

Ptarmigan Hillwalking & Mountaineering Club



Website: www.ptarmiganmc.org.uk

Monthly Newsletter

August 2024

The Meet on Sunday 4th August is to Ballachulish

DETAILS OF THE MEET

The bus will leave Waterloo Place at 07.30 and travel via Shandwick Place (bus stop opposite Boots), Haymarket, Roseburn, Currys PC World, comfort stop in Callander. It is estimated to arrive at Ballachulish at 10.45.

**Please note: The bus may proceed to Kentallen, with a further drop-off if required about 2km south of Kentallen, at the west end of Glen Duror (NM995555), providing an excellent opportunity to make a west-to-east traverse of Beinn a Bheithir. (For fast parties only)*

Departure times: Ballachulish Tourist Info 17.30; Glen Coe visitor centre 17.35; Kingshouse 17.45; Bridge of Orchy 18.05; Tyndrum 18.15; Lochearnhead 18.55; Callander 19.50; arrive Edinburgh approx. 21.00.

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

Main map required: OS 1:50 000 Sheet 41 Ben Nevis, Fort William & Glen Coe

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

Bus departure times - a reminder

We always aim for our buses to leave Waterloo Place promptly at 07:30 am on the day of an outing. It is difficult to predict the times at which the bus will arrive at other pick up points which will depend on traffic, any roadworks etc but the roads are usually very quiet at that time of day. We have a note of who is due to be joining the bus at Waterloo Place and the other pick up points. If anyone is missing, the bus will usually wait for two minutes at any pick up point but will not normally wait for any longer than that."

Route Options

Munros - There are a huge range of possibilities with various starting points.

Beinn a Bheithir, which offers two Munro summits: **Sgorr Dhonuill**, 1001m, NN040555 and **Sgorr Dhearg**, 1024m, NN056558. The bus may go west from an initial stop in Ballachulish to Kentallen, providing an excellent opportunity to make a west-to-east traverse.

<https://www.walkhighlands.co.uk/fortwilliam/beinnabheithir.shtml>

Sgor na h-Ulaidh, 994m, NN111518 can be linked to the Corbett **Meall Ligiche**. Access from the lay-by at Achnacon, NN118565 with the possibility of walking to the Clachaig Inn at the end of the day.

<https://www.walkhighlands.co.uk/fortwilliam/sgornaulaidh.shtml>

Bidean nam Bian, 1150m, NN143542; **Stob Coire Sgreamhach**, 1072m, NN154536 can both be accessed via the Lost Valley from Allt-na-reigh, NN172569 but nowhere very obvious to wait for the returning bus.

<https://www.walkhighlands.co.uk/fortwilliam/bideannambian.shtml>

Buchaille Etive Beag offers two Munro summits: **Stob Dubh**, 958m, NN179535 and **Stob Coire Raineach**, 925m, NN191548. Access from the beehive cairn lay by at NN187563. Again, nowhere very obvious to wait for the returning bus. <https://www.walkhighlands.co.uk/fortwilliam/buachailleetivebeag.shtml>

Buchaille Etive Mor also offers two Munros: **Stob Dearg**, 1021m, NN223543 and **Stob na Boige**, 956m, NN190525. Access Altnafeadh, NN221563. It might be possible at the end of the day to walk along the WHW to the Kings House Hotel. <https://www.walkhighlands.co.uk/fortwilliam/buachailleetivemor.shtml>

Aonach Eagach: Not for the faint hearted but the whole Aonach Eagach ridge is probably too time-consuming for this outing. The Munro **Sgor nam Fiannaidh**, 967m, NN140583 can be climbed from Loch Achtriochtan or from the Pap of Glencoe col. <https://www.walkhighlands.co.uk/fortwilliam/aonacheagach.shtml>

From the ski centre, with the possibility of taking the chairlift part of the way up, two of the Black Mount Munros, **Meall a Bhuidh** 1108 m NN250503 and **Creise** 1100m NN238506 could both be reached. Pick up would be at the road end but there is a café at the ski centre and the Kings House would be reachable.

<https://www.walkhighlands.co.uk/fortwilliam/creise.shtml>

From the Bridge of Orchy Hotel, **Beinn Dorain** 1076m NN326378 and **Beinn an Dothaidh** 1002m NN332408 can both be reached. <https://www.walkhighlands.co.uk/argyll/beinn-dorain.shtml>

From Dalrigh NN343292 with a short walk to Tyndrum at the end of the day, **Ben Dubhchraig** 978m [NN308255] and **Ben Oss** 1029m [NN287253] would be possible. <https://www.walkhighlands.co.uk/argyll/ben-oss.shtml>

Ben More 1174m NN432244 and **Stobinian** 1165m NN434227 could both be done from Ben More Farm NN413258 with a walk back along the road to Crianlarich at the end of the day.

<https://www.walkhighlands.co.uk/lochlomond/ben-more.shtml>

Corbetts

The possibilities include:

Beinn a' Chrùlaiste, 857m, NN246566 can be accessed from Altnafeadh ending the day at the Kings House Hotel or as a circuit from either. <https://www.walkhighlands.co.uk/fortwilliam/beinn-a-chrulaiste.shtml>

Fraochaidh, 879m, NN029517. Access from Ballachulish
<https://www.walkhighlands.co.uk/fortwilliam/fraochaidh.shtml>

Beinn Odhar 904m NN337338, **Beinn Chaorach** 818m NN358328 and **Cam Chreag** 884m NN358328 could be done from Tyndrum

<https://www.walkhighlands.co.uk/corbetts/beinn-odhar>

Grahams

The possibilities include:

Sgorr na Ciche/The Pap of Glencoe, 742m, NN125594. Access NN105590 from Glencoe Village.

<https://www.walkhighlands.co.uk/fortwilliam/papofglencoe.shtml>

Sgorr a' Choise, 663m, NN084551; Meall Mor, 676m, NN106559. Access Ballachulish.
<https://www.walkhighlands.co.uk/fionas/sgorr-achoise>

Low Level

A good walk starting from the A82 at the "beehive" cairn is round the base of Buchaille Etive Beag via the two passes, Lairig Gartain and Lairig Eilde then following the WHW to the Kings House hotel.

Various sections of the West Highland Way are possible.

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.

'Everyone should be aware that the Scottish hills can provide more challenging days than the height and distance alone may indicate. Preferably robust boots should be worn and clothing worn or carried suitable to deal with wet, windy and cold weather at any season. A change of clothing in the bus is also advisable too. See additional advice for winter conditions.'

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. If you have not already joined and would like to do so, please email secretary@ptarmiganmc.org.uk

Highways Hillwalking Club

For many years we have had an informal association with the Highways Hillwalking Club in terms of which our members are welcome as guests on their outings and vice versa without restriction of the number of such outings that can be attended. The HHC operates a programme very similar to ours, also using MacLeod Coaches, but usually on the second Sunday of the month. The combined programme for both clubs can be found in the Meets section of our website and full details of the HHC including how to sign up for their outings are available at their website: <https://sites.google.com/site/highways3102/home> "

What we did last month

Colin Shepherd writes: Another good outing with Ptarmigan Hillwalking & Mountaineering Club on Sunday, this time to Carie on the south shores of Loch Rannoch. Our small group of four, Cherie, Diane, Lewis and myself managed to climb two of the four Glen Lyon Munros, Carn Gorm and Meall Garbh from the north.

As so often when starting off in a plantation we had some initial difficulty in finding the correct route to follow but we were soon making good progress on the track through the woodland, reaching the forest edge in around an hour, where we had to scale a locked gate in the deer fence to gain access to the open hillside. From there the going was tougher, over rough, tussocky, boggy ground until we gained the summit ridge of Meall Droilichean, where the underfoot conditions made for much easier progress on short cropped heath. From the ridge there were fine views south to the Ben Lawers range and the Tarmachan ridge with Ben More and Stobinian visible in the distance. During our ascent we disturbed a herd of perhaps twenty Red Deer which stampeded upwards from the wide corrie and on

over the ridge. There were one or two some rain showers but fortunately these passed over quickly. On reaching the summit of Carn Gorm we had clear views down into Glen Lyon but the chilly wind didn't encourage us to linger, so we descended to find a more sheltered spot to eat our lunch.



The group on Carn Gorm & Meall Garbh: Pictures by Colin Shepherd.

There is a good path between Carn Gorm and Meall Garbh and we reached our second Munro fairly quickly. From there we followed an intermittent path back down to Corrie Carie where we picked up another forest track on the opposite side of the Carie Burn from the one we had ascended in the morning. We got back to Carie just after 4.30, and as everyone else was being picked up in Kinloch Rannoch we set off early, allowing us to stop for a drink in the highly salubrious, though not inexpensive, bar of the recently refurbished Dunalistair Hotel, described by the Torygraph as 'the perfect place for those who love the great outdoors but aren't prepared to rough it' Are we getting soft?

Meanwhile, two other Ptarmigan groups took in Schiehallion and the Corbett Beinn a' Chuallaich. Here is Alistair Haigs take on their day. Alighting Jim's bus a few km north of the Glengoulandie campsite on a dry, overcast morning, we set off for highland Perthshire's famous summit by a road less travelled. A large gate marked the entrance to a community woodland. From here, ten of us set off along a path including several guests on their first outing: Bob, Elliot, Melissa and Sarah. We enjoyed a variety of woodland with colourful bloom and the heather starting to turn. I think we had the path to ourselves. After about half an hour Schiehallion appeared, the classic mountain-shaped mountain, with the cloud level well above the summit.



Ptarmigans en route to Schiehallion & at the summit: Pictures by Sara Knight & Alistair Haig

Our path joined the restored “tourist” path and here we started our ascent, meeting other walkers but not the masses I had anticipated. After negotiating the rocky ridge we had time to relax in good weather for a summit lunch before setting off down the steep western slopes. Down in the glen we joined a path which some used to return to Kinloch Rannoch.

Justin, Sarah, Tim and I set our sights on Gael Charn, the 792m summit almost directly due west of Schehallion. The bog was not too wet but cross-country walking was a contrast to the good paths on the way up and scented with bog myrtle. Our second summit offered wonderful views back to Schehallion and over Loch Rannoch to distant peaks at Glen Coe. Rather than take a muddy ATV track back we opted to descend a southern ridge almost all the way to the minor road leading back to Kinloch Rannoch, with fine views north and west ending in a beautiful mixed woodlands at the foot of the glen. Unsurprisingly we had this off-path route to ourselves. From here we passed a shooting lodge and joined the road for a few kilometres past fields with deer and fine horses. Jims bus was outside the plush Dunalastair Hotel where we met the entire bus to enjoy a drink together before setting off back to Edinburgh.

The other Ptarmigan group taking a break & on the summit of Beinn a’Chullaich: Pictures by Alex Williamson



PHMC Rum Weekend: 28 June – 1 July 2024

Sixteen of us headed off to Mallaig in a variety of cars at 7 am on Friday to catch the Rum ferry. Only thirteen of us arrived as scheduled on Rum, carting all our stuff: food, drink and gear for our next three days of activity.

What happened to the other three, you may well ask? The first that we knew something was wrong was via a series of WhatsApp messages from Wendy asking if anyone was south of Ballachulish, where Jo’s car had broken down, so that we could pick them up in time to get the 12.50 sailing. Unfortunately the rest of us were already nearing Mallaig or had travelled a different route.

One of those involved can no doubt enlarge on the story but the RAC took the stricken car back to Edinburgh while Jo, Wendy and Peter managed to book an apartment in Fort William for the night and hire a taxi to whisk them to Mallaig for the 7.30 ferry on Saturday. Jo subsequently decided to return home to support her stricken vehicle, so we were down to fifteen.

With a cancelled or delayed ferry a possibility, the rest of us had managed a slightly rough crossing direct to Rum, where we arrived in time for most of us to explore one of the local hills, Mullach Mor, just north of Kinloch. This packed a bigger punch than we had expected in more ways than one. Although standing at only 304 m high, the approach along part of the marked ‘Nature Trail’ soon petered out into a rather muddy and boggy path we were following so that we could avoid most of the tree covered lower slopes.

We eventually headed upwards in a largely north-easterly direction which mirrored the lie of the land but without finding any obvious track. The ground was a warren of holes obscured by long, lush grass, so progress was slow.

Breaking into two smaller groups we traversed a series of false summits before arriving at the trig point which gave some sort of satisfaction, knowing that we needed to pretty well retrace our steps to attain the Nature Trail once again. Walter took a tumble on the descent and we all slid more than once into hidden hollows sometimes getting a boot soak. But we did all made it back to the bunkhouse, having picked up essential supplies (beer anybody?) at the village store.

Later Walter realised that his phone was missing, presumed to have been ejected from a pocket during his tumble, but some resident geology students helped locate the position of the phone so, after the next day's activities, Walter and Colin headed back to the identified location but were unsuccessful in finding it. A further sortie the next morning failed to find it either (battery flat), so it's a new phone for you, Walter (done!).

On the two full available days, most of us on Saturday headed westwards to tackle Orval, which was mostly cloud capped, while Walter and I headed to Harris to see the mausoleum for the Bullough family who had previously owned the island. En route we saw several red deer, several long haired feral goats and a cuckoo, which later serenaded us as we retraced our steps. We had a few short sharp showers during the day to keep us on our toes and it was good to know that Wendy and Peter had arrived early enough to get a walk in too.

Sunday was a much brighter day which encouraged a large contingent to take on Hallival and, in some cases Askival, as a subsequent collection of photos on WhatsApp confirmed. Walter, Lesley and I headed down to Kilmory where the long-running red deer study is based. It was sunny and warm for a change, so we had a relaxing hour or so watching the relatively unspooked does and their fawns, until some other walkers startled them into crossing to the side of another hill. One or two visitors on the sandy beach had braved the sea for a swim but we did not.

The bunkhouse was very well appointed with plenty of space for sitting and cooking, so is to be recommended to future parties. The shop was well stocked with food and beer and was open most of the day. The only problem for us was that we had to vacate the bunkhouse at 9.30/10 am and our ferry wasn't due till about 4 pm. Fortunately this ferry called at Rum on its way to other islands, so we managed to talk our way aboard at 12.50 for a pleasant tour of the Small Isles in warmth and comfort and the chance for a hot meal before the long drive home. Fortunately for Peter and Wendy, Peter Clark had offered to take them back home in his car.

Wendy adds: Peter and I were really pleased to make it to Rum eventually, but felt bad for Jo that she wasn't able to join us, given her kind offer to drive us in the first place. Richard and Colin's reports are pretty comprehensive but I just wanted to mention two additional attractions on Rum: the otter hide and Kinloch Castle. Sadly there was not an otter to be seen from the former (despite several visits), but the castle and its decaying contents (peered at through dirty windows and some half-hearted Heras fencing), prompted an interesting debate on the future and purpose of buildings like this.

All in all a great weekend – and NO MIDGES!

Richard Love



Kinloch House: Pictures by Wendy Farmer

Hallival and Askival by Colin Shepherd

With a promising forecast we decided that Sunday would be the best day to tackle some of Rum's higher tops, so a group of us comprising Wendy, Cherie, Lynn, Cathy, Peter Mackenzie Smith, Richard Bennett and myself set off from the Bunkhouse just before 9am. As we walked up the well constructed path towards Coire Dubh, passing on the way an attractive rusted metal sculpture depicting the life cycle of the enigmatic Manx Shearwater, there was still a fair amount of cloud shrouding the upper slopes but this was definitely beginning to lift .

An obvious path led us from the abandoned dam in Coire Dubh up to the scoured, rocky slopes of Cnapan Breaca above which the summit cone of Hallival was now emerging from the cloud. The final section of ascent was steep but relatively straightforward, the only difficulties being one or two short rocky steps requiring a little scrambling, and we reached the broad grassy summit just as it was finally clearing, giving us great views back down towards Kinloch and Loch Scresort. On the way up we passed the numerous burrows of Manx Shearwaters which nest underground on the high tops of the Rum Cuillin, home to the largest breeding colony in the world. These delicate and streamlined birds, much more suited to a life skimming over the ocean waves than on land, only emerge from and return to their nests under cover of darkness as they are subject to heavy predation by gulls. It is believed that the disquieting sound of their calls emanating from underground gave rise to Norse stories of Trolls, from which the hill Trollabhal (Trollaval) gets its name.



The final push & the summit of Hallival: Pictures by Colin Shepherd

The descent to the bealach between Hallival and Askival was even steeper and rockier than the ascent and proved a bit too much for most in our group, with only Richard and myself continuing on, while the others retraced their steps to explore the lower top of Barkeval. History does not record whether that hill gets its name from the sound of some mythical Viking era dogs.



The route ahead up the even steeper slopes of Askival looked pretty intimidating but Richard led the way on an intermittent path through the rocky outcrops and apart from one slightly difficult manoeuvre near the top during which I used as many points of contact as possible, it wasn't as bad as it looked. Emerging onto the summit beside the trig point the views over the Minch were stupendous, from Coll and Tiree to the south, Skye and the other Small Isles nearer to hand and the hills of the Outer Hebrides in the distance to the west.

(Steep descent from Hallival: Picture by Colin Shepherd)

The descent towards the Bealach an Oír was steep but not difficult, with all the surrounding hills bathed in afternoon sunshine. I had

originally thought we might manage a short foray onto Trollabhal but quite frankly by that time I for one was pretty tired, so instead we made the long and rather tedious traverse around the trackless head of Atlantic Corrie back to the Bealach Bairc-mheal where we picked up the path back to Kinloch.



View back to Hallival from the upper slopes of Askival & Eigg from Askival: Pictures by Colin Shepherd



Descending from Askival towards the head of Dibidil Glen, with Ainhval to the left and Trollabhal on the right: