

Jacobites Mountaineering Club



Journal 2020-2021

Cover photo: Jon Ascroft at Stanage in the Peak District. Stuart McLeod

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Editor's bit

It's been interesting looking back over the year, and everything that has been going on. Despite restrictions, the Jacobite calendar was still very busy and there was a wide variety of organised activities. The Pentlands were well used, this is reflected both in the organised activities and the articles. Here's to lots more adventures next year.

Fiona Shepherd

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Weekend Meets

Due to COVID-19 restrictions and because households were not able to meet indoors, weekend meets could not take place at the start of the 2020/21 year, so day walks were organised instead.

Lammermuir Hills, Saturday 17th October 2020 (Day Walk)



Six people went on the Lammermuir walk, starting at Blinkbonny Wood for a circuit including Lammer Law. The route went out by Hopes Reservoir and Longyester. It was a rainy and misty day however; this allowed some compass bearing practice on Lammer Law. It was so wet, Cat's jacket pocket filled up with water and drowned her phone.

Longniddry Station, Saturday 31st October 2020 (Day Walk)

Rained off!

Pentlands, Saturday 14th November 2020 (Day Walk)

A 12km walk starting from Hillend. We went around the back of Caerketton and up to the Caerketton-Allermuir saddle. About half of the group went straight back from there while the rest went up Allermuir and Capelaw, heading back by Green Craig.



Cathy's Last Munro celebration, Saturday 28th November 2020 (Day Walk)

Cathy Southworth completed her Munros in September 2020, she did this COVID style, with one other household: Euan and Jackie. As a thank you to everyone who has been a part of the venture over the



years, Cathy organised an expedition to bring everyone together and celebrate. Twenty-four people joined the 30km / 8-hour walk, most starting on the summit of Easter Craiglockhart Hill for sunrise at 8am. From there, dividing into smaller groups, people headed to Swanston via

Braidburn Valley Park and "Robert Louis Stevenston's Path to the Pentlands". From Swanston the route went over Caerketton, Allermuir and Capelaw, before returning to Swanston, and cutting across via Frogston and Mortonhall to the Braids and Blackford Hills in time for sunset.



Holyrood Park "Landscape Treasure Hunt", Saturday 12th December 2020 (Day Walk)



We met at St Margaret's Loch, then walked via St Anthony's Chapel, Arthur's Seat summit, Nether Hill, Crow Hill, Dunsapie Loch (with lengthy otter sighting!), Dunsapie Crag, round the high road and back by Salisbury Crags.

Tightening of COVID restrictions post Christmas 2020 meant that all face to face club activity had to stop. Restrictions eased mid March 2021, with groups of up to 15 people allowed to meet up outdoors as long as they stayed within the City of Edinburgh council area. Day walks were organised to replace meets.

Craiglockharts & Braids, Saturday 20th March 2021 (Day Walk)

Eleven people met at the Craiglockhart Tennis Centre then headed past Craiglockhart pond to Craiglockhart Hill West. From here the walk went past woods near Firrhill School, across Braidburn Valley Park then on to Braid Hill. The group then headed past Liberton Tower to Blackford Hill, then back to Craiglockhart Hill East. It was great to see people again and enjoy an interesting walk, taking a lot of us to local places we'd never been.

Pentlands from Dreghorn, Saturday 3rd April 2021 (Day Walk)



The walk was full (the limit at the time was 15). We walked from Dreghorn Wood (A.K.A. Covenanter's Wood) beyond the city bypass and traversed Caerketton, Allermuir, Capelaw and Harbour Hills before weaving back to the start point via Clubbiedean Reservoir. It ended up being 20km under almost clear skies.

Arthurs Seat and Figgate Pond, Saturday 17th April 2021 (Day Walk)

Another adventure to parts of Edinburgh that some of us had never visited. A group of 11 left the Commonwealth Pool at 9am and headed into the park and up the path. We then took an interesting, scrambly detour to the summit. From there we headed down through Meadowfield Park, past a lost goose, some lovely artwork and on to Figgate Burn Park and Pond. At



this point the group split, with some heading home and others continuing to Portobello for coffee and cake on the promenade.



Restrictions eased again at the end of April, with day trips outside the City of Edinburgh allowed.

Peebles, Saturday 1st May (Day Walk)

Five of us did an anti-clockwise round of Glensax from Peebles, taking in Birkscairn Hill, Dun Rig, Middle Hill and an out-and-back extension to Stob Law. We could see all the way to Arthur's Seat. The weather was not as nice as we've had on previous walks, but it was mostly dry, except for a flurry of snow at one point.



Glen Clova, Saturday 15th May (Day Walk)



Katherine, Tom and Miles did Mayar and Driesh anticlockwise - starting through scenic woodland before ascending via the imposing Corrie Fee. There was no snow on our route but they had good views to snow-capped Lochnagar. Their descent was via the Shank of Drumfollow.

COVID restrictions continued to ease, with weekend activities increasing as allowed.

Inver work meet, Achnasheen 29–30th May 2021

Tom, Chris, Catherine, Graham and Katherine spent Saturday restocking Inver with gas. They also scrubbed the mould from, and painted the living room walls, and did a deep clean of the kitchen cupboards. On Sunday, they had a great day in brilliant weather on An Ruadh Stac and Maol Cheandearg.

Mill Cottage, near Glen Feshie 11–13th June 2021 (Weekend Meet - hooray!)

On the first meet of the year Glo, Sarah and Ken did Carn Dearg Mor and Meallach Mhor on Saturday and a woodland/river walk on Sunday. The weather was nice and they all enjoyed Glo's excellent homemade date and nut bars (Glo bars!).

Alison and Iain did an expedition to bag the Corbetts Leathad an Taobhain and Carn Dearg Mor on Saturday, then did Geal-charn Mor on Sunday.



Naismith Hut, Elphin 25-27th June 2021 (Weekend Meet)

Graham, Caroline and Ros attended this weekend. On Friday Graham walked up Carn Chuinneag en route from a night in Aviemore. Graham and Ros walked up Quinag (making two milk pails in as many days for Graham) on Saturday. Caroline ran some Munro's and did a random trail extension on her own. It was mega sunny and she did not want the day to end but decided the Prosecco was probably well chilled in fridge back at base camp. There was an awesome sunset seen from the hut.

On Sunday Caroline and Ros did a south loop road cycle to Lochinver and back via Coigach to buy pies for dinner. Graham stuck to Mr Naismith's time-honoured pace by walking up Breabag.

On Monday Graham walked up Beinn Enaiglair. Ros headed off on a backpacking trip in the Beinn Dearg group and the Fannaichs and Caroline cycled around the north loop on her own, playing chicken with motorhomes at the beachy stretch of the loop. It was another super sunny day.

Spittal of Glenshee 9-11th July 2021 (Backpacking Weekend)



Graham, Katherine, Tom, Miles and Chris walked into the darkness and up into a cloud on Friday night and made camp by Loch nan Eun. The majority of the group bagged Carn an Righ, Beinn Iutharn Mhor, Carn Bhac and An Socach via various routes on Saturday, Graham taking a different route in order to still be walking

when the heavens opened. Then walked back over Glas Tulaichean, on Sunday, stopping off at Dalmunzie House Hotel for coffee and cakes on the way.



Inver Croft, Achnasheen 23-25th July (Weekend Meet)

This was a three household meet Ros, Guy and Alexey and family. It was really hot, high-pressure weather. Ros went up early on the Thursday and did Beinn Liath Mhor in scorching weather. The next day Guy and Ros headed off on an overnight back pack into Fisherfield (see article 'My post-lockdown obsession – confessions of a backpacking addict'). On Sunday Ros and Guy cycled in from Attadale to do the Corbett Beinn Dronaig. Really good weather.

Badaguish Outdoor Centre 6-8th August 2021 (Weekend Meet)

Chris B, Chris D, Catherine, Katherine, Dave L and Fiona Z camped at the Badaguish Outdoor Centre, near Aviemore. Chris D and Fiona went MTBing on the Saturday, while the others climbed Ben Macdui and Cairngorm. The weather was pish (very wet) on Sunday so everyone did a short walk from the campsite up to Craiggowrie, then to Creagan Gorm and Meall a' buichaille, then back to the campsite. There were a lot of midges, the whole weekend!

Sands Camping, Gairloch 20-22nd August 2021 (Weekend Meet)

Cancelled due to lack of attendees.

Muir of Inverey, Braemar 3-5 September 2021 (Weekend Meet)



Caroline, Chris and Dave did an epic mountain bike ride on the Saturday - Glen Quoich to Inchrory to Fords of Avon and back via Glen Derry - an epic due to the time they eventually arrived back. Chris departed at the Inchrory junction due to low electric bike charge
Mike had a short fun day out, riding the gravel tracks at the end of the Linn of Dee in the Cairngorms, starting from the Cairngorm club hut to Bynack Lodge, Geldie Lodge, and Glen Quoich.

On the Sunday, Dave and Caroline did some Glenshee Munros before joining all others for late lunch at the bothy cafe. Mike and Chris rode up Morven / Morrone, from Braemar. It was Mike's first Corbett on his Gravel bike. A very windy and memorable day! (10miles 1,900ft of cycling). They cycled back to Braemar where they met up with everyone else (the others had walked up Morven) for a late lunch.

Badrallach Bothy 17-20th September 2021 (Weekend Meet)

Seven people attended the Badrallach Bothy weekend. Katherine Ross, Paul Harris, Michael Barnard, Scott Sutherland, Dave Lawson, Kasia Drak and Martin Bella. All but Michael went for the An Teallach traverse on the Saturday. Four succeeding and two turning back. Michael cycled in from Poolewe to do Beinn Lair and Meall Mheinnidh. On Sunday everyone met at Loch an Eilein near Aviemore and walked a circuit.

Annual Dinner Weekend – 1-3rd October 2021

See social events.

Midweek Activities

Fortnightly mid-week activities ran until December, when they had to be put on hold due to COVID restrictions.

Walk - Corstorphine Hill -Wednesday 7th October 2020

A lovely torch lit stroll over Corstorphine Hill, starting from the top of Kaimes Road. They went clockwise around the hill, to the summit and out to the "Rest and Be Thankful" viewpoint where there were good views across the city.



Walk - Blackford Hill - Wednesday 21st October 2020

A few people met at the Charterhall Road gates near the pond for an evening walk around Blackford Hill walking the woodland paths and taking in the extensive views.

MTB Night Ride – Hermitage, Braids - Wednesday 4th November 2020



There was a good turnout for night ride in Braids and Mortonhall. The ride started at The Hermitage and everyone was out for a couple of hours, the route took in a variety of paths in the Braids and Mortonhall area.

Orienteering - Blackford Hill - Wednesday 18th November 2020

A 4.5km MapRun orienteering course made a bit more challenging with the dark, wet conditions. Several people ran / walked the route which started at the Braid Road entrance, went through the Hermitage and up onto Braid Hill. Great for practicing your navigation.

Walk - River Almond - Wednesday 2nd December 2020 - Rained off!

MTB – Pentlands - Wednesday 16th December 2020

Tom, Katherine, Jill, Alastair, Chris B, Stuart, Sally, David Hoyle, Fiona Z and Karl biked up the Water of Leith, Warklaw Hill, and past Kinleith Farm, then up the track towards Maiden's Cleugh before turning back down towards Harlaw Car Park. The return was via Lymphoy, Blinkbonny, and the Water of Leith. Wet, muddy and dark but mostly enjoyable until some got a bit cold and we made for home.

All activities ceased due to post Christmas restrictions, resuming mid-March 2021.

MTB – Pentlands - Wednesday 24th March 2021

More than 6 people went on the first Wednesday evening activity of the new year. This was a mountain bike ride, which started opposite the Water of Leith visitor centre and went to Bonaly then past the Torduff and Clubbidean reservoirs. From there the route went past the top of Kirkgate and headed in the direction of Maiden's Cleugh. A pretty nice spring evening for an evening ride.

Walk – Corstorphine Hill - Wednesday 7th April 2021

Thirteen people did a loop explore around the whole hills - over both summits, with a view stop at the Rest and Be Thankful viewpoint. Lovely evening (if a bit chilly) with great excitement at being able to meet lots of people at once. Extra kudos to the people who cycled there up the enormous hill (every cyclist who arrived commented, between pants for breath, on how much bigger and steep it is than they remember).



Orienteering – Cammo Estate - Wednesday 21st April 2021

A lovely evening warm colours and an amazing sunset. Only 10 controls of the MapRun Cammo Scatter route had to be checked to complete the course, but we all did all the controls. Fiona and Karl ran the whole course, while Fiona S walked.

Walk - Mount Maw and The Mount from Carlops – Wednesday 5th May 2021



On leaving a wet and grey 7°C Edinburgh City, Pam, Fiona, Karl and Alex all likely expected a soggy trudge. However, the snow on the cars coming towards us was a curious sign and actually our walk over The Mount and Mount Maw was stunning! Fluffy snow, crisp air, low long sun, cloud inversions, a sky of pale pinks, oranges and blues over the snow topped green hills for miles around. A nice touch was

the song of a sky lark whilst at the top of The Mount.

Orienteering – Humbie - Wednesday 19th May 2021

Approx. 10 people took part in the Humbie orienteering. The course consisted of 20 checkpoints and took between 1.5 and 3 hours. It involved some quite challenging terrain in places (woodland, steep ground, river crossings) but everyone enjoyed it and most managed to complete the course. The weather was kind too - showers were forecast but it actually stayed dry the whole evening. The course is still available - anyone wants to try can message Adrian for the code.

Walk – Green Law, Broughton Heights - Wednesday 2nd June 2021

Another stunning Wednesday walk. Slow traffic inspired us to go to Flotterstone instead of the original plan of Broughton. Just lovely! As well as all the quietly dramatic clouds and pretty views, we saw a skylark, a chilled-out heron, kestrels and loads of other birds.



MTB – Pentlands - Wednesday 16th June 2021



A small group on a beautiful evening. Tom, Katherine, Dan Whaley, Jon Shut and Karl did a great loop around Capelaw and Kirk Burn areas with some fine descending. The trails were pretty dry and the midges were enjoying the evening too.

Walk – West Lomond Hill - Wednesday 30th June 2021

A quiet, sunny evening. Guy, Chris, Sally and Fiona did a circular route over West Lomond top from Craigmead with views over the patchwork valley to the Tay.



Cycle – South Queensferry – Wednesday 14th July

Matt, Sabine, Ken and Catherine met at the Cramond Brig on a lovely summer evening for a little cycle around the Dalmeny Estate. The route led quickly past the Craigiehall Barracks and then onto the railway track towards the Forth Railway Bridge and into the centre of South Queensferry. The nice weather called for ice creams, and Matt duly dove into the local Co-op and emerged with ice creams for everyone. We returned via the scenic coastal route and made it back to the Brig just as the cloud was coming in again from the sea. A nice evening outing.

Walk – Moorfoot Hills – Wednesday 28th July

Two Fiona's and one Joanne did a circular walk up Dundreich going via the east side of Portmore Loch and returning past Northshield Rings and the west side of Portmore Loch. A lovely evening, great chat and interesting walk.

Orienteering – Bolton – Wednesday 18th August

Adrian's course was challenging and fun. There were 20 checkpoints covering about 10km. About 8 people did the course, and most people got half of the checkpoints, then opted to return to Adrian's for the BBQ. Cathy persisted and was the clear winner getting all 20 checkpoints. The plan is to do the course again when there is more daylight.



Walk – Scotlandwell - Wednesday 25th August



This was a brilliant evening out. Fiona Z, Guy, Chris D, Matt and Sabine met at 7:30pm at the car park near the church at Scotlandwell. It was a glorious still evening as we made our way up the sheepish slopes past the White Craig's and on to the plateau of Bishop Hill. The mist started rolling in though and we just made it to the top in time to get a view over Loch

Leven. After a summit snack we returned via the Western edge of the hill before very steeply dropping down to Kinneswood. By this time, it was getting dark and we navigated back through the forest with the help of mobile phone torches ... time to remember the shorter evenings again! A superb outing.



MTB – Eastern Pentlands - Wednesday 8th September 2021



Another nice evening's mountain biking in the Pentlands. Scott, Tom, Karl and Katherine did a good loop in the most Eastern Part of the Pentlands.



Walk – Allermuir - Wednesday 22nd September

About 5 people went on the walk, it started at Swanston and took the less direct route to Allermuir over Green Craig before descending back to Swanston. It was very wet and increasingly windy and headtorches were required for the descent off Allermuir. Sally discovered that her waterproofs were not waterproof at all!

Climbing

Midweek climbing was somewhat quieter than usual - a bit of a hangover from COVID. Nevertheless, there were small groups out and about at the local favourites such as Aberdour and Traprain.

Social Events

Due to COVID restrictions, social events were limited at the start of the year.

Annual Dinner Walk – Saturday 3rd October 2020

Even though we couldn't see much before and after night fall it was nice to have a group walk and catch up with a few folk. Ten of us walked around 9k this evening onto Capelaw and Castlelaw. The lack of wind made it rather pleasant and the company was good.

Hogmanay Walk – 31st December 2020

Nine Jacobites went on the Hogmanay walk - a gentle canter up a snowy and a little icy Braid Hill by a bunch of Jacobites eager to see in the New Year. Great views of the fireworks across the city were enjoyed by all as the bells rung while we sipped on the small drams and glasses of fizz carted up the hill.

Burns Supper – Wednesday 27th January 2021

This year's Burn Supper was slightly different to usual, but lots of fun. Thanks to everyone who made this such an enjoyable and fun evening. There was music, song, poems from around the world, tributes to climbers who had passed recently and various other forms of entertainment. Everyone did the usual toasts and danced in their living rooms, and there was a communal, (including Zoom time lag) rendition of Auld Lang Syne, hence Cat's comments in the screen shot below! See Jamie Thin's poems 'Inver Poem'.



Whisky Tasting - Saturday 27th March 2021

Around 20 people joined the Zoom Whisky Tasting event. Mike Snook did a sterling job of organising - buying 11 different whiskies, splitting each of these up 20 ways, then arranging for them all to be



collected or posted! Mike had issued tasting notes in advance, and had a special labelling system for the blind tasting. There was a varied and interesting selection of whiskies, including a couple of unusual choices from the Cotswold distillery and from Starward in Australia. There were some interesting comparisons, for example two drams from the same distillery, and two Caribbean finishes from different distilleries. The best dram of the night was widely regarded as the Glengoyne cask strength, and the Balvenie Doublewood was highly rated too.

Granttown on Spey - Annual Dinner Weekend – 1-3rd October 2021

Despite the fuel shortages, about 36 people attended the 2021 Annual Dinner at the Grant Hotel in Granttown on Spey. This was the first big meet after group restrictions were lifted.

On Friday Jill and Alistair MTB'd 26 miles up rugged tracks of Glen Tilt to Falls of Tarf.

On Saturday Ken, Sarah, Ros, Guy, Glo, Jamie, Joanne, Scott and Jenny climbed Corryhabbie Hill. The weather started bright, breezy on top and clouded over just avoiding a shower. Highlights - Jamie getting cornered by the cows! Another group (Lisa, Walt, Katherine, Tom, Catherine, Chris, Cathy, Adrian, Fiona Z and some others) did Cathy's 'Hills of Cromdale' loop-... this was memorable in being about



30km long! Caroline, Mike, Dave, Chris, Alex and Karl went on a gravel ride from the Bunkhouse via



the Speyside Way to Aviemore (1st lunch) then down to Loch Eilean and through Rothiemurchus Forest to Roveyan Bothy (2nd lunch). This was followed by a nice descent to Nethybridge (3rd lunch) then a swift ride back to Granttown as it started to rain. Fun was had by all, a 'grand day oot', as they say! 47miles and 2,500 ft of cycling.



Lucy did a wee hill up the back of Newtonmore - Carn Liath, and Michael did Bynack More and Creag Mhor. Jill and Alistair went on MTBs from Newtonmore up the hills to the west then crossed the A9 at Kingussie and did a lap or two of Inshriach woods, 31miles total. Excellent MTB single track in the woods.

The Grant Hotel provided an excellent buffet meal and lovely beer on the Saturday night. The food was amazing and the staff were great. There was transport arranged to get back to the bunkhouse, so it was an earlyish finish (just before midnight).



On Sunday, a lot of people did Forrest walk on the way to Nethy Bridge. Ken, Sarah & Michael did a hill above Granton. Lisa, Walt, Fiona, Catherine, Chris and some others, hiding from the wind, went for a stroll up lower Glen Avon (nr Tomintoul). Karl and Alex went for a gravel ride from Tomintoul South to Inchroty and then east to Cock Bridge before returning to Tomintoul via the Lecht. Jamie and Joanne went up Creag Mhor. Mike, Katherine, Jenny, Adrian, and Chris bumbled around the Loch Inshriach woodland trails on their bikes (13 miles, 1,300 ft).



Thursday Pub Meets

The virtual 'Zoomerland' pub meets that started March 2020 continued until 9th September 2021 with slide shows, quizzes, a scavenger hunt and general catch ups. The pre-Christmas session saw people wearing festive attire and bringing photos of their 2020 highlights.

There were a few outdoor 'pub meets' between July and September 2021, then the club started meeting at the Old Bell Inn, Causewayside on 16th September.

Slideshows

- 8th October 2020 - Karl and Fiona Go Munro Bagging – slideshow covering the 15 or so Munros they did in August and September this year.
- 15 October 2020 – Cat's Hebridean Way Bike Touring Trip – Cat Trebilco showed photos from her week-long cycling and hiking tour along the Hebridean Way.
- 22nd October 2020 - Summer backpacking in Knoydart – Guy Wimble showed photos from his recent backpacking and Corbett bagging trip in Knoydart.
- 11th November 2020 – Stuart McLeod gave a slideshow on his climbing trips in Scotland and Wales during 2020.
- 3rd December 2020 – Bike Packing the Great North Trail – Jill Baker and Mike Snook talked about their 10-day trip from Blair Athol to Durness and back.
- 14th January 2021 - Cats C2C Cycle tour. Cat Trebilco talked about her cycling journey from Whitehaven in the Lakes to Newcastle, along the Sea to Sea (C2C) national cycle route.
- 4th February 2021 - Guy Wimble showed some photos from his kayaking in Greece and Scotland.
- 18th February 2021 - Jill and Alastair showed photos from their cycle and wild camping trip on Mull, Iona, Moidart and Ardnamurchan in Oct '20.

- 4th March 2021 - Karl talked about his (and Fiona's) 2020 adventures – running golf courses, climbing Munros, cycle rides and a 45km run: all within 1km of his flat.
- 17th March 2021 – Pam van de Brug showed some pictures of her snorkelling adventures around Scotland – see Snorkelling in Scotland 2021.
- 1st April 2021 - Phil McLean showed photos from his week's walking holiday in 2017 in the Rila and Pirin mountains of Bulgaria, including the highest peak in the Balkans (Musala, 2,925m).
- 1st July 2021 - Robyn Huggins - (Mis) or (Miss) Adventures mopping up Munros in COVID times. Robyn's recent return to Scotland to bag some more Munros.

Pub in the Park

- 29th July - Saughton Gardens
- 11th August - Princes Street Gardens
- 26th August – The Meadows
- 9th September - Summerhall



The Old Bell

Just under 30 people attended the first Thursday pub night in the Old Bell on 16th September. Pub nights continued in the Old Bell on Thursdays from then on.

Jacobites Making Club - Making Maisie's Menagerie

Cat has always been a keen member of the Jacobites Making Club so when she and Phil announced that they were expecting a baby, Alison though it would be a nice idea if we pooled our creative genius and made something together to welcome the little one into the world. Besides, we were still in lockdown, confined to the city limits, and the pubs were closed. What else were we going to do?

Even under normal circumstances, it would have been tricky to coordinate nine people to make one uniform item, especially with a mixture of knitters, crocheters and embroiderers in the group. Now we also had the added challenge of not being able to meet in person. So, we decided to embrace diversity in all its forms and make a blanket out of squares. The rules were simple: any animal, any colour, any style, but each square had to measure precisely 15 x 15 cm. The challenge was set, the "shhh... don't tell Cat" messenger group was born, and the makers set about their task with great enthusiasm. We had a google doc and everything.

By June, we were nearly done, restrictions had eased, and the makers and animals embarked on a secret mission, congregating in a garden in Ratho. Laying out the squares, we had good representation across continents and taxa and ecosystems. It became apparent though that some animals had a rather laissez-faire attitude when it came to the 15 cm rule. There were laid back elephants and uptight monkeys and a camel and a sloth who seemed not to have grasped the concept of a square at all. All in all, they seemed happy to meet each other though. We settled on "cardigan blue" to join them all together, with a fleece backing for enhanced structural integrity.

Pleased with our efforts, we were very happy to present the blanket to Maisie a few weeks after she was born. She showed her appreciation by remaining asleep.

Although artistically magnificent, all those animals together did have a slight weight problem. So as to avoid headlines of "mother crushes new-born child with crochet", Cat used her own making skills to turn it into a wall hanging for the nursery, where hopefully Maisie can admire it for years to come.



Maisie's Menagerie by Alison, Pam, Jean, Sam, Catherine, Katherine, Tom, Sally, Fiona

Climbing - New Routes

by Michael Barnard

Four of us had a really rewarding Shetland trip this summer – see Climbing in Shetland article. The premier venue of Eshaness Lighthouse didn't have much in the way of blank spaces, but myself, Lucy and my friend Alan found an adventurous diagonal line on rock which was certainly not above suspicion! This gave "Quest for Adventure", a nod to the great Chris Bonington who penned an interesting book of the same name.

Congratulations

Well done to Paul Harris who completed his Munros on Meall a' Chrasgaidh in September 2020. Paul climbed Meall a' Chrasgaidh along with 43 other Munros to raise money for Walking With The Wounded.



Congratulations to Alec Erskine who completed his Munros on A'Ghlas Bheinn on 13th May 2021. His first Munro was Ben Nevis in 1975.

Dave McHugh Award

The Dave McHugh award honours the memory of Jacobite member Dave McHugh who was tragically killed in a road accident on the way to ski in Glencoe in 1987, along with his travelling companion, Lin Merritt. His parents donated an original painting of the Aonach Eagach Ridge to his club in his memory to be given as an award for special achievement, endeavour or enhancing the reputation of the club.

The Dave McHugh award for 2020 was given to Miles Gould. Back in February, Miles' friend Andy was involved in an avalanche. Miles drove up from Edinburgh to help with the search and to support Andy's friends and family. When, sadly, Andy's body was finally found Miles volunteered to go and identify him, to save Andy's partner from having to do so.

The 2021 McHugh Award goes to Cat Magill for her mountain running in 2021. Cat has always been a keen runner, but this summer took her running to a new level, with in particular three long rounds. In June 2021 Cat completed a Tranter's Round in under 24 hours. ("Tranter's Round" – a round of Glen Nevis, including all of the Mamores, the Grey Corries, the Aonachs, Carn Mor Dearg and Ben Nevis itself – around 60km and covering 18 Munros). She followed this up with a solo round of Loch Mullardoch which is 55km and 12 Munros. Most recently she came third female in the Glencoe Skyline race completing the 52 km route in 11 hours and 6 minutes. The route goes up Curved Ridge, continues over Bidean nam Bian and then returns along the Aonach Eagach.

President's Speech Annual Dinner 2021

by Fiona Zeiner

At the AGM in 2019, when no one stood for president, my name was thrown in the air and I said "I do not want to be president..." however subsequently I was co-opted to the role, and after the first committee meeting, Catherine J said to me "Let's hope that nothing bad happens while you are president". Now we all know the dangers of mountaineering, and so it does not take much imagination to think of the sort of thing Catherine had in mind. Shutting down all club activities due to a global pandemic was not one of the things that was in anyone's mind...

In fact, there were a few months at the end of 2019 and the beginning of 2020 where the coronavirus was still something we read about on the news, and people did get out in the hills. Good trips were had to Glencoe among other places. Karl and I joined Euan and Jackie for what turned out to be the last meet of the Times Before, to a very wet Kintail.

And then, as we all know, everything changed. No travelling to hills, no meeting in pubs. How do you run a club when the very thing that club exists to do is not allowed? Well, we did our best. The pub moved to Zoom. As individuals and couples, we got to know our local areas. We got to grips with running slideshows and quizzes online. As things opened up again, we discovered that Mountaineering counted as a sport. Who knew? All the same, it gave us the chance to meet in larger groups, along with the challenges that came with having to record names and contact details, when the Jacobites have always been a fairly informal group. The committee gained a new member (COVID officer) – many thanks to David, who, having joined the club not long after lockdown bit, offered to take on this role. As groups could go out together, we started climbing the hills of Edinburgh and learned of the concept of a Tump (Thirty Meter Prominence). You can't keep a true bagger down... For some, this was the first time up some of the Edinburgh hills (though I have to confess that quite a few routes were simply places Fiona likes to go running).

Inver, of course, was strictly off limits; a matter of some concern. We are very fortunate that we do have a club member, John Burns, in Inverness, who was able to go over and keep an eye on the place. I'd like to record my appreciation to him and also to Graham P whose job looking after hut bookings has been considerably more complicated than usual.

Summer 2020 never saw organised club activities beyond Edinburgh – but we were able to travel as individuals and couples for a few months. Catherine and Chris ventured into the remote hills north of Blair Atholl. Guy went Corbett bagging in Knoydart, as did Ken and Sarah. Karl and I managed various Munro bagging trips including a round of the five Lochnagar hills and the four hills at Tyndrum that include Beinn Laoigh. Stuart McLeod got out climbing to various parts of Scotland and even took a trip to foreign parts – well Wales... Mike Snook got on his bike in a big way culminating in 1) cycling 200km in a day and 2) a bike packing trip (with Jill and Alistair) to Durness.

There were even two Munro completions: Cathy Southworth completed on Ladhar Beinn in Knoydart in August, accompanied by Euan and Jackie. Paul Harris made a long trip, bagging 44 Munros and raising funds for the military charity Walking With The Wounded. Paul completed his Munro round on Meall a' Chrasgaidh in the Fannichs in September.

As the Autumn drew in, so did the new coronavirus lockdown.

In October we started sending out weekly newsletters to keep the membership better informed of planned club activities. In December the tightening of restrictions meant that our organised club activities had to remain within the City of Edinburgh boundary; and therein lies a tale. Cathy, having not been able to have a big group join her on her Last Munro, had arranged for a club activity to walk the Pentlands Skyline route instead. This was all organised and then with about a week to go, the rules

changed and club activities were no longer permitted to leave the City of Edinburgh. Fortunately, some of the Pentlands still qualify (just) and after some frantic re-organisation we were able to have a very fine day out – the weather was kind to us, even if nothing else had been.

Then in January full lockdown meant that organised activity had to stop altogether – or at least, meeting up had to stop. We still managed to run the club Burns Supper over Zoom – (probably a bonus if you don't like haggis) which was very successful, with a wide variety of poems from as far afield as Australia.

We may not have been able to get to the mountains but the snow came to us and for a few weekends the ski tourers were out in the Pentlands in force.

After the success of the Burns Supper, Mike organised a whisky tasting – which involved a considerable amount of work, not only buying the whiskies but dividing them up into small bottles, labelling the bottles, boxing them up and then getting them to the participants – thankfully I think only one parcel had to go in the post! We had a very fine, convivial evening, with some unusual whiskies to try.

The making club also took to Zoom. However, some Jacobites took to making whole new people – I shall mention Tim and Sam Kearsey's son Andrew (although he was a pre-pandemic baby), and then there was Otis, son of Tim and Tamsin and finally Cat and Phil's daughter Masie.

Another achievement of this year has been the work of the Environmental sub-committee who have provided a most excellent report which I hope the club will be able to take forward and make use of.

As spring arrived, lockdown eased. We were finally able to get away from Edinburgh – the first club meet was to Peebles for a day walk, followed by day trips further afield before reductions in the restrictions on shared accommodation meant that we could run weekend trips, albeit for only a few people to start with. This also meant that we could go back to Inver, and several of us enjoyed a weekend there. There were also work meets to sort out the roof, and a fair amount of informal maintenance in lieu of the usual big work meet. Many thanks to all who fixed/cleaned/painted.

There were also opportunities for other trips. Stuart McLeod has again had a good climbing summer – to the non-climber, his ascent of The Old Man of Hoy is notable, but he's also been in to Carnmore crag and the Shelterstone crag, among other places. Adrian has been out climbing as well; and our Munro and Corbett baggers have been active – Guy and Ros had a trip into Fisherfield and I know Ken and Sarah have been out and about as well.

Alec Erskine completed his Munros on A' Ghlas Beinn in May 2021.

Also not exactly mountaineering, but still what looked like a good adventure was Jill and Alistair's trip by bicycle and campervan from Edinburgh to Lands' End and John O'Groats and back.

Sadly, we also had notice of the deaths of three former members of the club: Barry Winston, John Docherty and Sean Canavan. Our sympathies to friends and family of all three.

So, now it is October, and things feel a bit more normal, perhaps. We have met in the pub, and here we are, over 30 of us getting together for the Annual Dinner. All the same, I think perhaps things will never go back to exactly the way they were. How has the pandemic changed the club? Has it changed us? Probably not in many ways; though I think we have been dragged into the 21st century as far as online membership payments and meets sign-ups are concerned... I think the weekly email newsletter is going to continue to be the main source of information for members, with the notices in the pub perhaps simply a reminder of the Times Before. And as the Climate Crisis continues, we will need to continue to take the impact of all our actions seriously.

Finally, I must thank the whole committee, those who served in 2019-20, those who were members in 2020-21 and the many who did both.

In Praise of the Pentlands

As travel and meet activity was limited for much of this year, we all made the most of our local surroundings, the Pentlands in particular were well appreciated. Below are some Pentland pictures by Euan Cameron and the next few articles are of different winter activities in the Pentlands.



Path towards the Kips from Silverburn



Waterfall near Flotterstone

Snowshoeing in the Pentlands

by Ros Clancy

A few photos from snowshoe and walking trips in the winter in the Pentlands.





My Lockdown Ski Year 2021

by Guy Wimble

New Year 2021 was seen in on Braid Hill summit with a band of intrepid Jacobites, adhering to the COVID rules on what was to be the last group walk until spring. It was a good evening under the circumstances, with clearing skies, crisp icy ground and a multitude of defiant midnight firework displays erupting from the surrounding suburbs – even from the top of Allermuir Hill. The icy descent, eased on my part by ice studs stretched over my boots was not only a hangover from the bright and cold Christmas period but a harbinger of much more to come in what was looking like a winter of lockdown.

Jumping January

The snow in Edinburgh and surroundings faded as we settled into a January with access restricted to City of Edinburgh plus 5 miles and groups of no more than two households. Early in the month more snow began to arrive in the hills – particularly in the out of reach Highland's north of Edinburgh!

Andy Follis contacted me in early January with a report of having skied in the Pentlands below the Kips. Not just sliding along uphill and the flat, but two or three linked turns downhill, no less. This was too much to bear, I had to get out there, even if it was sure to be a bit crap... At the weekend I drove out in sunshine past snowy fields and met Andy in the small parking area he'd identified just at the access track to Eastside Farm. A good spot as everywhere else was stowed out with parked cars.

We headed up the track and things were looking good, with a severely cold breeze, dazzling sun and not a little snow – which had accumulated in the days since Andy had last been there. We stopped below a shallow gully on the side of South Black Hill and decided to test the snow with a couple of yo-yo's. My first turns of the 2021 ski season were made on smooth, soft, drifted powder!



First Tracks!

Things were looking good! We were passed by other skiers moving along the track to and from the Kips. Noticing a group on South Black Hill above us we headed up to the summit to be greeted by a panorama of the 'Pentland Alps' and surrounding countryside, everywhere gleaming white in the sunshine. We skied through decent snow back down to our practice gully and then to the track, avoiding the areas of heather and began to dream of more.

We had seen the Kips from the summit of South Black Hill, crawling with ant-like figures, some of who were dropping off down the southeast face. Wow. Temptation. One more ascent of our gully and a traverse round the hillside bowl enclosing Eastside Farm led us to the shoulder of East Kip and then over to West Kip.



Zermatt??

We looked nervously down the slope to the farm as a skier shot off the edge and down to the single tree 130m lower at the bottom of the slope in about three turns (or so it seemed). Despite my rustiness I was up for it. We avoided the rocky drop from the top and traversed onto the wall. Andy first on his Alpine skis and then me more cautiously on my Telemarks. And reader... we made it without falling A over T!

From the tree we shot over to the track on near-perfect snow, past grazing sheep, and through the farm to a gentle glide along the farm track past the avenue of beech trees, each casting their long shadow in the orange setting sunlight. We had a quick stop for a flask on the last of the sun and then a glide all the way back to the cars, returning home feeling that this had been better than anything we could have imagined.



West Kip Drop

Under the circumstances, this day alone would have been reward against expectation – but it wasn't to stop there! The snow did melt back, but it also came back. I had another short day with Alan Yardley in mid-January. Meeting at Swanston early enough to get a parking place we headed up to Allermuir under grey skies but on a promising amount of snow. There followed a round to Castlelaw and back on indifferent snow and then we found a good stretch of drifted powder near the wall on the north side of Allermuir, which we of course had to repeat! There followed a descent across hummocky terrain to the Swanston track, which was a bit scraped and icy, and a gentle series of turns down the former golf course (also repeated).

Another weekend in late January saw myself and Andy test the 5 mile limit in a trip to Carlops (within 5 miles of the Edinburgh boundary by radius, if not along the road...). By now, car parks close to Edinburgh were permanently rammed and the good burghers of Silverburn and Ninemile Burn were getting pissed off with on-street parkers. Furthermore, the Pentland Rangers had asked people not to ski the Kips any more, as the farmer was concerned about constant disturbance to his pregnant ewes. At Carlops there was parking aplenty and we 'bumped into' Colin Crabbie, making us a group of three. Deep snow cover and more dazzling blue skies - it looked absolutely stunning as we ascended the track and headed off up the lower slopes of Grain Heads. The snow had other ideas though: we soon realised that a slight thaw and freeze had created the skier's nightmare, breakable crust (also known as 'breakable leg'). There ensued a gentle climb and traverse to The Mount, followed by gentle downhill and kick turns. Near the bottom of the slope, we found something that hadn't frozen too hard and got a few turns in. Back to the cars – a great looking day on the photos at least!



Carlops Crust

The snow melted and came back again, again. February was to yield the best conditions of all – almost EVER!

Fabulous February

In early February snow fell and carpeted the streets and parks of Edinburgh. I had a lunchtime walk with Fiona Shepherd and we resolved to ski to Merchant's Golf Course on Easter Craiglockhart Hill. I dug out my incredibly ancient, long and inflexible Sondre Telemark XC skis, together with leather boots and met Fiona by the canal bridge after work. We skimmed along the snowy towpath, each pole thrust yielding metres of glide. Having crossed the road by Tesco we headed up through the trees by

Craiglockhart Pond, with just enough snow on the path to allow us to keep our skis on. The golf course was coated with thick, fresh powdery snow, some of it still falling in intense bursts. The XC skis were fine for this undulating terrain. Just don't try to turn quickly. Back along the path and canal and in not much more than an hour we felt we'd had a night out!

I could see a weather window appearing from Wednesday 10th to the weekend; before it all was due to melt in stormy conditions! Unfortunately, a Zoom meeting kept me at my desk until lunchtime, after which I drove to Swanston to see the last snow flurries drift away revealing soft snowy mounds where once the Pentlands had been...

The car park was mounded with snow, so thank goodness for winter tyres! I could ski from the car, through the village and up the track on fresh snow. I met Alan Yardley skiing down. We briefly chatted before he strongly advised me to get up there asap before the light went! Arrival at the summit of Allermuir was greeted by a gentle breeze and gaggles of skiers and boarders, several of whose number disappeared once more over the southern horizon. I figured the best route for me was down the west side to the Dreghorn track. So it proved: the snow was barely tracked, perfect deep powder. I don't think I mouthed anything out loud, but someone coming up the hill whooped as I telemarked down like a leaf on a stream (or so it felt). What to do but go back up and repeat? Just as transcendent the second time!



The Dream

By now, the sun was close to setting and I needed to get back down. Once more over Allermuir, then a weightless twilight glide down over the pillowy humps and bumps and along the Swanston track to the old golf course (and another yo-yo, illuminated by the streetlights of Edinburgh). Finally, a ski in last light through the Christmas card village, over the footbridge and through the trees right up to the car and a waiting thermos. Perfection in 2.5hrs. I could die here without regret.

The last hurrah of the season was three days later on Saturday. The forecast was for it to crap out later, so I joined Andy Follis early on the No.10 Lothian (Ski) Bus to Bonaly. Skis were donned at the A720 bridge and we skinned up the track through the trees to the top of Capelaw Hill, where the wind was blowing stiffly. Here we met two different groups of familiar skiers plus Ros Clancy on her snowshoes, all converging at the same time! After skiing down on reasonable snow and attempting another descent on deceptively catchy snow (i.e. falling over), we decided to traverse east towards Allermuir (again!). As we ate our sandwiches the clouds began to disperse, and the sun came out. Buoyed up by this we continued our traverse round the east side of Capelaw to the Dreghorn track where we bumped into Alan Yardley and Ken Crocker (and everyone else from Edinburgh with skis). The sun was riding across a blue sky and suffice it to say that the west face of Allermuir was once again the place to be: three times in a row. Much more tracked than Wednesday (it was like a ski resort up there!) the snow had not transformed and was still powder (if a little heavier).



Shredding the Piste

Andy and I bade goodbye to Ken and Alan and traversed out on the slopes above the Dreghorn track to Green Craig. We then picked our way back across the mounds of snowy hillside to a tight little downslope with gorse patches, down to an awkward burn crossing and through the trees to skate back to Swanston and a walk to Morrisons to catch the No.27 (Ski) Bus home.

On the Sunday the bright start quickly deteriorated as winds and temperatures picked up, clouds descended, and the Great Hairdryer of God began to wipe away the winter. I was snug in my flat.

Epilogue

What to make of all this? First to thank the planners and politicians for including a good chunk of the Pentland Hills within the boundary of 'City' of Edinburgh. Secondly, as long as you didn't look at any reports from the Highlands, then under the circumstances we had it good. Very good. It reminded me of the 'Great Winters' of 2009/10 and 2010/11 but in all honesty the snow quality this time round and the number of days with good snow lying in the Pentlands exceeded those. It was an unlooked-for bonus at a grim time, and I can only hope for a repeat (or ten) before I skin up to the great piste in the sky...

Winter Mountain Biking During 2021 Lockdown

By Karl Zeiner

Bikes and snow may seem like an odd combination but they go better together than one might think. The fatter the tyre the better the ride.

I only own a pair of downhill skis which is not ideal for a trip to the Pentland Hills with the only uplift available on a dry ski slope rendering the more fun part of the Pentlands inaccessible on skis for me. Alan who spent a fair bit of the snowy lockdown winter of 2021 skiing the Pentlands did ask me one day if I fancied carrying my downhill skis up the Pentland Hills for some skiing. That sounded like a lot of hard work for very little fun to me.

January and February 2020 saw some amazing snow conditions and very calm weather in Scotland and thus also in the Pentland Hills, just outside Edinburgh. With the Alps and the Highlands inaccessible due to travel restrictions, the Pentlands were busy with skiers, walkers, runners and to a smaller extent mountain bikers.

Skiing wasn't possible for me and running didn't work either due to injury it was either walking or mountain biking. The benefit of mountain biking is that you can go further afield assuming the same starting point. As I don't have a car (also unwilling to add further to the overused car parks) and wasn't really using the buses during this stage of the pandemic either everything started from the front door.

What follows are short accounts of 4 amazing mountain bike days in the snow in the Pentlands during the winter of 2021.

In my photo album I titled these blue sky snow days. You can see why from the pictures. The first 2 trips were done with Alan Yardley, both midweek on a spur of the moment based on the forecast being calm, cold and sunny.

The first one of those was on January 8, a Friday, after we had some fresh overnight snow. I put my Ice Spiker tyres on for this as I was expecting some ice too. This proved to be the case early on, such as along the canal and the water of Leith but when we were in the hills proper, they didn't serve any purpose. On the contrary, they slowed me down. The tyres are thinner than the ones Alan was using and had a different tread pattern meaning that I would dig into the snow more than he did and so ended up pushing more.

After a brief excursion onto the ice sheet that lay on Threipmuir Reservoir we made our way up to Hare Hill. Well walked tracks rode well, tracks where walkers had been less caused us a fair bit of frustration. Our route from Hare Hill to Green Cleugh was one of those frustrations. The descent into Green Cleugh was great though. We then skirted round Black Hill and onto Harbour where we found another stretch of track that too few people had walked on – yet.

As the sun was started to get low in the sky the light turned the snow into a beautiful orange as we headed back into town.



Alan Riding on Threipmuir



Approaching the Exponential



Descending into Green Cleugh



Only 4 days later, on January 12, we were on our way again. Some more fresh snow for some more amazing winter scenes. The tracks had been bedded in a bit more, I had chosen to leave the spikes at home and be on similar tyres to Alan. This time we chose to go over Capelaw and down to the waterfall below Glencourse Reservoir. The return leg from there took us over Phantoms Cleugh and Bonaly Reservoir. With both the snow bedded down and the ground pretty solid a lot of what would normally be pretty unrideable in winter due to muddy or boggy conditions was very rideable and fun. It was overall a shorter ride so less low sunlight for warm late afternoon colours this time.



12 days later, on January 24th I headed out with David Hoyle after we had yet more snow. An early afternoon start this time saw us finish in the fading sunlight. We took on a pretty traditional route roughly up via the Harlaw and Threipmuir Reservoirs and then through Green Cleugh to return over Phantom's Cleugh and drop down to Dreghorn. It was slushy in places and we struggled at times but another blue-sky snow day made for an awesome day out.



Riding up Phantoms

Finally in the 2nd week of February the best of the Pentland Snow the temperatures well below freezing. On February 12th I went out with my friend John-Sebastian. It was a day later than the best of the snow but made it better for mountain biking as walkers had bedded down the snow for us to get a good ride in. This didn't apply to all the route as we struggled our way across the side of Harbour Hill. Skis would definitely have been better here where the snow had drifted and no one had walked. This ride we stayed on the northern flanks of the Pentlands coming up through Swanston, skirting round Capelaw and Harbour Hill before dropping down from Maiden's Cleugh back towards the Water of Leith Path.



The hardgoing snow drift



Pushing up the Side of Capelaw

The Pentland snow could be enjoyed by many during the 2021 lockdown in so many ways. As I wasn't running and skiing wasn't an option the mountain biking was a great way for me to enjoy the snow. It also meant I could head there from the doorstep without adding another car to the overfilling car parks and I could steer clear from the buses too.

The Best Laid Plans

By John Sanders

Part 1 - failure

If it's a mountain, or a climb then everyone wants to get to the top. If they're running a river then they want to get to the bottom. When we set a goal, it has an end result. If that end result is not met, then we think of the whole thing as a failure - "we failed to reach the summit" or "we failed to run the rapid."

So, we had a goal. We planned to hike the Royal Arch Trail, clockwise from the South Bass trailhead, down to the Tonto trail, then loop back up the South Bass Trail to return to the trailhead. Everyone does it clockwise to accommodate a mandatory 40 foot abseil.

It is 31.5 miles from the end of the tarmac road at the Grand Canyon Village, to the South Bass trailhead. We planned to cycle this section out and back. We figured our total weight would be approx. fifty kilos, made up of camping gear, abseil kit, grub, and of course emergency medicine, like whisky and wine. We accepted that we couldn't ride 63 miles out and back with that kind of weight on our backs. It was going to be hard enough carrying the packs for the 38 miles of the actual hike.

Enter our new panniers, a birthday pressie for yours truly. We had our permit and were good to go. The day before we were due to leave, I cycled ten miles in, to check the first part of the trail, which was written up as high clearance, four-wheel drive only.

It wasn't.

I zipped in and out in one hour forty-six minutes on my hybrid. Sure, it was a bit rough, plenty of washboarding, with sand and mud. But defo not high clearance. Change of plan. We decided to drive Vera the van, as far as we could down the four-wheel drive only track, see how far she could get, and then cycle the rest. I tested the panniers that afternoon, everything worked OK. Sadly, I hadn't loaded them at that point, which was to prove a bad mistake.

We left the tarmac just outside of Grand Canyon village the next morning at first light, just after 06.00. It took Vera two and a half hours to negotiate all the obstacles and get eighteen miles down the four-wheel drive track - go girl....

We found a great parking spot, had some breakfast, loaded up and locked the van. I got on my bike and then fell off. The amount of weight in the Panniers was pulling them forward where they caught my heels as I pedalled. We tried tying them back, adjusting them, putting them on the upper rail, or the lower rail. Nothing worked.

We unloaded the panniers and put all our good shit in our packs. I was carrying just a little more than Al, maybe 26kg, she had 24kg. So strong shout by her, given the difference in our size. We had a time window to be out by Friday, just five days away, when snow and sleet were forecast. Once the mud trail we'd driven in on got wet, then Vera would defo be stranded. So, I was thinking as I walked along the track for the first mile or so - we had to hike an extra 13 ½ miles to get to the start of our 38 mile walk. Then we had an additional 13 ½ miles to walk at the end, to get back out to Vera. The 38 mile hike is classified as the most difficult on the South Rim. Most people take a minimum of five days just to do that. We were attempting to hike 65 miles in the same time other folks hiked 38. It was hot. The arthritis in my left foot was complaining about the weight. It was already 13.20 in the afternoon.

I called it.

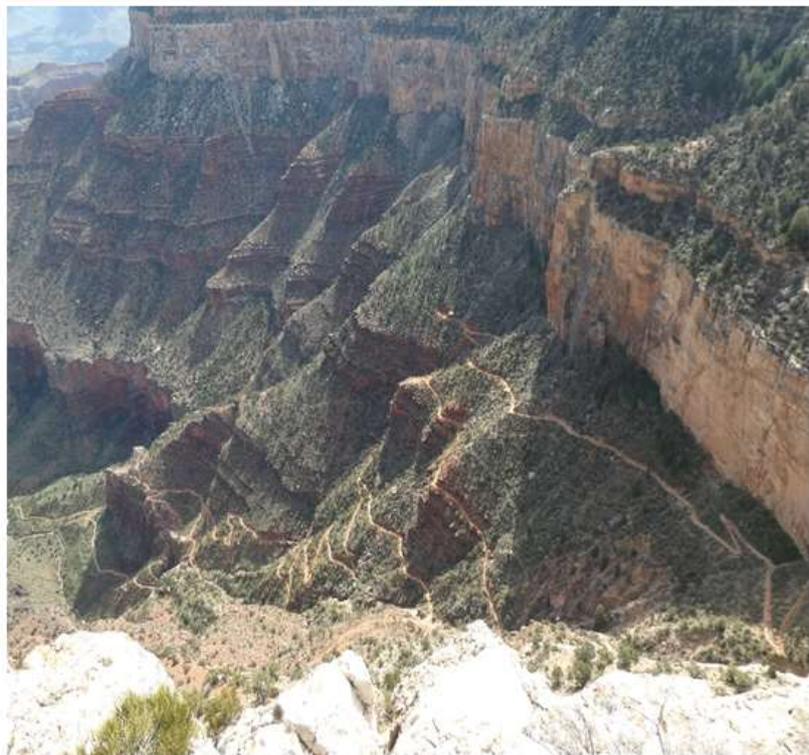
Al was not a happy bunny. She was still convinced that if we put our heads down we could manage it. An average of 16.25 miles per day, with approx. 9,000 to 9,200 feet of uppy-downy.

We operate a system of veto. If one of us feels that we are entering a position that is unacceptable due to the risk involved, then the veto is exercised. We'll never know if she was right and we could have made it. We turned back. We drove Vera back to just outside the National Park boundary and wild camped in a beautiful spot, consoling ourselves with cold beer.

I kept asking myself, "did we fail?" I decided, you can't win every battle, what's important is that you fought....

Part 2 - if at first you don't succeed...

We were at the National Park permit office when it opened the following morning (Sunday), where we were greeted by Alyson the ranger. We explained our situation, hoping she would be able to recommend a shuttle service that could take us out to the trailhead. She told us there wasn't one. No one was prepared to risk running a shuttle out there because of the road condition. She also confirmed that bad weather was indeed coming in on Friday, so we didn't have the time to do that hike now anyway.



Looking down the descent trail

"Can we swap our permit for a different hike?" we asked. She was brilliant. Despite the fact that the South Rim is always extremely busy, and that this was high season, she put together an itinerary that she thought might work, albeit with longer days than she usually recommended. It went as follows –

- Day 1 - Hike the Bright Angel trail down to the Tonto trail. Then hike the Tonto trail to Salt Creek. Twelve and a half miles: two hundred meters of uppy: twelve hundred meters of down. It took us seven and a half hours. This was an amazing descent through changing and entirely different landscapes. Steep zigzags at the top, levelling out to a flat valley, lush with vegetation quite unusual for the desert. Followed by a traverse across open, arid, broken country, around deep-cut, side canyons. The camp was beautiful, totally quiet with stunning views.

- Day 2 - From Salt Creek we traversed the remaining five miles and dropped down to the Colorado river. We set up camp right next to the river at Granite Rapids. We planned to stay two nights, with a rest day on the Wednesday. Occasionally rafters would come whooping down the falls. We waved. Apart from that we saw no one for two days.



Our camp on day 2 – on the beach next to the river

- Day 4 - Hike out day. Back up Monument Creek to the Tonto trail. Traverse around to Hermit Trail, then straight up to the rim. Ten point three miles. Fifteen hundred meters of uppy, over some pretty rough terrain. I'd set my goal at seven and a half to eight hours for the ascent. In reality it took me nine hours ten minutes, which was disappointing. I need to be moving a lot better than that to have any chance of climbing Cathedral Peak in August.

So, did we fail? Well, we didn't get to Royal Arch. It's easy to say we hit some serious technical issues, but the truth is, better prep would probably have avoided that.

Did we do our best?

Under the circumstances we could not have done more on the day. Also, we had fun. We spent four days travelling some amazing wild country, in the desert. One of my favourite places on this planet.

We updated the 'lessons learned' book. [1] Don't buy a cheap panier rack from Walmart. [2] Don't just fit the paniers to the rack – load them as well, to see how they perform, under stress. [3] Regardless of how much you want to do something, always leave some 'sods law' wiggle time.

But what we did achieve, was good enough to be called an adventure, and I'll drink to that....



Lochdown (sic) Walk Report

By Graham Pearson, 11 Apr 2021

The Mission:

Bag all eight lochs in Edinburgh.

The Inspiration:

Someone posted a "Lochdown" cycle route, visiting all the lochs in Edinburgh, in the Spokes Facebook group. Which seemed a good basis for a lockdown walk.

The Route:

From home in Dalry, along the canal to CRAIGLOCKHART POND. Over Easter Craiglockhart Hill, then via Hermitage of Braid and over the shoulder of Blackford Hill to BLACKFORD POND. Over the summit of Blackford Hill (just because), then roughly following the Braid Burn and Figgate Burn to FIGGATE POND. Back up Figgate Burn then along Duddingston Road to DUDDINGSTON LOCH. Up Jacob's Ladder to DUNSAPIE LOCH. Over the shoulder of Whinny Hill - and through a hailstorm - to ST MARGARET'S LOCH. Via streets to LOCHEND LOCH. Along the Leith New Lines cycleway to Easter Road then via streets, Pilrig Park (and past my previous workplace :- () and up the Water of Leith to INVERLEITH POND. Continue up the Water of Leith to Dean Village then home along streets to Dalry for a well-deserved hot chocolate.

The Stats:

Steps: 36,622; distance: 31km; ascent: 464m; moving time: 5h48; total time: 6h54.

What Was Good? (1)

Discovering places on the East side of the city which were completely new to me.

What Was Good? (2)

This walk combined two of my favourite things: bagging and puns.

Hazards On the Route:

COVIDiots who think the reason people are keeping a safe distance apart is so that they can squeeze through the gap. Figgate Park seemed to be unusually infested with them; even worse than the runners on the canal towpath. I'm not sure how this could have been mitigated: perhaps by fending them off with the pointed end of a Leki pole, or by not showering for a month or two beforehand!

What Would I Do Differently?

Research. I saw a list of all the lochs in Edinburgh and I believed it; as soon as I posted my route on Facebook, I was inundated with people pointing out lochs and ponds which I had omitted. Some, like Elf Loch on the South side of the Braid Hills, were annoyingly close to my route, but others were well off my route in places like Granton. I did have an idea to mop them up with a second Lochdown walk, which I might resurrect if we need a third lockdown.



Heron in Lochend Loch

What Did I Learn? (1)

There are more than eight lochs in Edinburgh. Don't believe anything written by randoms on the internet.

What Did I Learn? (2)

This is more of a general lockdown learning: Edinburgh has a fine network of paths, but it is amazing how many mostly off-road routes across the city pass through the same few bottlenecks. I don't know how many times I traversed Easter Craiglockhart Hill or used the same bridge in Craigmillar to cross the Sub, not due to any desire to visit them that day (though I'm sure Craigmillar is a lovely place) but just because they were the most practical link from one path to another.



Lochdown Walk Route

My post-lockdown obsession – confessions of a backpacking addict

by Ros Clancy

Lockdown eased in late April and like most of us I shot out to the hills like a rat out of a drainpipe. There was the long-planned early-May bank holiday weekend camping at Big Sands Gairloch with friends, but this barely scratched the surface. With restrictions still in place on households and group gatherings, and pressure on bookings for campsites and accommodation, something more was needed. I found my thoughts turning to backpacking weekends as a way of going when and where I wanted without having to book anything, and, in particular, a longing to go up as high as possible to camp. There was a lot to get out of the system.

Actually, I hadn't backpacked for years. The mid May weather looked showery but it looked like the far north west might just get away with it. I settled on Fisherfield for my first foray, but couldn't persuade anyone else to join me, admittedly at short notice. I started a kit spreadsheet and weighed everything - what was the bare minimum I could get away with. I decided on a basecamp option – walk in to Fionn Loch from Poolewe and camp for a couple of nights. I felt



Walking in to Fisherfield in May

I felt slightly nervous about going on my own but the fears melted away as soon as I set off. I found a great campsite right beside the loch – the next day I headed up the Munros A 'Mhaighdean and Ruadh Stac Mor, adding in the Corbett Beinn a' Chaisgein Mor. On top of the Corbett, I realised what an amazing spot this might be for a summit camp and noted for future reference. I was up super-early the next morning to bag the Graham Meall Mheinnidh before walking out on Sunday. This was great and I felt great. I wanted to do it again.

So I did, very soon after. This time I wanted to camp high up. I had a week's holiday in a house at Durness coming up at the end of May and the weather looked good. I thought I'd go a day early and camp on the top of Ben Hope. In the intervening couple of weeks, I had reviewed my kit from the first trip. Mostly pretty good, I thought, but I did take too much food and I found a few ways to shave some grams here and there. This turned out to be an expensive exercise as I bought a new lighter weight tent and Thermarest and a more comfortable rucksack. So, with my new fine-tuned set up, I



Summit Camp sunset on Ben Hope

headed up to the Far North. Although it was gloriously sunny it was going to be windy in the evening – I hadn't actually practiced putting up the new tent so did so by the car before I set off, realising that a summit camp in the wind would not give much margin for error. On the way water needed to be collected

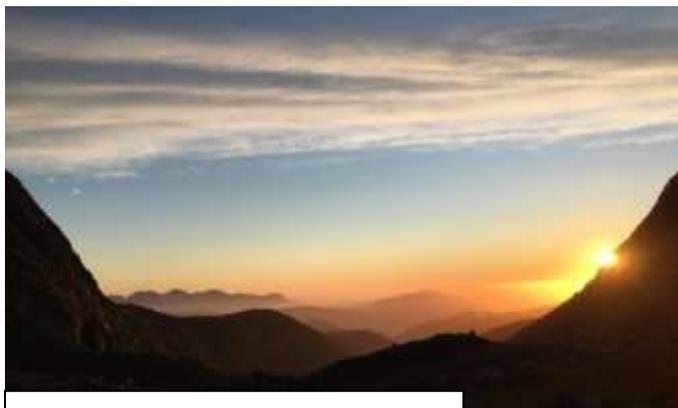
and carried up making it a tough climb. But it was worth it.

A stunning promontory campsite with views of Foinaven, Arkle, Ben Loyal and out beyond the North Coast. A beautiful sunset. Not much sleep during a breezy night so I got up just before dawn and capered around in my thermals photographing the moon rising to the south, and then the dawn light gradually illuminating Foinaven and Ben Loyal. The wind died down and I dozed in the early morning sunshine, packing up in complete stillness on the summit.

So now I was hooked, and this is what I wanted to do. The trips followed in quick succession over the summer. I became evangelical about the experience of camping high and was sometimes successful in recruiting companions. I packed in three weekend trips in June. Ben Avon with Margaret, walking in from Tomintoul, which was a new way for me, and taking in the various tors. We camped up on the plateau and then returned via the Graham Cnap Chaochan Atinn and Glen Loin. A fine walk. After the first club meet at the Elphin Hut, a further opportunity presented itself and I tacked on a Dears back pack, heading up Eididh nan Clach Geala and over Meall nan Ceapraichean to camp at the high col at the head of Gleann na Sguaib. I was glad of a small tent that could just about be sandwiched amongst the many boulders. In the evening I wandered up Beinn Dearg itself and Cona Mheall before settling down to watch the sun set over An Teallach as I cooked some pasta. Really, this was the best ever. In



High camp on Ben Avon



Sunset view from Beinn Dearg Col

the morning, I woke to a cloud inversion, the mist rolling over the col, parting occasionally to reveal Beinn Dearg clear in the sunshine. I reassured folk I met as I headed down that they would be rewarded with summit views. The month ended with a fantastic 11th hour trip with Sally and Alan, having managed to devise a route that would provide new Munros and Corbetts for my companions. From Craig on Friday evening, we headed up for a stunning camp just below the summit of

the Corbett Sgurr nan Feartaig – flat, spongy dry moss, water

supply and a Torridon and Skye panorama so we gave it 'ten out of ten'. The next day we headed on over Feartaig to Bealach Bearnais and dumped our packs to head up the Corbett Beinn Tharsuinn before backpacking over the Munros Sgurr Choinnich and Sgurr a Chaorachain, wandering on to the summit of Bidean an Eoin Deirg to look in to Loch Monar, before heading down into Pollan Buidhe as a heavy rainshower passed through. Thunderstorms were forecast for Sunday evening so we nipped up Maol Luinndie then packed up and headed out, not quickly enough



Sally and Alan on Surr Choinnich

as 20 mins from the car a huge bolt of lightning crashed over Moruisg and we were caught in a torrential downpour of biblical proportions.

In July the backpacking odyssey continued. I was keen to camp high up in the Cairngorms again for my birthday but the weather was very windy so I modified my plans and went for a basecamp option instead, heading in to Derry Lodge on Friday for a couple of nights. After pitching, I headed up Carn a Mhaim that evening just as the wind was picking up. Saturday would be the windiest day. I'd head up



High Camp on Beinn a Chasgein Mhor

to Coire Etchachan and if it wasn't too bad, go up MacDui and Ben Mheadhoin. It was bad and I could barely stand just crossing the stream at the coire mouth. Instead, I carried on into the Shelter Stone and along the shore of Loch Avon, up the Munro top A' Coinneach of Bynack Mor, and then over to the falls of Avon before returning to Derry lodge via Lairig an Laoigh. The next morning the wind had died down and I popped up

Bein Bhreac before heading out. The following weekend was forecast to be hot and sunny. I

was heading to Inver for a 3 household meet and Guy was attending too. He needed Beinn a' Chaisgein Mor, and I persuaded him that it was the perfect opportunity for an overnight camp at that wonderful

spot I found in May. He did need a bit of persuading as, quite rightly, he noticed that it would be necessary to lug water up to the summit. Minor details. I brushed concerns aside, waxing lyrical about the flat dry spongy moss and the view to An Teallach, and he was in. I'd even brought an extra 2 litre Playtypus bladder to ensure that lack of water carriers could not be an obstacle. We left a car at Gruinard Bay and then drove to Corrie Hallie, walking in past Shenaval, Guy puzzling over how come my backpack was a fraction lighter than his (answer: it was his much heavier



Sunset from Beinn a Chasgein Mhor

Trangia stove). It was seriously hot, and a bathe was required to try to cool down. We reached the foot of Beinn a' Chaisgein Mor at tea time and began the ascent following a stream. The stream petered out and the dreaded water carry loomed. We loaded up and headed on. The effects of the heat had taken their toll on Guy whilst I in contrast was full of renewed energy, fuelled by the excitement of realising my plan. Of course, it was all worth it and no refunds were required. The high-level camp was as described, there was a fabulous sunset followed by a bonus full red moon rise over A' Mhaighdean, and topped off in the early morning by sunrise over An Teallach. Guy was a happy bunny. And on our route out I could bag the Graham Beinn a' Chaisgein Beag. It was a top trip.

My last backpack of the season was the icing on the cake. I still wanted to camp high up in the Cairngorms, and finally the right weather presented itself at the end of August. The route I had really



High camp on Macdui cloud inversion

wanted to do was the Cairngorm 4,000's. I set off from the ski carpark on Friday afternoon, heading through the Chalamain Gap and up on to Braeriach. The weather was beautiful and I enjoyed the evening light on the summit before heading on to my much longed-for camp at the Wells of Dee. It did not disappoint, and I loved that feeling of being so high up on the vast expanse of plateau. In the morning I headed on over Cairn Toul, Angels Peak and, dumping the bag, the Devils Point, then down into the Lairig Ghru and up towards Ben Macdui by

the Clach nan Taillear. I wasn't sure exactly where I was going to camp that night, but as I reached the plateau top

at the head of the stream, a man clad only in his underpants who had set up camp, waved and asked if I was planning to camp here too. I wasn't. I did fill up with water for the night though. I soon reached the summit and as I started to head down through the boulder fields I spotted a small area that might just accommodate a tent and set up for the night. At just below 1,300m it was my highest

campsite so far with a fine view across to Ben Mheadhoin. At dawn, banks of cloud rolled in but I was above them and enjoyed the cloud inversion with Mheadhoin rising above, and the cloud rolling over the shoulders of Braeriach, before heading over to Cairn Gorm and back down to the car park.



High camp on Macdui cloud inversion

I feel very proud of all my post-lockdown backpacks during the summer. They gave me an exhilarating feeling of freedom and liberation after the stressful effects of lockdown but were also a more personal journey of taking responsibility for myself and feeling independent. It's a journey I plan to continue and there will be more.

Climbing Scottish Sea Stacks

By Stuart McLeod

I have been fascinated by sea stacks since first seeing the Old Man of Stoer and Am Buachaille during trips to the far North West. It is easy to see why they were such an attractive challenge for climbers back in the day: standing as proud impenetrable looking bastions, surrounded by an unpredictable moat of sea. They even look like they are goading you on by giving you the middle finger. In addition to the Old Man of Stoer and Am Buachaille, the Old Man of Hoy completes the trilogy of 'classic' Scottish Sea stacks that may be enjoyed.

Am Buachaille (The Shepherd)

Ewan Paterson was holidaying with his partner in Kinlochbervie in the summer of 2019, and asked if I would like to join him for a trip up Am Buachaille: a caper not to be missed. Am Buachaille is a 65m tall sandstone sea stack at the Southern end of Sandwood Bay. It has the most complex approach of the three classic sea stacks; a descent down a slope of choss, a slippery scramble along a tidal beach, followed by a brief swim. This must be done out and back, as well as the climbing itself, during a time window around low tide. This gives the excursion the feel of an escape mission against the inevitable tide. The climbing on the landward side of the stack is technically the easiest way up at VS, but it has a reputation for being loose and sandy. The Atlantic Wall route offers slightly harder climbing at E1, but on more reputable rock, so we opted in favour of this route. The first ascensionists of this route were very reputable climbers, but I noted that they became stranded on the



summit during the first ascent, due to being cut off by the high tide and rough seas. We had our doubts about the quality of the accommodation options on the top of the stack, so we decided to play it cautious and get to the headland well before low tide and get across at the earliest opportunity. When we arrived at the headland opposite the stack, we could see that the tide had just cleared the beach leaving the path open to the narrow channel that separates Am Buachaille from the mainland. The approach beach is comprised of very slippery boulders so plenty time should be allowed to cross this and prepare for the swim. The swim itself is brief and you only need your 10m swimming badge to manage it. It is possible to wade out on a submerged platform then thrash across the remaining narrow channel. Still, being rubbish at swimming and knowing nothing about currents, we took buoyancy aids and an old rope to minimise the risk of needing the coast guard.



The climbing itself on the Atlantic Wall is relatively straightforward as a three pitch E1. The first pitch seemed to be the crux, with slightly delicate climbing followed by a fine traverse out onto an excellent belay position on the seaward face, where you perch above the waves coming in from the Atlantic.

The second pitch is an overhang followed by some pleasant climbing up the arete in a superb position, and the third pitch is a relatively mellow, well protected crack to the summit. From the top there are beautiful views over to Sandwood Bay and onwards to Cape Wrath. We made good time so spent some time on top taking in the unusual position. Descent was quick by means of a single abseil and it was just getting to low tide when we got down, leaving plenty time to swim the channel and retrace our steps.



Me on Pitch 1



Ewan at the top – Sandwood behind

Even though the trip went smoothly in the end with plenty margin for the tide, it was easy to see how small mistakes or issues could easily escalate into a maritime palaver. So, I still think it is important to treat this outing with respect and plan well to avoid an epic.

Old Man of Stoer

In late April 2021 Tim Elson and I travelled to the Far North West for post lockdown climbing and we headed straight to the Old Man of Stoer. This old man is 60m high and is around 10 miles North-West of Lochinver and just east of the Stoer Head Lighthouse. The approach to the Old Man of Stoer is not so constrained by the tide as Am Buachaille but is still involved. The approach is down a slope of choss and scrambling ground directly opposite the stack. At the base, there is a narrow channel which may be swum to reach the stack. It is then customary to put a Tyrolean traverse rope in place to bring across the rest of the party, the climbing kit and to enable a pseudo-dry return journey. Since Tim likes swimming even less than I do, I swam across and Tim setup some sturdy Tyrolean anchors on the landward side – the corresponding in situ cluster of pegs at the base of the stack has the look of a shambles about it. I had never used a Tyrolean before and it looked precarious and bizarre to me, and I was heartily amused by Tim's crossing.



First-off we set about climbing the Original Route which is an improbable looking VS that goes up the SW face. Tim led the crux which is a short, and sometimes greasy, traverse from the Tyrolean anchor



on the landward face round onto a big ledge on the SW face. The route then follows a cunning line up the steep face which involves some balancing round ledges to avoid roofs and take the edge off the steepness. We found the rock on the Old Man of Stoer to be the best among the three classic sea stacks: another couple of pleasant pitches lead to the summit where beautiful views up and down the coast may be enjoyed. Since the climb up the Original Route had been brief, we had the stack to ourselves and we could return over the Tyrolean, we decided to do another route. The Diamond Face route is an E1 which takes a direct line up the

same face as the Original Route and shares the same first pitch. However, at low tide the first pitch may be avoided by performing a scrambling circumnavigation of the base of the stack which is a nice thing to do in any case to explore the stack a little and get a better appreciation of its structure. The Diamond Face route involves some beautiful and varied climbing. I started off with a steep fist-jamming crack followed by a wall and pod leading to a cave belay with pleasant views. The second pitch is then comprised of a roof, grooves and corner once again to the summit. We thought the



climbing on the Diamond Face route to be better than the Original Route and it is worthwhile doing both if time and stack occupancy allow.

By the time we returned to shore on the Tyrolean, the tide had risen somewhat. The sag in our particular Tyrolean setup being sufficient to give no clearance above the sea in the centre, but thankfully not enough for a full dunking. Frankly, the swim was quicker, easier and more pleasant: more practice with this system needed for me anyway. All in all, it was a beautiful day out and felt like going cragging on nice rock in a very special location.



Old Man of Hoy

The Old Man of Hoy lies on the West coast of Hoy, Orkney, and is twice as tall as the other two classic sea stacks at 137m. I had never been to Orkney, but I'd been relishing the trip up there for a while. In the summer of 2021 Tim Elson happened to be on holiday with his partner on Orkney: so, a plan was hatched.

Fellow climbers, Tom and Aaron, picked me up and drove us to Latheronwheel, about 20 miles south of Thurso, where we were reliably informed there was a pleasant place to overnight. The following morning, we took the ferry from Scrabster to Stromness, some enjoying the customary fry-up more than others given the swell. The ferry passes the Old Man mid journey just to whet the appetite. We drove from Stromness down to Kirkwall where we enjoyed some further breakfast rolls. En-route we visited the ring of Brodgar where we briefly learned about Neolithic people from the friendly warden. We then met with Tim at Houton where we would take the second ferry across to Lyness on Hoy.

A retired fisherman from Stromness approached us here and it was great to talk to him about his lifetime of crazy adventures at sea. He suspected that we were up to something and seemed glad of some nutters to talk to following an apparent scarcity during lockdown. Upon landing on Hoy, it was a relatively brief drive over to Rackwick bay: I loved staying there, it seemed like the end of the Earth after the journey. The forecast was good for the following day, so we walked into the Old Man of Hoy to check out the approach and have a look around before starting the climb the following morning.

Unlike, the other two classic sea stacks, the Old Man of Hoy is not separated from the land by the sea, there is a ridge heading out to it: no swimming. However, it makes up for this 'shortcoming' in other ways.



It is a beautiful stack and location.

Tim led up the first pitch which was a nice pitch on the left arete of the landward face. I then started the crux pitch which was as odd an E1 5b pitch as I have led. It starts with a down climb to a ledge which I soon noticed was covered in a lot of wet sand. I naively thought that there would be no wet sand on the steep section, however, this was not to be the case. Nevertheless, the climbing was at first reasonably easy despite the sand, and it was of historic interest to pass a wooden block hammered into a crack as protection. I headed, with care, up through the 'coffin' to the crux move at the exit. I had encountered some sand on routes before, but this seemed of a different order: the wet sand caked my hands and boots upon using each hold. I found that chalk desiccated the sand so that it fell off my hands, leaving just the boots caked, which was a blessing. The crux move out of the coffin was well protected with large cams. Overall it seemed a poor choice of situation for taking a fall, so I spent a time





figuring out which foot holds could be rammed secure even with sand caked boots. Eventually I committed to a couple of fist jams and mantled left to surmount the crux. The wide crack which followed, relented to easy bridging on the way up to the belay, which I was glad to reach. The next two pitches were relatively straight forward as long as some care was taken to avoid being vomited on by the few resident Fulmars. The fifth pitch to the top is a pleasant VS pitch and it felt great to feel the wind blowing through the cleft that spits the stack in two in its upper section: what a place to be. The top itself is a loose crazy paving style setup with some in-situ tat to abseil off. There were also some photogenic puffins hanging about up there.

We made 2 abseils to the top of the crux pitch and we had understood that it was possible to abseil to the base using 60m ropes from there, albeit on the stretch of the rope. Given the free nature of the abseil, it was a relief to touch down. All in all, it is an amazing part of the world and I thought it a privilege to climb the Old Man of Hoy.



Diary of summer holidays to Bidein A'Choire Sheasgaich.

By Catherine Jones

Monday 26th July 2021

Drove from Edinburgh to Achnashellach. Swift lunch and then walked up to Bealach Bhearnais. Generally very sunny, all tops clear of cloud. Put up the tent. Dropped rucksack at campsite resulting in punctured tin of beer. Thankfully drybags work in these situations. Pleasant dinner with a good view and beer. However, lots of clegs flying about. It is noted that there are no antihistamines in the first aid kit.

Tuesday, 25th July 2021.

Awoke to see midges between the flysheet and the tent, and a wall of midges congregating at the door of the tent. Exit tent into sea of midges. Attempt to boil water for breakfast. Stove is black with a swarm of midges. First pan of water falls off the stove. Second pan of water boils. Hastily drink tea and then run away up Beinn Tharsuinn, while suffering mega-midge induced all over body itch. Desperately wishing there were antihistamines in the first aid kit.

Midge situation improves greatly on the ascent of Beinn Tharsuinn. Eat a midge-free second breakfast. Descend off Beinn Tharsuinn to the south and contemplate direct ascent up the north ridge of Bidein A' Choire Sheasgaich. Unable to see all of the route up and wary of ending up on some vertical, wet, chossy face of doom, we go around to the coire and can see a way up onto the ridge above Sail Riabhach. The weather is very humid; clegs very bitey. We get onto the ridge dripping in sweat, with multiple cleg bites. Ascend up onto the top of Bidein A'Choire Sheasgaich. Wind drops: midges come out. No view: low cloud (to be fair I didn't get a view from the top of the Wildspitze either, but at least there were no biting insects up there).

Wind picks up, and sun comes out as we go towards Lurg Mhor, with a view and no midges or clegs. The sort of situation where people forget that they could not get a cup of tea that morning without being eaten alive by midges and say things like "Why would you want to go anywhere else?". Descend to the western end of Loch Calavie. Add up kilometres back to the tent: short story it's a long way and uphill but there is a good path until the final 2 km.

Weather gets darker, thunder starts, it starts raining. There are frogs everywhere (eating midges, hopefully). Continue upwards. Path ends. Rain starts. Finally give in and put on waterproofs. Get back to the tent. It is still raining. Boil water. Midges are still bad. Water boils. Midges get worse: too bad to eat outside. Pour water onto "delicious" instant macaroni cheese. Hastily get into the tent. Remove damp clothing. Eat dinner in underpants, while simultaneously suffering mega-midge-induced body itch. Put on dry clothes. Go to bed. It is still raining.

Wednesday 28th July.

No midges visible at door of tent. Open tent door. Midge infestation begins again. Give up all hope of the planned multi-day back-packing trip. Pack rucksacks while inhaling midges, deconstruct tent, inhale more midges, run away back down to the car. Telephone my parents (in Inverness) from public toilets at Achnasheen, asking if we can please get a shower and dry the tent? I miss the Alps.

Tranter Round

by Cat McGill

I first heard of the Tranter round when I saw its squiggly loop - and big numbers! - pop up in my Strava feed in the summer of 2020. After a few years of doing flat-ish ultras - and enjoying them less and less - I had been thinking about attempting some more ambitious runs in the hills. I'd always enjoyed the longer and more challenging hill races, and somewhere deep down I wanted to try something harder, but I didn't believe that I could really do it. I had watched a few friends complete some awe-inspiring sky races, and I secretly wished I had the courage and confidence to try something like that.

While for years I had deliberately refused to put any kind of metrics or measurements on my outdoor activities, I succumbed to a Black Friday-inspired smart watch purchase in 2019 and then joined Strava in the early days of lockdown. As I watched other people's mountain running adventures pour across my feed in summer 2020, a little bug wormed its way under my skin. And finally, one day, after much hemming and hawing, I got in touch with a running friend and personal trainer to talk about doing some serious mountain running.

The first thing that Jill asked me was, what is your goal? I cringed and shied away from the question. I was reticent to set a goal that I didn't think I could achieve. I also wasn't sure I actually needed to set a goal that felt unachievable, as that's not really how I find motivation. So I said, well, I want to run in the mountains. I want to have the mountain skills, strength and confidence to explore big hill routes while moving quickly and lightly. Ok, said Jill, but still, why don't you set a goal? Why don't you try something like the Tranter round? I cringed again and said, very hesitantly, well, let's start and I'll think about it.

Jill gave me a training plan for a month, and off I went. In the first weeks, 3- and 4-minute hill reps seemed impossible. But the months ticked over, my legs got stronger, and soon I found myself tackling 6-, 7- and 8-minute reps up steep hills in Holyrood Park. Thanks to my training buddy Mark who kept getting me out the door through the winter, I spent almost every Saturday in the Pentlands, churning out longer and longer runs with more and more elevation. There were days of ankle-deep slush and frozen feet and days of crisp, firmly packed snow and glorious sunshine on sparkling white hills. The day I finished a run of over 40km and 2750m of elevation, all done in the Pentlands, I felt I had tipped the scales and the Tranter was within reach.

It was then I realised that I had poured all my energy into physical training, without giving much thought to the route (which I had never been on) or logistics (no option for drop bags) or lining up supporters (how was I supposed to know what day I was going to do it without knowing the weather forecast two months in advance) or timing (what?! you have to start at 4am?!) or what I was going to wear for a very loooooong day in the hills. I thought I'd overcome all the anxieties, but no, here was another round of things to send me into doom spirals of worry and doubt. Clearly, I didn't have the mind to do this kind of thing; I'm not a planner and meticulous organiser; I can't be arsed reading all the articles and watching all the films on YouTube; I just want to get out into the hills - why is it so complicated? Can't I just follow someone else around instead of having to figure it all out myself?

At the tail end of May I came back from a bikepacking trip, checked the weather forecast, and realised that the next weekend was my moment. Stop waffling, stop whimpering, it's time! I lumped my kit in a bag and trundled up to Glen Nevis rather late on Friday 4 June, set up my tent in a swarm of midges, cursed the cheerful and loudly social people nearby who hadn't dreamt up such an idiotic idea as I had, went over all my packing lists and woke up to a fiendishly early alarm before I even knew I'd fallen asleep.

The plan was that I would run the Mamores and across the Glen by myself and then a friend would meet me with some extra water and food supplies on the second hill in the Grey Corries. Up the track I trudged in the pre-dawn light, grateful I'd bothered to recce the route a few weeks before and find the elusive trod that wove through the woods on the other side of the fence.



The sun began to glow on the hills as I approached the summit of Mullach nan Coirean. At the top I took a deep breath and soaked up the expansive view of mountains in every direction. I sat down on the stones for a moment to digest all the feelings I hadn't had time to process in the hazy blur of the morning and to realise that here I was, on the Tranter Round, and going for it! After all the winter's training and the anxiety and worry about making this a reality, it was finally happening.

There was a slight chill in the air as I set off down the gently sloping, rocky and grass ground toward Stob Ban. I had recced the Mamores side of the route and knew what to anticipate on this side of Glen Nevis - where the tough climbs and the dodgy scrambles were, where I could refill water and where I needed to take extra care not to twist an ankle.



I ticked off the tops one by one as the sun rose and the air warmed. My mind, legs and feet were somehow connected in a beautiful flow, and I felt like I was covering the ground well and almost dancing along. At An Gearanach I met a group of hikers following the Ring of Steall; they had brought along a portable speaker and were having second breakfast while basking in the sun and chilling to cool vibes.

The temperatures climbed steadily as I descended Binnean Beag and followed a little trod around the side of Binnein Mor, aiming toward Sgurr Eilde Mor. In the valley I glugged cold water from the stream and filled my soft flasks. Scree and loose rock at the top made for a challenging climb, and my legs began to let me know that this was a big undertaking.

Somewhere along the way the flow I'd felt in the morning began to fade. I hadn't been on this part of the route before, and the unknowingness of it gnawed at my mind. Negative thoughts began to creep in, and the relentless and largely unrewarding trudge over rough ground to the second Stob Ban of the day left plenty of time for dark thoughts to infiltrate my psyche.

At the summit, I sat down to collect myself but ended up disintegrating into unexpected tears. I'd been on the move on my own for nearly 10 hours. Georgia was waiting for me over the way on Stob Coire

Claurigh with cookies and sandwiches and company for the rest of the route, and I just needed to get there.



Georgia's positive energy and collection of treats soon sorted out my low; I did my best to follow her fast-moving feet, and we made short work of the Grey Corries. A beautiful runnable descent landed us below the rather looming face of Aonach Beag. The clouds were moving in, physically and in my mind again. If I'd known the terrain I still had to cover, I might have sat down and refused to carry on.

The brutal descent off Aonach Mor and the climb up toward CMD destroyed my legs and shredded my soul. I should have been rejoicing as we came nearer and nearer to Ben Nevis, but with every step getting to the top felt more impossible.

I found very little joy in the snowy and clagged-in summit of Ben Nevis, despite it being my first time on Scotland's highest hill. After a requisite photo where I attempted to smile, we descended into slowly deteriorating weather. The stones of the tourist path slipped under my feet and the drizzle turned to rain. Tantalising lights shimmered in the Glen, promising rest and respite and reminding me to keep moving.



And then, like that, the bridge appeared, and there was the hostel sign, and with it the sad realisation that we had to jog another few kilometers back down the road to the car. Next year when I do the Ramsay Round I'll definitely be staying at the hostel (hopefully it will be open then...).

Haha, just kidding about the Ramsay. I was more than happy to have finished the Tranter Round in approximately 16:45. After the memories of the painful bits faded, I decided I probably wouldn't mind - and in fact might really enjoy - doing it again.

Inver Poem

by Jamie Thin

.. with apologies to Hillaire Belloc and the High Pyrenees!

Do you remember Inver?
and the longest board walk
of the North West Highlands
and the mists that tease on the mountain tops
and the whisky that tasted of tar
and the cheers and the jeers of the young mountaineers
(under the lea of the dark boulder!)

Do you remember Inver, Jacobites
and the cheers and the jeers of the young mountaineers
who hadn't got a penny
and who weren't paying any
and the banging of doors and the singing..

And the chat! chat! chat!
round the fire
of the hand waving and story-telling
of the girls gone chancing,
dancing,
climbing,
edging and traversing,
going to the mountains in the sun,
out and in
and the Ceilidh in the kitchen

Do you remember Inver,
Jacobites,
Do you remember Inver?

Never more,
Jacobites,
Never more,
Only travel restrictions
and the Pentlands in the snow
No sound
in the walls of the room where falls
the tread
of the feet of the dead in the ground

No sound
.. but the faraway boom
of the Thursday night pub on Zoom!

Snorkelling in Scotland 2021

by Pam van de Brug

2021 was a successful year of snorkelling which included trips to:

- Strathcarron and Loch Sheildag with Lucy Spark, Alison Beresford, Rosslyn McNally, Ailsa Murray and Iain as land-based photographer/shark spotter.
- Lochaber with Franklin Jacoby and Lucy Spark
- Gairloch with Alison Beresford
- Dunbar with Alison Beresford

Lots of amazing marine life was seen, but it was not a successful year for underwater photograph! So here is a selection from 2021 and also 2020.





7



6



10



4



11



8

1. Large Common Starfish (roughly 40cm long). Sheildaig Island, Loch Sheildag. 2021
2. Large Spiny Starfish (also roughly 40cm long). Sheildaig Island, Loch Sheildag. 2021
3. Lucy. Sheildaig Island, Loch Sheildaig. 2021
4. Some kind of fry, Castle Bay, Lochcarron. 2021
5. Anemones on Bladder Wrack. Castle Bay, Lochcarron. 2021
6. Alison & Pam. Photo by Iain Kinnell. Loch an Eisg Brachaidh, Assynt. 2020
7. Common Starfish. Loch an Eisg Brachaidh, Assynt. 2020
8. Velvet Swimming Crab. Loch an Eisg Brachaidh, Assynt. 2020
9. Hermit Crab Fir & Dahlia Anemone. Culkein Drumbeg, Sutherland. 2020
10. Shore Crab. Loch an Eisg Brachaidh, Assynt. 2020
11. Lion's Mane Jellyfish. Loch an Eisg Brachaidh, Assynt. 2020

Mullardoch hills from Strathfarrar

by Rob Graham

This is not the most logical ways to do these hills but logic has to be turned on its head sometimes.

The main driver is that I am in my late 70's and anyone in that age group will know that one's capacity for a long day is rather seriously limited, as is your rate of hill ascent. So, everything has to be trimmed back with a 9 hour day being a maximum and then the slower rate means less ground covered too.

So the Mullardoch Loch boat for the whole ridge was not an option, and then there is the reduced number of walkers in my age group, so it was to be a solo trip, and hence early escape options needed to be considered, particularly for the 8pm gate closure.

So, Strathfarrar it had to be for An Riabhachan, Sgurr na Lapaich and Carn nan Gobhar.

A prompt 9am turn up at the gate saw me join the queue of cars all seemingly going to the eastern Strathfarrar Munros. So, from about a third of the way up the glen I had the road to the top power station to myself. It is a stunning glen with a good but twisty road thanks to the hydro board, and unusually two dams to cross.

Delayed by a cautious driver initially it was nearly an hour for the 24km to the top power station, which though small had an impressive plume of water coming from its outlet – remember that 60 minutes!!

So off at a bit after 10am. The route lay westwards for a good 2 km on initially a hydro track and then one of those horrible tracks where the estate has attempted to turn a stalker's path into being quad bike / Argocat friendly. Sadly, this had been done all the way up into the coire below Sgurr na Lapaich, and reduced my pace. So, having been ahead of my time initially, I was behind it at the coire, and it was obvious too it had never been used since its butchering and the failure to drain it properly made it even more unpleasant.

Rather than go up the back of the coire, I went up a western rib onto the shoulder of Riabhachan - and this was slower than anticipated too.

Once up onto the wide sweep from the ridge down to the glen, I could see what looked to all the world like a little stone building!! This did have to be investigated. It was a solo huge very square-cut boulder and what, at a distance, looked like stones in a wall were patches of white lichen. Ok, my eyes without glasses aren't what they should be!! But I then spotted that it had a rectangular shaped opening under it that someone had used at some point as there was a little sheltering wall built of slabs. All of a sudden, a horrific screech came from this cave and I backed off a couple of paces instinctively only for a deer fawn to emerge protesting strongly at me. It trotted off across the hill side still muttering and I hope it found its mum alright. It has to be said that was a bit unexpected!!

There was then a 1km x 250m ascent steep unrelieved slog to the summit, where I was an hour behind my schedule. Working time back from the 8pm gate closure I reckoned I was possibly going to be OK.

The descent off An Riabhachan to the bealach up to Lapaich was more interesting and exposed than I expected – at that point I was grateful for the walker's path!

And then too the upward path was a pleasure and, despite a sharp dose of thigh cramp, I was up in 45 minutes and had made up some time on that ascent such that I was there at 15:45, and reckoned I would be able to do Carn na Gobhar comfortably as well.

That was until I looked for the way down towards the east. Absolutely no direct way off the summit was clear despite there being a cairn above the scary east ridge, and then the coire beside it and below me was virtually vertical. I've since learnt that the south ridge towards Loch Mullardoch has the onward line - that is probably written up somewhere but I hadn't found it.

OK, I'm running late - I can't get the way I want to go – it's a great day - have a nice rest and head off by the north ridge escape route. Carn na Gobhar will be there for another day from the Mullardoch dam.

So, I suppose it must have been after 16:15 when I started down reckoning that I was going to be well within time.

Well, apart from having to retire from a hazardous boulder field I wandered into, I was doing well and once lower down and having the first 1 km track of the day in sight I targeted that.

But then the ground got steeper – and then steeper as I approached the glen floor, and yet further steeper grass and then steeper again until near the bottom and amongst scant trees it was really a scrambly descent over rubbishy rock and grass using the walking poles to poke lumps of grass to ensure that they were adequately attached. It was a phew when I got off that, but for the first time for ages I looked at my watch – Oh s**t!! it was 18:45 and I had 75 minutes to get back to the car and then down the glen that had taken 60 minutes to get up.

At approaching a 9-hour hill day, few of us can sprint a kilometre, but I walked back to car as quickly as possible and had those 60 minutes to get down that 24 km to the gate.

What fun that was – I would like to think I drove it safely with any possible up-coming traffic being in mind, but it was definitely a bit of a scamper and I was there under the slightly disapproving eye of the gate keeper lady at 19:45.

I don't walk the hills that often by myself and that wasn't quite the day I had planned but it was an interesting and good fun day.

All the Munros in a day

by Cathy Southworth

Cathy Southworth and Fiona Zeiner took part in the Carnethy Hill Running Club challenge 'Munro's in a day' where they completed Cairn Toul, Sgor an Lochain Uaine and Braeriach (and Devil's Point for fun!) – a total of 34km and 5,124 ft height gain in 8 hours and 20 minutes.

The event, which took place on 14th August 2021, was invented to bring members together in the pandemic. It involved about 120 members and saw at least one member of the club on top of all the Munros on that day. It was the first time this had been achieved.



Cathy and Fiona on the summit of The Devil's Point

For full details of the event see [282#munrosinaday](https://twitter.com/282#munrosinaday) on the Carnethy Club journal page <http://carnethy.com/intro-club/club-journal/>

Lockdown Walk Report: Ten Tumps of Edinburgh

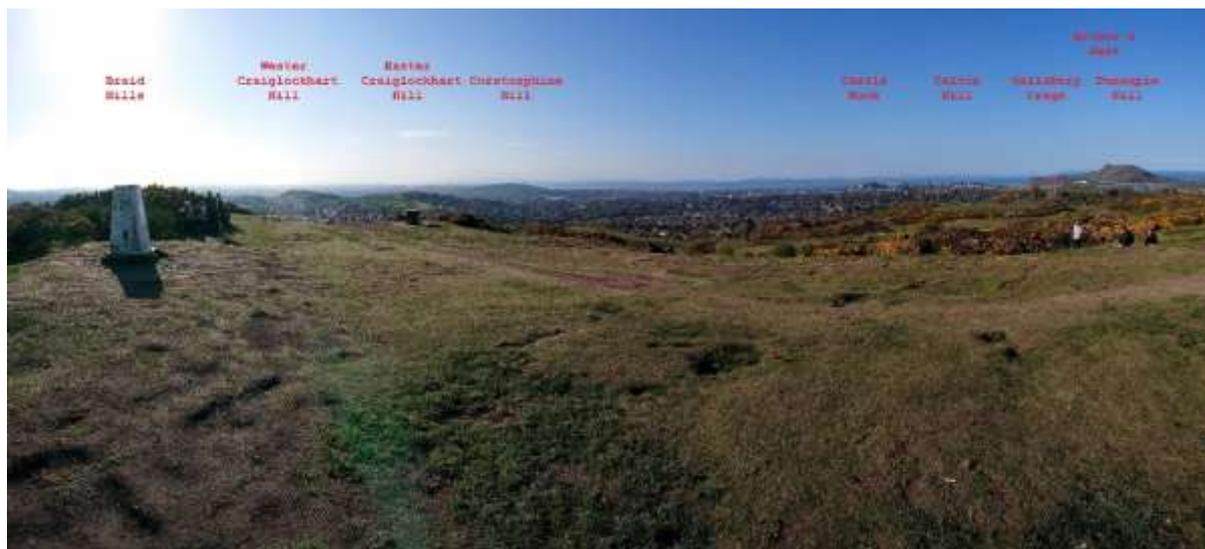
By Graham Pearson 25 Apr 2021

The Mission:

Bag all ten Tumps in Edinburgh.

WTF is a Tump?

"The Tumps (Thirty & Upward Metre Prominences) comprise all British hills with 30m or more of drop, with no minimum height." - <https://www.hill-bagging.co.uk/Tumps.php>



The Inspiration:

Tom attempted a walking and cycling route to bag all 18 Tumps in the City of Edinburgh Council area, which inspired me to look up how many Tumps are in Edinburgh itself, and whether they would make a good lockdown bagging challenge. And, since you can't keep a good bagger down, the answer was "yes!"

The Route:

From home in Dalry, along the Barnton Branch cycleway to Davidson's Mains Park then up CORSTORHINE HILL. Descend via the Rest and Be Thankful; along the Corstorphine Branch cycleway; across Saughton Park; up the Water of Leith to the Slateford Aqueduct; along the canal then up EASTER CRAIGLOCKHART HILL from Craiglockhart Pond. Across to WESTER CRAIGLOCKHART HILL. Descend to Firrhill High School; follow the Braid Burn to the top of Braidburn Valley Park then ascend the BRAID HILLS. Skirt the edge of the golf course; descend the Lang Linn Path to the Braid Burn then ascend BLACKFORD HILL. Roughly follow the Braid Burn to Cameron Toll; cross Prestonfield Golf Course to reach Holyrood Park; follow the Queen's Drive then ascend DUNSAPIE HILL. Cross to ARTHUR'S SEAT. Descend to The Hawse; traverse SALISBURY CRAGS; exit Holyrood Park at Abbeyhill. Attempt to ascend CALTON Hill from Carlton (sic) Terrace Lane; discover that the gate shown on OpenStreetMap is locked; divert via London Road Gardens. Descend to Waterloo Place; follow North Bridge and the Royal Mile to the CASTLE ROCK. (Or rather, to the top of the Esplanade: the castle was closed due to COVID, it was well past normal closing time anyway, and even if it had been open, I'm not quite a pedantic enough bagger to pay the entry fee!) Head home to Dalry via Johnson Terrace and Morrison Street.



The Stats:

Steps: 53,424; distance: >38km; ascent: >886mm; moving time: >5h49; total time: 10h36.

What Was Good?

Bagging hills!

Hazards On the Route: (1)

Darkness. The descent from Arthur's Seat to The Hawse was less than obvious in the dusk, and I chose not to investigate why so many car doors were being slammed on Calton Hill. Perhaps I should have set off before lunch.

Hazards On the Route: (2)

Lack of water. I was already short of water when I passed Cameron Toll but, instead of going into the shopping centre, I figured it would be less faff to buy water from the next corner shop I passed. Unfortunately, the next corner shop I passed was on North Bridge, over three hours later. Never did a can of Bru taste so good!

What Would I Do Differently? (1)

Put my 'phone in aeroplane mode. After five Tumps the battery got low and the 'phone switched to stamina mode (I know how it felt), after which Strava only logged my position when I used GPS to check my position; generally, this was only at summits or when I was spatially misplaced. So, by measuring point-to-point between summits and geographical discombobulations, and assuming that I jumped instantaneously from each point to the next, the above stats undermeasure both distance and ascent, and massively undermeasure moving time.

What Would I Do Differently? (2)

Curb my enthusiasm. When I first planned this route, I concluded that it was too long, and incorporated some short cuts to reduce the distance; the biggest of these short cuts was ascending Corstorphine Hill from the South to eliminate the big loop via Davidson's Mains. Unfortunately, by the

time I came to do the walk, I remembered how much I preferred my original route but not how much extra distance it included.

What did I Learn?

What a Tump is. How did I get through life until now without that vital knowledge?

What Did I Win?

An 850g bar of Dairy Milk (see picture), which lasted until November. This walk coincided with the last day of a four-week step challenge run by my work. My team won a great moral victory, coming fifth out of seven, and I was mid-placed within my team, but I did get a "final day achievement" prize for logging 53,424 steps on the last day of the challenge.



Climbing in Shetland

By Lucy Spark

Inspired by the beautiful new book "Great Sea Cliffs of Scotland" Robert, Michael, Alan and I spent a week exploring the wilds of Shetland at the start of July 2021. Base camp was a lovely campsite at Braewick, close to the prime climbing at Eshaness. While the rest of Scotland basked in a heat wave, we just tried to keep warm. The mornings tended to be overcast but it brightened up and we managed to climb almost every day. The climbing below the lighthouse at Eshaness was fantastic: 45m cliffs of pyroclastic breccia with many classic HVS routes which are much less intimidating close up. Robert and I climbed some of the classics: The Silmaril, Scooty Alan, Ringil and Blackwatch. Michael and Alan climbed 10 new routes during the week.



Our other days were spent exploring some of the other areas in the guidebook. For me, the highlight was The Augurist on Prophecy Wall at the Faither Headland: a remote, wild, committing route with the steep juggy style of climbing reminiscent of Mingulay.

Shetland is a beautiful place just to spend time. As you can see from Robert's photos, the scenery and wildlife are amazing. The coastline, with all its caves and stacks, makes Shetland a haven for kayakers as well. With so much more to explore, there will definitely be a return trip. Enjoy the photos.





Lucy and Robert on Ringil HVS, Eshaness.

Lucy and Robert on The Silmaril HVS, Eshaness.



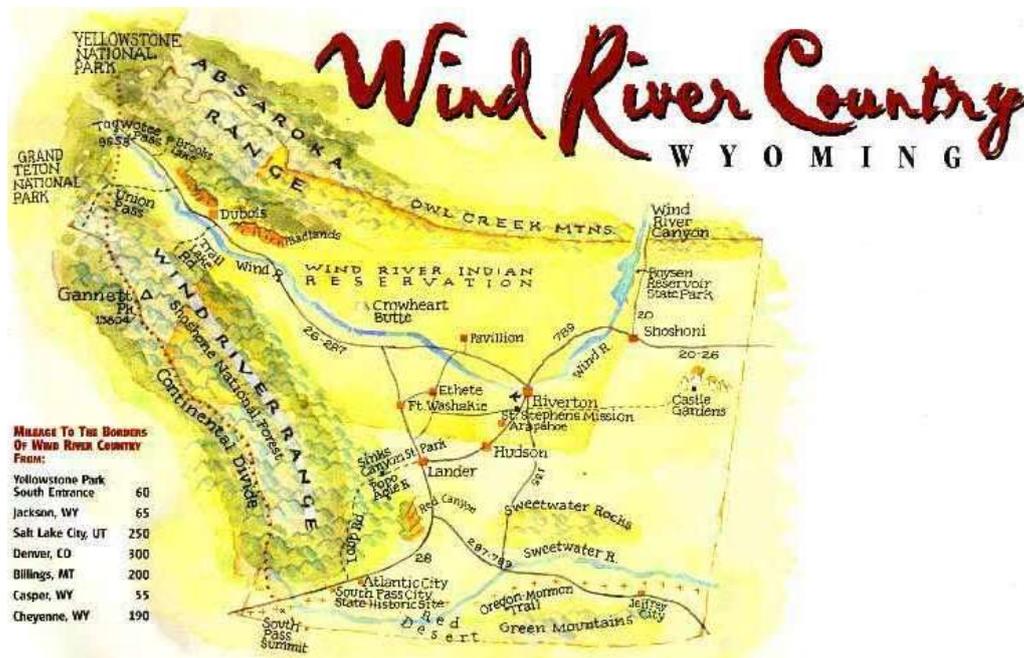
Michael on his first new route: Headless Wall, Mirki Wall, E3 5c. Still waiting for direct finish.

Relaxing at the top of Sea of Change HVS, The Arch Wall.



Wind River Range, Wyoming

By John Sanders



I first heard about Wolf's Head well over twenty years ago, during a pub convo with Bruce Kerr. To say the idea of a full traverse captured me, would be an understatement. I have no idea therefore, why it took us fifteen years to make the first trip. Something to do with, too many places and not enough time. But since that initial visit, we have gone back on every possible occasion. That is to say, whenever we were within two or three days driving time of south west Wyoming.

On every occasion we have had a different adventure, some awesome, and one or two not so much.

A not so much...

By way of example, on our most recent excursion we planned a seven day back pack, from the Boulder Lake campground and trailhead, north east into the Bridger Wilderness. Our ultimate goal was to pass below Gannett Peak on the Lakes Trail, near Mt Baldy. The big plus was that we were hiking and not climbing, therefore right there we saved around sixteen kilos in weight. We had a clear weather window for the first five days, and had been told this was one of the best hikes in the Winds.

Well, there's an old saying, "you call some place paradise, and you can kiss it goodbye." What they should have said was busiest, not best. We passed 96 people on the first day. It's true that the numbers thinned as we got higher and further in, and once we passed the 20-mile mark, there was only the odd hiker or two. Don't get me wrong, this was still the Winds, and still beautiful. I don't know about you, I like my wilderness to be a little... well, wilderness. Ergo, empty of people, or as close as I can get.



Camp on the second night at the Titcomb Basin

We broke camp on the second day early. We had ten miles to cover, and a pass to cross at 10,800 feet. We'd only just passed the end of the lake, when the sky in front of us changed, over the mountains. It was like someone flipped a switch, and the lights went off. A huge black weather front, was coming in and fast, like it was on steroids. We were approximately 23 miles from the trailhead. Nowhere to run. Nowhere to hide. I estimated 30 minutes, maybe 45 max before we were hit. There was a big boulder next to a recess in the ground. Al started pitching our three-season tent in it, while I built a wall from rocks either side of the boulder. The wind was already starting to howl.

We were carrying a three-season tent, and I reckoned we had to protect it somehow. This was August, not the middle of friggin' winter. We finished building what we could and climbed inside as the blizzard hit.

This was not the longest I've spent confined in a blizzard, that was in Greenland in a snowhole, with Ian Hall. We were trapped for 4 days. But fortunately, on this occasion we only had to endure 41 hours, before the blizzard stopped. Also, fortunately, life has taught me it is better to have medicine (Whisky), and not need it, than to need it... etc. I had some. Well, quite a lot actually. Enough anyway to last 41 hours. I have to admit that it was quite a relief when the wind stopped and we could get outside.



Tent bound for 41 hours

There was no going on. The pass was at least another thousand feet above us, and drifted in deep snow. We had no winter kit. Remember, this was August. We packed up camp, and headed back to the trailhead. It had taken us two days to get in, but now I'd run out of whisky (I mean medicine), so it was a no brainer. We were going out (more medicine in the van), and we were doing it in a oner.

On the way, Al had one of her wishes come true. She's always going on about beach holidays. I try not to yawn. And then there it was – a beach. She appeared somewhat sceptical, and I will never understand, but I keep trying.



Al is always on about beach holidays... go girl

Strangely, we didn't see anyone on the way out for about fifteen miles.

Was it fun? You bet your ass it was. None of us knows what's going to happen next, that's the great thing about life.

Awesome



Cirque of the Towers, via Big Sandy Pass

So having covered one of those, 'where it didn't actually quite go to plan', allow me to share one that did. Don't want you thinking we feck up all the time. Remember Wolf's Head? That traverse Bruce had told me about more than twenty years ago...

We drove in to the Big Sandy Trailhead, from Pinedale. Loaded up our sacks, bent double, and began our shuffle into the wilderness. The plan was an 8 night, 9 day trip. Climbing gear, camping gear, bit of food, shed loads a medicine. Goal, a full traverse of Wolf's head, and any other adventures that could be discovered on the way. The Cirque of the Towers, for me, epitomises the meaning of adventure.

No backup. Everything you need, is on your back, and if something goes wrong, then the best person to rescue you, is.... You.

The walk in is brutal. 2,000 feet of height gain, between 9 and 11 miles, depending on your choice

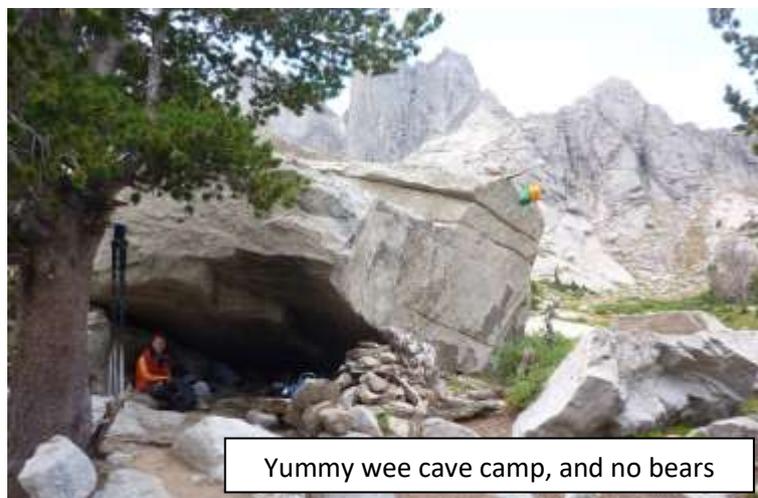
of camp, and a sack that weighs between 35 and 40 kilos, depending on how kind you want to be to the wifey person. I went with 35, she had 25. She's a tough lady. It took us nine hours, and in truth I considered throwing some of the cams out. Surely, I wouldn't need that many? But this is America, after all, and everyone carries racks and racks of the friggin' things. I'd brought one rack. It's all I could fit in, next to my medicine. Al suggested that three bottles of whisky might be a little too much for only nine days. Fortunately, we worked it out, and there was no divorce involved.

The great thing about this area of the Winds is that there are not many people, if you choose your timing right. There might be the odd climbing team, but the area is big enough to choose a camp, and not see anyone else for days. We met one other party in the five days we were in the Cirque. A few more when we relocated to climb East Temple.



Pingora, with the Wolf's Head traverse in the background. Taken from the other side of Cirque Lake – not another soul anywhere

When I have a goal, I like to focus. No point in messing around dwelling on other stuff. We arrived in the evening, and found a yummy wee cave for our camp. Then an early night, after some scran, and medicine, as soon as it got dark. Up at 04.30. Nice brekka. Check for bears, all good, and off we went. We'd climbed Pingora on a previous occasion, and knew the route. There are two ways to get onto the ridge, one of which is the Pingora Tower, then some abs down to the col, before the start of the traverse. This is the option we chose.



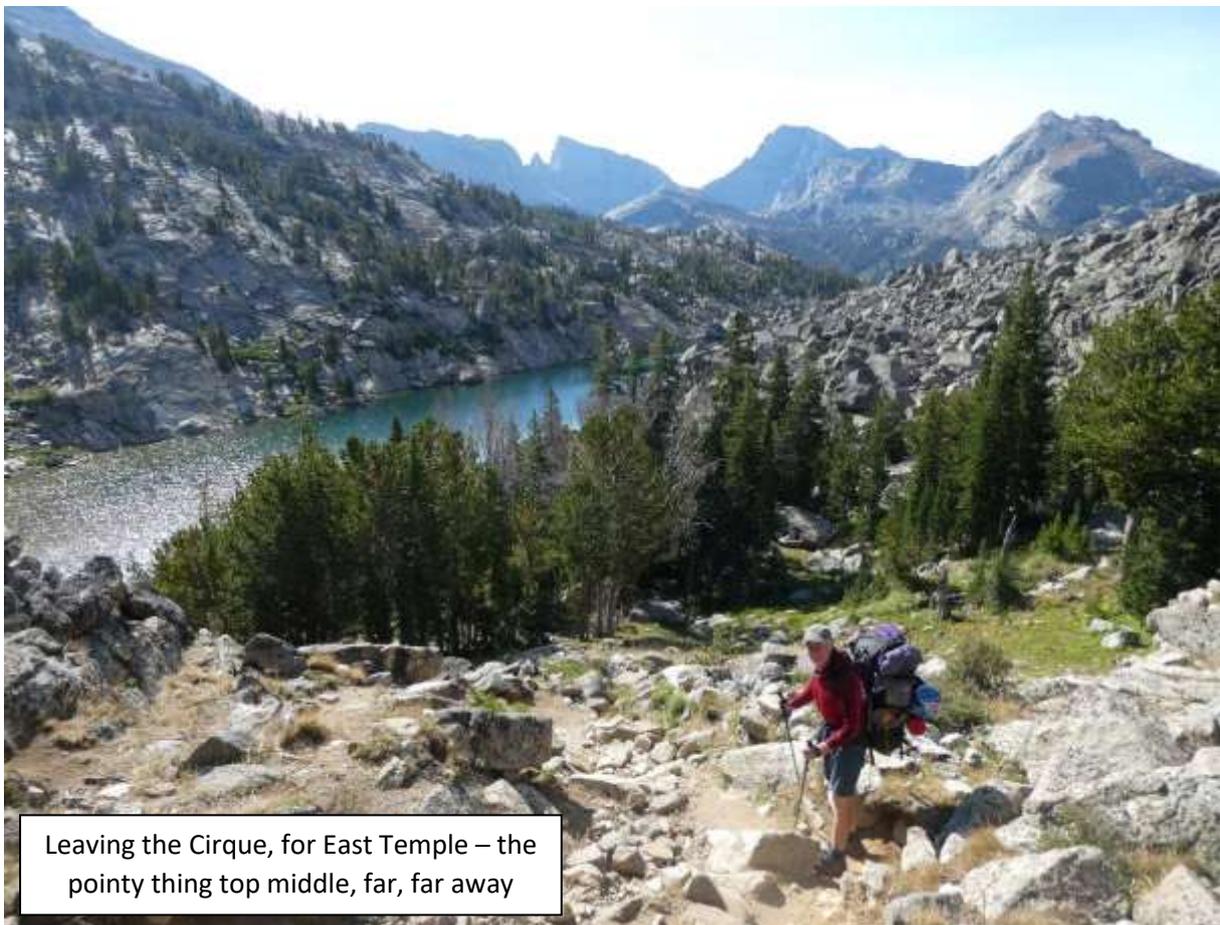
Yummy wee cave camp, and no bears

We completed the nine pitches of climbing on Pingora, before 09.30. There are only a couple of moves up to VS, and we moved together on the rest of it. Once rapped into the col, it all became very interesting, with some spectacular climbing and very exposed sections. The route is given 4c or even 5a, depending on who you talk to. I didn't find anything on it above 4c, albeit there is a nasty slab, halfway through, with absolutely zero gear, with a forty-foot runout, which could have felt like E10, if you didn't get your shit together. Also, sometimes the route finding is a little vague. I ended up off route on some horrendous ground, and had to aid some serious overhangs.

Bad Nav.

The whole day took us eleven hours tent to tent, or should I say cave to cave? Over the next four days we did some more climbing on Pingora, and had a rest day walk around Cirque Lake. Then it was off to relocate to new climbs, new fun, new adventures, and the unknown at East Temple.

This is still one of the last great Wilderness adventures. Somewhere to live your dreams.



Leaving the Cirque, for East Temple – the pointy thing top middle, far, far away

Back cover photo: Alison and Iain, An Ruadh Stac, Strathcarron taken by Ailsa Murray

