

Ptarmigan Mountaineering Club



Website: www.ptarmiganmc.org.uk

Monthly Newsletter

August 2019

The meet on 4 August is to Arran.

Fare £20 (bus) plus £8 (ferry).

Note start time of 0700 hrs.

The bus will leave Waterloo Place at **07.00** going via Shandwick Place (bus stop opposite Boots), Roseburn, PC World, Harthill, M8 to the south side of Glasgow, arriving at Ardrossan around 09.15. The bus will connect with the **09.45** ferry which reaches Brodick at **10.40**. The bus will remain in Ardrossan all day. On Arran the excellent local public bus service can be taken to all of the access points on the island. Check Sunday timetables at <https://www.stagecoachbus.com/promos-and-offers/west-scotland/how-to-get-to-arran-by-bus>

The return ferry leaves Brodick at **19.20** – this is the last ferry of the day so don't miss it!

Members should be back at Brodick pier by **19.00** to board the ferry. The bus will not be stopping en route back to Edinburgh (unless specifically requested) and refreshments should be purchased on Arran or on the return ferry.

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.

Bookings and cancellations: either
or

1. Text and phone Tim Featherstone 075 49 48 0321
2. Email bookings@ptarmiganmc.org.uk

Emergency Number 075 49 48 0321 must be taken on the hill with each party. Bus Convener: Douglas Tullis

Main map required: OS 1:50 000 Sheet 69 Island of Arran

Route Options

High-Level Routes

Corbetts

Goatfell 874m NS991415: access by signposted route through Brodick Castle grounds or from High Corrie via Meall Breac.

Beinn Tarsuinn 826m NR959412: access via Glen Rosa

Cir Mhor 799m NR972431: access via Glen Rosa (or Glen Sannox)

Caisteal Abhail 859m NR969443: access via Glen Rosa (or Glen Sannox)

Arran has been called 'Scotland in Miniature' and offers some of the best scrambling on its rugged granite peaks outside Skye. The famous A' Chir Ridge with its 'bad step' is a serious and committing proposition, with considerable exposure in places, and should only be attempted by members with some rock-climbing experience.

However, the difficulties can be avoided by traversing paths, and that allows all the main summits in the compact range of hills to be accessed from Brodick.

The most popular ascent will be the highest mountain Goatfell, either by the 'tourist route' or more rewardingly by its north-east ridge to North Goatfell first, from Sannox, with easy scrambling. Goatfell can also be climbed from High Corrie via Meall Breac. Also from Sannox, another famous geological feature can be visited, the Witch's step, or Ceum na Caillich. The direct descent is NOT recommended but can be avoided by a very steep descending traverse and re-ascent to its base. From there it is an easier scramble to the Corbett, Caisteall Abhail, and so to the Island's most dramatic spire, Cir Mhor, although it is only a walk to its summit. Cir Mhor can also be tackled by a steep scramble directly from the Saddle, but great care should be taken to find the easiest line, or you might find the situation getting over-dramatic! Heading south to the bealach at the head of Glen Rosa, a safe descent can be made from here, or you can carry on via the aforementioned A' Chir ridge, or by a lower path to Beinn Tarsuinn and, if time and energy permit, Beinn Nuis too. The full traverse of the north-south mountains via the Witch's Step is the best expedition on the island and is recommended for fast parties.

Beinn Tarsuinn can also be approached from Brodick via Glen Rosa and Beinn Nuis, and a return over Beinn a' Chliabhain and Cnoc Breac makes for an excellent horseshoe route. An alternative approach to Caisteall Abhail can be made from North Glen Sannox and traverses the north ridge of the Corbett on the west side of Coire nan Ceum. This could be combined with Cir Mhor with a return to Brodick from the A'Chir-Cir Mhor bealach at the head of Glen Rosa.

Low/Mid-Level Routes

Glen Rosa is one option for an out-and-back route and in good weather this offers spectacular scenery.

Other options include Brodick Castle with its famous gardens and its own Country Park. There are forest walks to the south of Brodick – looking at the map the one through Glen Cloy and Gleann Dubh could be linked to a return via Fairy Glen to the east. For a middle-level route Glen Cloy and Gleann Dubh could be linked in either direction with A'Chruach (514m) and Muilleann Gaoithe.

There is also an Arran coastal path and routes could be followed north and south from Brodick. Further details of this path can be found at <http://www.coastalway.co.uk>.

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**. 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.

Disclaimer: The routes outlined above 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.

What we did last month

Midsummer weekend at Aultguish, 21 - 23 June

Fourteen Ptarmigans had an excellent weekend at the Aultguish Bunkhouse and Inn. The staff were welcoming and the accommodation was clean and comfortable. The continental breakfast included in the Bunkhouse price was amazingly good - not just tea and toast but also croissants,



jam, meats, cheeses and fruit. Definitely a place to be recommended.

On the way from Edinburgh to Aultguish, the Wyvises, Ben and Little, were many people's target. Kathy, Douglas, Christine, Jan and Sandy, who was recovering from a cold and a sprained ankle, went up Ben Wyvis via the mostly-paved 'tourist route'. It was so cold on the top that hats, gloves and gilets had to be donned; but we didn't have half the trouble that the Little Wyvis party had, as Richard tells us...

Gathering Corbetts while ye may (or was it June?) by Richard L

"Our 'easy' Friday walk, after the long drive from Edinburgh, was Little Wyvis. We (Michael, Walter and I) managed up OK, although we were startled to find large tyre gouges in the soft ground near the summit. The descent went wrong as we disputed where we should be heading to return by an easier route to the car park. Unfortunately and unknown to us all, Walter had set the coordinates for the wrong car park, which resulted in a horrendous assault course through new forestry planting with a finish, in and out of holes, across piles of brash to our end point, witnessed by those who had ascended Big Wyvis.



Walter, Michael and Richard fuelling up on Beinn a'Chaisteil (photo by Jan)

"We were joined by Jan on Saturday for what looked like an equally straightforward day but involved a long walk in from Black Bridge to Loch Vaich, followed by a steepish ascent of the SW slopes of Beinn a'Chaisteil. The others decided to retreat by the same route (roughly), while I headed S over Meall a'Ghrianan down its steep upper face, fortunately graced with the remains of a stalker's path. We met up again on the lochside track for the last 7km. Walter's device informed us we'd covered 28km, though we think it was nearer 25km.

"Our final morning involved a drive W just short of Corrieshalloch Gorge, this time joined by Colin and Sandy, for our final Corbett of the weekend, Beinn Enaiglair. We all headed up to the lochan just S of the summit slopes. Three of us continued to the top for spectacular views to Ullapool and beyond. Time lost on both the ascent and the descent meant we were a little late leaving for home.

Having dropped Colin and Sandy off at Aultguish, we headed south again and, near Garve, spotted Christine, who had backpacked the Aultguish-to-Garve drove road; so we gave her a lift home, saving her a long wait for the train."

Meanwhile another seven Ptarmigans had a big day on the Saturday, bagging four Munros in the Fannaichs: Beinn Liath Mhor Fannaich, Sgùrr Mòr, Meall Gorm and An Coileachan. Bill, Colin, Cheryl, Douglas, Christine, Sandy and Tim H took their time (well, some of us HAD to!), enjoying brilliantly clear conditions with a blustery breeze above 700m keeping us cool. On the top of Meall Gorm the views were panoramic - and Bill celebrated his 100th Munro (photos by Christine).



Perhaps the most epic day out, though, was Lynn and Kathy's. Lynn writes: "On Saturday Kathy and I started at Black

Bridge at 08:00 hrs just 2 miles to the west of the Aultguish Inn. Our objective was to climb the remote hills of the Munro Seana Bhraigh and the Corbett Carn Ban. We cycled north initially along the Strath Vaich and the eastern shore of Loch Vaich until heading west into the remote Gleann Beag, a distance of 17Km which took us over 2 hours of constant cycling. After a much-needed coffee stop we headed up a good stalkers' path to a beautiful lochan named Loch Sruban More. Our route then continued in a north-westerly direction over very rough rocky and peaty ground to the summit of Seana Bhrigh, en route spotting numerous breeding Curlew, a family of Ptarmigan and a breeding Dunlin. We then headed east along the spectacular corries of Seana Bhraigh with fantastic views all round. This was very remote country and quite slow going due to the broken, rocky nature of the ground. Just wonderful. We arrived at the summit of Carn Ban at 17:30 hrs before heading south along easy-angled slopes and picked up the stalkers' path back to our bikes. Our cycle back to Black Bridge was thankfully easier than the cycle in the morning and we arrived at Black Bridge at 20:30 hrs. We rushed back to the Aultguish Inn as we were running late for the group dinner and we were very grateful that our meal had been kept for us! A truly terrific and memorable day in the hills."

On Sunday, Lynn and Kathy had an easier day, confining themselves to "just" Cona' Mheall (where they spotted a lovely specimen of the rare Holly Fern), Meall nan Ceapraichean and the mighty Beinn Dearg.

A succinct summing up from **Richard**: "Thanks to all for a great weekend at a great venue with great company."

Glen Lyon meet, 7 July

Our July meet, to Glen Lyon, was - like Aultguish - blessed with fine weather, and we had a nearly full bus too! Two new guests, Louis Otis and Alex Williamson, joined the party variously tackling between one and four of the Carn Mairg Group while another group headed for the Lawers range. **Lynn** tells us how the latter got on:

"Cheryl, Tim F and I started from Invervar and headed for the zig-zag path that gained the north-west ridge of Meall Greigh. From there we took a contouring route to ascend Meall Garbh. In glorious weather and excellent visibility we then completed our round over a further four Munros - An Stuc, Ben Lawers, Meall Corranaich and Meall a' Choire Leith. Views in all directions were wonderful from Ben Nevis to the west and the Lomond Hills to the south. Our finishing point was at Camusvrachan where we arrived at 17:30 for a 17:35 pickup. Very few birds were seen during the day but there were a number of lovely flowers including Cyphel, Moss Campion, Mossy Saxifrage, Starry Saxifrage and Alpine Mouse-ear. A grand but strenuous walk."

Further up this loveliest of glens, Richard, Christine, Elsa, Anna, Colin, Michael and Douglas set off from Innerwick up the Allt a'Choire Uidhre, heading for the Corbett Cam Chreag. The track ended at a large corrugated iron 'bothy' complete with table with integral benches - but, as **Richard** says, "nae windaes. We had a wee refreshment and then backtracked a bit and followed an obvious path up the SE end of the Corbett. This path disappears after a short while and we took a more easy line towards the ridge and N summit, where fantastic views were available all round.

"Our descent, over softish ground, made for a comfortable rendezvous just below the dam at the end of Loch an Daimh. Here the road was lined with heath spotted-orchid and heath fragrant-orchid, much to Christine's delight, while Colin found a diminutive *Betula nana*, dwarf birch, which lives mainly in the Arctic tundra.



Left: heath spotted- and heath fragrant-orchids (photos by Christine)

Right: *Betula nana* (photo by Colin)



"Three of us opted to take the return route along the lower road via the hamlet of Gallin and Meggernie Castle,

despite notices warning us not to enter 'the curtilage of local residences (sic)' The other four, a little way behind us, were advised by a female passer-by that the lady laird was in residence and might not like this, so they returned via the main Glen Lyon road. (Douglas subsequently sent a complaint about access rights to Perth and Kinross Council, who said they will investigate, so we await developments, if any.)"

Meanwhile, Jennifer, Dave and Walter, who had also started from Innerwick, were tackling another Corbett, Beinn nan Oighreag (which, with apologies to Gaelic speakers, they found easier to call Oily Rag). Jennifer later said they had gone "Commando-style" which caused imaginations to run riot until we realised she meant it had been extremely rough underfoot. But they overcame all difficulties in time to rendezvous with the Cam Chreag party at the Bridge of Balgie Post Office for tea and cake.



The Oily Rag and Cam Chreag parties, replete with tea and cake, outside the Bridge of Balgie PO. The dog said, "Frankly, my dears, I couldn't give a damn." Photo by Douglas