

Ptarmigan Hillwalking & Mountaineering Club



Website: www.ptarmiganmc.org.uk

Monthly Newsletter

August 2023

The Meet on Sunday 6th August is to Loch Muick via Blairgowrie

DETAILS OF THE MEET

The bus will leave Waterloo Place at 07.30 and travel via Shandwick Place (bus stop opposite Boots), Haymarket, Roseburn, Drum Brae, Forth Road Bridge, M90, Blairgowrie (comfort stop), Glen Shee, Braemar and Ballater to the car park at the Spittal of Glenmuick [NO 308851] at about 11.00.

Departure time: 17.00

Bookings and cancellations: Email bookings@ptarmiganmc.org.uk

Bus Convener (Alistair Haig) Mobile Number 07402 580588: This number can be taken on the hill with each party and should be used to advise the bus convener of any problems or significant changes of plan.

Main map required: OS Landranger Sheet 44

The fare will be £25 and, while cash can be taken in the bus, it would be preferred if you could pay by bank transfer IN ADVANCE of the outing. The day before is fine. Please pay to:

PTARMIGAN MOUNTAINEERING CLUB (note name is not yet changed); 80-17-68; 00248765

For those without access to this facility, please post a cheque payable to the club, to Adrian Casey, 8 Succoth Place Edinburgh EH12 6BL.

Route Options

Munros

This area is a "Munro Baggers'" paradise – climb a single mountain or take in several in one high-level traverse. The most likely destination for members will probably be Lochnagar, a fine and complex mountain that dominates the Royal Forest of Balmoral.

Lochnagar (highest point Cac Carn Beag, 1155m [NO 244862]): access from the car park at the Spittal of Glenmuick. Descend either the way you came up or down the Glas Allt to Glas-allt-Sheil [276825] and back to the bus via Loch Muick.

Another possible approach (for fast parties only) is from Glen Callater via Carn an t-Sagairt Mor , 1047m [208843] and Carn a' Choire Bhoidheach , 1110m [226845]. Start either from Auchallater [156882] or the A93 at [140834].

Broad Cairn , 998 m [240815] from the destination car park.

Note: taking in all five White Mounth Munros from Glen Muick is just too a big a day, even for fast parties.

From Spittal of Glenshee [108700] (NB: hotel now a burnt-out ruin)
Glas Tulaichean, 1051m [051760]

Carn an Rìgh, 1029m [028773]

Beinn Iutharn Mhor, 1045m [045792]. A combination of all three would be suitable for fast parties only .

From Glenshee ski centre [138782]

An Socach, 944m [080800]

Alternatively it is possible to climb An Socach from [138833], going up the Baddoch Burn and descending ESE to the ski centre.

The Cairnwell, 933m [135773]

Carn Aosda, 917m [134792]

Carn a' Gheoidh, 975m [107767]

All three could be done with the option of returning to the Spittal of Glenshee (hotel now a ruin) either by going south over Carn Mor or by a scenic descent westwards into Gleann Taitneach.

From the A93 north of the ski centre, at [148800]

Glas Maol, 1068m [167765]

Creag Leacach, 987m [154745]

Carn an Tuirc, 1019m [174804]

Cairn of Claise, 1064m [185789]

Tolmount, 958m [210800]

Tom Buidhe, 957m [214788]

Corbetts

From A93 at Dalhenzean [127681] or Slochnacraig [125686]: Monamenach, 807m [176706]

From lay-by on A93 at [114714]: Ben Gulabin, 806m [100722]

From A93 at [140834]: Creag nan Gabhar 834m, [154841]

From Chapel Brae, Braemar: Morrone/Morven, 859m [132886]

Morvern 871m, [377040] may be attempted from the Pass of Ballater [365970]

Conachcraig, 865m [280865] (un-named on OS 44) can be approached from the north at Balmoral or by a shorter, less scenic route from the car park at Spittal of Glenmuick. Caisteal na Caillich, 862m [283874] and the lesser top of Conachcraig, 850m [285872] are named and all three can be climbed from the track to the south or the one to the north-east of the car park at the Spittal of Glenmuick.

Grahams

From junction of A93 & B951 at [NO 142633]: Mount Blair, 744m [167630], Mealna Letter or Duchray Hill, 702m [161672]

Geallaig, 743m [298981] can be done by a loop walk from Crathie leaving the B976 at [281000] and rejoining it at [267987]

Lower level

The best walks from the bus are circuits of Loch Callater or Loch Muick, to which a side trip of 2.5km may be added up the Allt an Dubh-loch to see the Dubh Loch in its dramatic setting backed by a wall of rugged cliffs. There are also some fine walks through the glens starting from the Spittal of Glenshee, such as the Cateran Trail.

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.

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

WhatsApp Group

You are reminded that we have now set up a WhatsApp group to enable members to exchange plans for the day in advance which may take some pressure off the bus convener. The group currently has 37 members. If you have not already joined and would like to do so, please email secretary@ptarmiganmc.org.uk with your mobile number and you will be sent a link.

What we did last month

Long weekend 23 – 26 June: Ariundle Centre, Strontian.

Following the long spell of settled weather, the rain put in an appearance just before we set off on Friday. Having arrived at the centre late afternoon without any desire to head into the by now wet hills, some set off for a short circular walk up and down the Strontian River before dinner at the restaurant in the centre itself for half of us. I think it's fair to say that the service was a little chaotic, which fitted in with the manner in which Douglas's friend Bill was treated, resulting in him spending the first two nights on a mattress on the floor of the men's quarters until the staff saw sense and gave him his own room on the third night (agreeing not to charge him at all in the end).

In terms of hillwalking, we all tackled quite a long walk up the Strontian River through a very attractive local nature trail, eventually emerging from the woodland to tackle Sgurr Dhomhnuill. However, this required crossing the river bed, which had filled up considerably over the weekend necessitating awkward boulder hopping to the far bank. One of us 'took an early bath', another removed her boots, while Elsa and Wendy decided to stay on the north side of the river.

As a result those two had to head all the way up the glen north of the ridge the rest of us climbed en route to Sgurr na-h-Ighinn, slightly south of our target summit. After quite a struggle up some steep slopes amazingly we all arrived in the mist on the top of Sgurr Domhnuill at the same time. A tricky descent down the north face eventually, albeit in improving weather, led to us being well spaced out and by the time of our return to base, most experiencing about nine hours on the hill.

(Ptarmigans below Sgurr Domhnuill & Lesser Butterfly Orchid: Pics by Colin Shepherd.)



On Sunday, based on the forecast for more rain, eight of us opted to Drive to Castle Tioram for a short, hilly but attractive circuit taking in the side of Beinn Bhreac then following the Loch Moidart shore line back to the castle. Mercifully, there were only a few midges in evidence. In Acharacle we found the appropriately named Café Tioram (Tearoom anybody?) which provided a delightful spread in short order. Wendy and Emily opted for a later start by heading east to tackle Garbh Bheinn and were just back in time for our scheduled dinner date at the centre, which thankfully went well and was enjoyed by all.

(Castle Tioram: Pics by Colin Shepherd)



Most of us headed straight home on Monday morning, other than the indefatigable Wendy, Emily and Cherie who took on Ben More and Stobinian. Several of us reported tick bites but after an initial scare on my part (an unexplained rash on my lower legs a week later) I think we have all emerged relatively unscathed from the weekend. Thanks to Douglas for sorting out most of the organisational problems. Although there are some improvements which need to be made at the centre, it was generally reckoned to be a pleasant and comfortable venue. (Richard Love)

Glen Nevis 2 July 2023

With the weather forecast predicting atrocious conditions in the West Highlands, we encouraged the 18 who turned up to head further east. As a result Moy was the furthest west anyone ventured. Four of us (Tim, Graham, Alex W and I) decided to start at Gallovie, close to the head of Loch Laggan, heading to Dalwhinnie, possibly via the Fara.

This got off to a bad start when we overshot the turning by nearly a kilometre before realising our error. After retracing our steps on a normally busy road we tramped on at a good pace until we reached the junction between the track to Loch Pattack and the path to the Fara. Tim and Graham decided to tackle the latter while Alex and I stuck with the lower level route: Alex because he was enjoying the route and I because I was already feeling leg weary and not prepared for more 'suffering' than necessary. We still kept up a good pace with waterproofs going on and off at regular intervals but the rain was nowhere near as bad as forecast.

I was (un)surprised to find that structural work is still going on at Ben Alder Lodge and there were dozens of crates of cut granite at the entrance to the BA estate at Dalwhinnie waiting to be employed somewhere. Undoubtedly the walk back along Loch Ericht doesn't have much to recommend it but we hoped to reach the fleshpots of Dalwhinnie in time for some refreshment. However, the closure of all means of crossing the railway line at the station meant a slight diversion, so would the Deerstalker, as the café is now called, be open for droukit walkers? We arrived literally as they were closing but blagged a couple of carry out teas. Not a very summer-friendly welcome.

The website of The Apiary in Station Road stated that it stayed open till 6 pm, so we gave it a shot as it served beer as well as teas and food. We found that this was true and we got a fantastic welcome from the new owner, who does indeed keep bees and has a much more user-friendly approach to customers. He said they actually closed at 4.30 on Sunday but weren't going to turn us away if we wanted to stay till 6.00. Having just started our second beer (bottled only) we were surprised to receive a message from Wendy that the bus had just arrived at the pick-up point 45 minutes early.

Once the others, including Douglas, our bus convener, had arrived we were able to set off early giving time for a longer than scheduled stop at Pitlochry (caused by a couple of miscreants 'misinterpreting' the departure time. Aye right!). All in all, a much better day than expected. (Richard Love).

(Ptarmigans on the Fara: Pictures by Douglas Tullis)



Ian Chuter

Ian Chuter died at home on 21st June at the age of 93. He joined the club in the late 1970s, a few years after I joined in 1972. He became its treasurer from about 1981 until 2006, keeping a good grip on the club's finances, aiming to balance the books after any loss-making trip and handing over a mass of immaculate Supercalc spreadsheets when Roger Holme took over briefly before John Townshend became treasurer thereafter. He continued to attend AGMs until at least 2014.

He was a stalwart on the hill and completed his Munros twice during his time with the club, only giving up when a heart condition slowed him down on uphill sections. Other than his prowess on the hills, he will be remembered for his extremely useful and usually accurate forecast for the day ahead, as he was a dedicated professional meteorologist, and before online forecasts became readily available. Ever the optimist, he was heard to say once: 'The sun is up there somewhere.' An additional claim to fame was his unrivalled knowledge of dropping off places and lay-bys, particularly on the A9, essential when not wanting our bus to hold up traffic heading north.

He was a senior colleague at Napier of John Savage, himself a former Chairman and bus convener of the club, who continued to maintain a friendship with Ian and accompanied him on hill and lesser walks into Ian's declining years. Thanks to John, Ian probably kept physically fitter than he would have done otherwise. In the words of one long-standing member: 'He fought a good fight'.

The club extends condolences and best wishes to his wife Hazel and son Jeremy, who occasionally came out with the club, daughter Caroline and grandchildren Merryn and Amber.

Richard Love