 13 September 2017.

Area: Grampians.

Accommodation: Prosen Hostel.

Programme: An opportunity to explore the attractive Angus glens and climb a variety of hills.

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 No 44.

Food: Will be provided by the Meet organiser, unless requested otherwise, from an evening meal on Saturday to breakfast on Wednesday.

Bookings: Please contact the Meet organiser who will attempt to obtain places in respect of requests received up to **31 July**.

Meet organiser: David Douglas.

MEET No 322: AGM

Dates: Friday 13-Sunday 15 October

Area: Northumberland

Accommodation: YHA Alnwick

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 to/from the walk locations (planned to include The Cheviots – distance about 20 miles each way).**

Maps: OS Explorer OL16

Food: It is planned to purchase breakfasts and the evening meal on the Saturday at the hostel. Those who prefer self-catering will need to bring and prepare their own food.

Members will need to arrange their own meal on the Friday evening as the hostel has said it can only cater for evening meals if required by the whole group. There are pubs and restaurants nearby and self-catering facilities at the hostel.

Those asking the Meet organiser to reserve rooms for them should advise him which hostel meals are required - ie Saturday breakfast, a Saturday evening meal (which it is presumed all will have) and Sunday breakfast).

Bookings: **To reserve a place, e-mail the Meet organiser as soon as possible, confirming hostel meal requirements, and send him a cheque for £50 by no later than 14 July for 2 nights' accommodation and a Saturday evening meal. Any balance will be payable during the Meet.**

Meet Organiser: David Cheesman

MEET No 323: HOGMANAY

The venue for the New Year Meet has yet to be decided. Those interested in attending should contact David Douglas to indicate preferred locations and dates.

Further details will be published in the next NeWSletter.