

# Ptarmigan Hillwalking and Mountaineering Club



Website: [www.ptarmiganmc.org.uk](http://www.ptarmiganmc.org.uk)

## Monthly Newsletter

December 2019

\*Note the new title of the Club: it's longer but more accurate and is intended to attract guests and potential members who may not regard themselves as "mountaineers". The web address and logo will also change - but not yet! One step at a time...

**The meet on 1 December is to the Campsie Fells. Fare £20.**

**REMINDER: if you cancel your booking after 8 am on the Friday before the meet, or if you fail to turn up, our Code of Good Practice expects you still to pay your fare (to the Treasurer) unless the reasons for your cancellation or non-appearance were beyond your control.**

The bus will leave Waterloo Place at 07.30, going via Shandwick Place, Haymarket, Roseburn, PC World, M9, M80 and A803 to Kilsyth. From there we go via Lennoxton, Strathblane and Killearn to Fintry where the bus will park for the day. The return route will be from Fintry via the A882 to Lennoxton and then the A891/A803 to Milton of Campsie and Kilsyth, thus keeping open a range of low-level options. The pub stop on the way home will either be at Fintry or in Kilsyth – the Coachman Hotel has a chippie directly opposite.

**Departure time from Fintry: 15.30**

**Bus Convener: Kevin Russell**

**Bookings and cancellations:** either  
or

1. Text and phone Tim Featherstone 075 49 48 0321
2. Email [bookings@ptarmiganmc.org.uk](mailto:bookings@ptarmiganmc.org.uk)

**Emergency Number 075 49 48 0321 must be taken on the hill with each party.**

**Maps required:** OS 1:50 000 maps 64 (Glasgow) and 57 (Stirling & The Trossachs)

**Winter is on its way and so here's a timely reminder of the Club's Code of Good Practice.**

*The Club's Code of Good Practice notes that parties should comprise two, preferably three, people and those members must have a map of the area and compass and know how to use them. A first aid kit, survival bag, whistle and torch should also be carried. The group should stick together and be alert for signs of anyone feeling unwell or getting into difficulties. For those members who have one it does no harm to carry a mobile phone, though it is important to understand that there is no guarantee of signal availability and this should never be relied upon.*

***Winter Conditions:** If possessed, an ice axe and crampons should be carried and may be needed on frozen ground at any level. A careful judgement must be made on the prevailing conditions. Do not wait until you are on steep ground and/or above the snow line. Be prepared to moderate plans according to experience in the party. The bus convener should be able to advise individual parties on the day.*

***Disclaimer:** The routes outlined below are merely descriptions of walks in the area; they do not represent invitations or recommendations by the Club or any of its Officers to members to go on these routes. It is the individual and sole responsibility of each club member to choose a route that is within their capability taking due account of the timings given and the weather conditions prevailing.*

## Route Options

The Campsie Fells are a range of volcanic hills where Scottish skiing was born in 1892 when W.W. Naismith became the first Scotsman to slide over snow on two planks. Although lowly in height they are rough in character and need to be treated with respect in poor weather. PMC members have made navigational errors here in the past!

The finest expedition is to get off at Blanefield, follow the road past Cantyweery and take in the outlying 'sore thumb' top of Dumgoyne (422m; NS 541828) first for the views. Then go via the highest point, Earl's Seat (578m; 569838), and the north-facing craggy escarpment to Fintry. DO NOT underestimate the time it takes for this walk or you will be coming down in the dark! However on a clear wintry day, with stunning views northwards to the Highland line, it is a highly recommended traverse.

Another route to Earl's Seat starts at Ballagan Farm (5815792) and follows the track up towards Dumbreck (508m; 574815). It is also possible to start further east at Clachan of Campsie and go up Fin Glen before angling towards Dumbreck.

Another possible traverse from Clachan of Campsie goes via Cort-ma Law (531m; 652799) to Milton of Campsie or (much further) to Kilsyth.

From Kilsyth it is possible to walk north towards Carron Valley Forest and back again.

From Fintry itself the even wilder Fintry Hills could be explored, with possible objectives of Stronend (511m; 629895) and the Spout of Ballochcleam (waterfall) although this would probably have to be an out-and-back.

There is a delightful wee hostelry in Fintry where post-walk libations can be partaken.

### Lower Level

The Strathkelvin Railway Path from Clachan of Campsie to Milton of Campsie, with or without an initial exploration of Campsie Glen, should give easy walking.

On the other side of the A891, Clachan of Campsie to Milton of Campsie via Lennoxton looks possible along paths and quiet roads.

Kilsyth looks a possibility for woodland, loch- and canal-side walks.

## News from the AGM

The AGM on 5 November was attended by 14 members. The Chairman, Richard Love, reported a good year and thanked members of the Committee for making it so and those members and guests who turned out despite all the "dire" forecasts! It was sad to record the death of long-standing member John MacInnes; on the other hand, the birth of Lucie's baby had been good news. The Secretary, Christine Thompson, confirmed she was stepping down after six enjoyable years and looked forward to handing over to Kevin Russell and Dave Law as joint Secretaries. The Treasurer, Adrian Casey, said the Club's finances were stable and over £1100 in credit; but volatility in passenger numbers could lead to difficulties in the future. The Webmaster, John Townshend, reported that the 10-year-old website received about 60 clicks a month and ranked seventh in a Google search for "Edinburgh hillwalking club". It was about to be revised using WordPress. He wished to stand down as Webmaster: fortunately Tim Featherstone had expressed interest in taking over.

The draft programme for 2020 was discussed and amended as follows:

January 2020	No meet
February	St Fillans via Lochearnhead
March	Inversnaid
April	Taynuilt
May	Glencoe/Balachulish
June	Coire Cas
July	Glen Nevis
August	Glen Muick
September	Kinlochleven
October	Linn of Dee

November	Luss/Arrochar (High Tea at Balloch)
December	Lowther Hills/Wanlockhead

Notes: 1. In the event of a bad weather forecast, the venue will be changed.  
2. Long trips (eg Glen Muick) offer plenty of opportunities en route.

Weekend away: May; venue northern or north-west Highlands

## What we did last month

### Blair Atholl and High Tea by Michael Good

“Sunday for us early risers began very disappointingly as we were drenched by heavy rain from the start, even before we got on to the coach! Seventeen hardy souls had volunteered to go, with the bait of Annual High Tea at The Atholl Arms Hotel to round off the day. The weather forecast for Atholl was not good for the rest of the day. As the coach progressed northwards, however, the weather improved markedly, and so did our spirits.

“At Blair Atholl we split into several groups, mine consisting of Walter, Dave B, Kevin, Anna, Jennifer, Elsa and the other Michael. We set off up the River Tilt then turned left past Old Blair on a track beside the Banvie Burn. We had distant views often with sunshine on distant hills over an incredibly bleak landscape. Surprisingly there were no signs of earlier habitation on the low rounded heather-covered hills. As we arrived at our destination of a bothy beside Allt Sheicheachan Burn (say that after a skinfull) we were astonished to see members of another Ptarmigan group (see **Oops!** below) who had intended to climb hills from Glen Tilt, miles away! They had veered completely off course, and to their credit were suitably embarrassed for an experienced team. We were unable to crow as some of our group marched off towards Bruar Lodge further up Glen Bruar. Kevin realised that they were walking at 90 degrees in the wrong direction, and he scampered off to collect them. After reading the map carefully again, and consulting various devices, we could not find a path shown going in the right direction and wisely walked back along the path we had already come by. Light rain fell but nothing seriously drenching as we got back early to a warm hostelry and welcome thirst-quenchers. The day was rounded off by the High Tea in an enormous Dining Room heated by a lovely log fire, and watched over by huge stags’ heads.”



*Rainbow over the bothy (photo by Jennifer)*

### Oops! by Dave Law

“My ambition along with Tim F and Kathy was to climb Carn a’ Chlamain. We seemed to head off in the correct direction but made an early error by walking too far up the Blair Castle avenue, missing a good short cut to Glen Tilt. So instead of heading up Glen Tilt we headed up Glen Banvie, only realising this when we reached the cairn where a few paths met just below Carn Dearg Beag. Oops! Realising this we opted to continue on the path towards Bruar Lodge but to loop round after the bothy to do Beinn a’ Chait. When we got to the bothy, we opted to make use of the bench to have lunch and plan with a bit more detail and sat-nav checks before following the path up onto the Meall Dubh nan Dearcag and onto Beinn a’Chait plateau. The summit approach and on it was wet and blustery but it was a day of rainbows. Views from the summit and beyond became better as the rain retreated. We came off the summit via Elrig, Meall Chlaonain and on to Glen Tilt. For all the mistakes made at the beginning, it turned out to be a good day.”

Meanwhile, Tim, Alex and Douglas did the Munro Carn Liath, taking advantage of the recently improved footpath.



Left:  
*Alex and  
Tim H on  
Carn  
Liath*

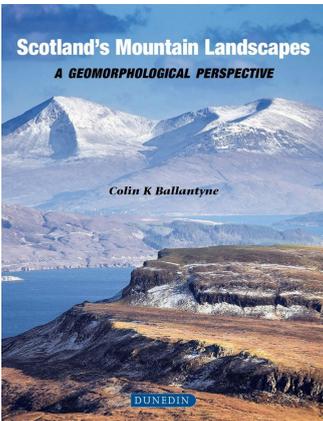
Right:  
*High tea  
in the  
Atholl  
Arms  
Hotel*

(both  
photos  
by  
Douglas)



**Book review: *Scotland's Mountain Landscapes A geomorphological perspective* by Colin K Ballantyne (2019). Dunedin Academic Press. ISBN 9781780460796**

Which Munro is the oldest and which the youngest? Why do the North-west Highlands look completely different from the rest of Scotland? How did the Parallel Roads of Glen Roy form? If you've ever pondered such questions while munching your piece on a mountain top, then this book is for you.



*Scotland's Mountain Landscapes* is beautifully written by an eminent Scottish geomorphologist who is also a hillwalker. In clear, readable prose, copiously illustrated by photographs and diagrams, he describes how "Scotland" was assembled over 400 million years ago from five separate continental fragments. It subsequently underwent many geological adventures, notably volcanic eruptions on its western margins when the North Atlantic opened up about 60 million years ago (think Skye, Mull, Ardnamurchan), followed by uplift and tilting of the whole country to the east. Then came the Ice Age, starting about 2.6 million years ago. This was when the face of Scotland was modified by the erosive power of ice sheets and glaciers as they scoured out glacial troughs, such as Glen Sannox on Arran, and corries such as those above Glen Clova. The eroded debris was dumped as moraine, for example in the "Valley of 100 Hills" in Glen Torridon, while in milder intervals deep gorges (such as Dirc Mhór, north of The Fara) were carved out by meltwater. Around the ice margins, periglacial

conditions reigned where frost action produced the tors on Bynack More and stone stripes on Tinto. As the ice melted and removed its support, whole mountainsides collapsed (such as the north face of Sgòrr Dhonuill). The wind has been a feature of numerous Ptarmigan meets and it too fashions the landscape. A prime example is An Teallach which has some areas stripped bare by wind and others buried under blown sand, while its slopes are terraced by wind action. We also struggle with water on many a meet: the book shows us how water is still shaping the landscapes of today, whether it's by mountain torrents plunging down the sides of Glen Coe or the braided River Feshie spreading sediment over a wide floodplain. The final chapter picks out key sites where you can clearly see the diversity of landforms described in previous chapters.

This book has opened my eyes to what has happened, and still continues, at the Earth's surface to produce the Scottish hills and mountains we know and love today. I can heartily recommend it to any hillwalker who wants to know more about the scenery around them. The book's cover price is £28 but Ptarmigans can get a 25% discount by buying direct from the publisher at [www.dunedinacademicpress.co.uk/page/detail/Scotland/?K=9781780460796](http://www.dunedinacademicpress.co.uk/page/detail/Scotland/?K=9781780460796) and quoting the code **SML252019** (valid 4 November until 6 January 2020). Maybe a wee note to Santa is called for!