

Ptarmigan Hillwalking & Mountaineering Club



Website: www.ptarmiganmc.org.uk

Monthly Newsletter

December 2021

The Meet on December 5th is to the Ochil Hills

Covid has made planning for the trip more complicated; so please read the following, highlighted in yellow, carefully:

On board the bus, we will keep things as safe as possible by:

- Allocating no more than 20 seats
- Asking you to wear a mask and use hand sanitiser when getting on and off the bus
- Requesting no eating, drinking or unnecessary waiting in the bus
- Entering the bus by one end and exiting by the other - tbc with Jim McLeod, the owner

In addition, if you could take a lateral flow test the day before the meet, that would be appreciated. Self-test kits are available free from NHS Scotland.

If, for any reason, you find at the last minute that you can't come, please let Tim Featherstone know (details below) so that we don't spend time waiting for you.

Adrian Casey, Club Treasurer, says: The fare will be £20. For extra safety we would like to avoid cash payments as we restart. We would be most grateful if you could pay by bank transfer IN ADVANCE of this 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 me a cheque payable to the club, to Adrian Casey, 8 Succoth Place Edinburgh EH12 6BL.

If no more than 10 people book by 12.00 noon on the Saturday, we will cancel the bus and let you know. In the event of cancellation, any fare already paid will either be refunded or held against a future trip. Anyone who cancels at the last minute with suspected Covid symptoms will similarly get a refund.

DETAILS OF THE MEET

The bus will leave Waterloo Place at 07.30 going via Shandwick Place (bus stop opposite Boots), Haymarket, Roseburn, Drum Brae, Queensferry Crossing, M90, Kinross Services (short stop) and Yetts o' Muckhart. From there we will take the A823 as far as the Lower Glendevon Reservoir road-end at NN948053 for those wanting to start in the heart of the Ochils. Then the bus will turn round, rejoin the A91 and go on to Tillicoultry, parking there for the day. On the return journey it will include a pick-up at Dollar but not go up the A823 again.

The bus will leave Tillicoultry at 15.30 prompt.

Bus Convener:

Bookings and cancellations: either 1. (preferably) Email bookings@ptarmiganmc.org.uk
or 2. Text or phone Tim Featherstone on 075 49 48 0321

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

Map required: OS 1:50 000 sheet 58 Perth to Alloa

Route Options

Higher level (including one Graham, five Donalds, all in bold)

For those getting off at the Reservoir Road End, a track takes you past a few small farms and Lower Glendevon Reservoir to the southern inlet of Upper Glendevon Reservoir at Backhills. The path from here leads east for a short distance before turning south back to Tillicoultry. From Backhills you can climb Backhill itself (584m) [NN904025], 584m) and Ben Buck (677m) and come back via **Ben Cleuch** (721m) (Graham; also a Donald) and The Law (638m).

You could also start from the same point and extend the above route by first walking the hills north of the two reservoirs – starting with Common Hill (415m) [NN940050] and going on to Wether Hill (502m) and Craigentaggert Hill (491m), then descending to the Glen Bee track where a path continues round the reservoir to Backhills.

An excellent traverse starts a mile or so down the glen at [NN967053]. Cross the River Devon and climb Ben Shee (515m). Descend and climb the gradual slopes to Scad Hill, Cairnmorris Hill and Skythorn Hill. Finish this traverse by continuing over Andrew Gannel Hill (670m), **Ben Cleuch** (721m) and Ben Ever (622m).

Even further down the valley, you can get off at Borland where a path leaves the road at [NN984047]. Head for the grassy ridge which can be followed as far as **Innerdownie** (611m), Whitewisp Hill (643m), **Tarmangie Hill** (645m) to Skythorn Hill (603m) where the path to **Ben Cleuch** via Andrew Gannel Hill (670m) can be picked up.

The usual Dollar to Tillicoultry rounds taking in Bank Hill (344m) and **King's Seat** (648m) with Andrew Gannel Hill (670m) and **Ben Cleuch** are justifiably popular. Alva Glen is always worth a visit and this could be included in a Tillicoultry return round including **Blairdenon Hill** (631m), Ben Ever and **Ben Cleuch**. A pleasant woodland track leads between Alva and Tillicoultry.

Lower level

A low-level walk starts at Borland from where you can walk up Glen Quey past the reservoir and Maiden's Well. This path then continues down past the wooded Hillfoot Hill and into the excellent Dollar Glen (remember your NTS Card if you wish to visit Castle Campbell).

There's also The Devon Way (an old railway line) between Tillicoultry and Dollar which can be extended to Pool of Muckhart (see: <https://www.scotsman.com/news/walk-of-the-week-dollar-to-muckhart-1-2898970>)

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.

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 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.

Annual General Meeting report

Thank you to the 11 members who attended the AGM on 16 November by Zoom. The Acting Chair, Douglas Tullis, dealt briskly with the business, the main outcomes of which were:

The Club has £2700 in assets, despite the fall in subscription income. There are 29 paid-up members and it is hoped that others will re-join in 2021-22. Subscriptions will return to pre-pandemic values (£25, £40 per couple, £15 for MS members, £10 for non-walking members) and it's to be hoped that a more normal year ahead will keep the finances stable. The bus fare will be £20, though the Committee will monitor bus bookings carefully and may change the fare if necessary. An encouraging number of membership enquiries are coming via the website.

Richard Love will continue as Chair for one more year. The Treasurer (Adrian Casey) and Webmaster (Tim Featherstone) will also remain in post. The job of Secretary is being divided into three, with Kevin Russell continuing as Newsletter Secretary, Christine Thompson as Membership Secretary, and Douglas Tullis as Secretary (meetings, correspondence, etc).

The programme for next year (brought forward from 2019) was approved: it's on the last page.

What we did on the last Meet

Back at last!!! Ptarmigans by the bus & on Ben Vrackie. Pictures from Douglas Tullis



Back at Last! Pictures & words from Colin Shepherd

The Club's first coach based outing since March 2020 took place on Sunday 7th November after an unprecedented 20 month break due to the Covid pandemic, the only remotely similar disruption to our programme having occurred in 2001 when meets were cancelled for a couple of months due to Foot and Mouth. I can't have been the only member worried whether the Club would be able to survive after such a long hiatus, so it was a great relief to find that 15 people had signed up for the outing, the maximum number as the Club has decided for the present to maintain a degree of social distancing on the bus. Those attending included two first time guests, Alistair and Tom, who hopefully enjoyed their day with us.

With extremely strong winds forecast for higher summits, many of us had already decided on a lower level route and a traverse of Ben Vrackie from Pitlochry to Blair Atholl seemed the obvious choice. In the event everyone chose this route, with the option of avoiding the summit altogether and following the path around Loch a Choire if conditions proved too difficult higher up. With MWIS later reporting a wind speed of 105 mph at the Cairnwell at 4am on the Sunday morning, this definitely seems to have been the sensible choice.

Jim was able to drive the bus up to Moulin, reducing our initial climb, so we all set off from the car park behind the hotel, following a minor road and then the path up through some attractive mixed woodland until we reached the open moorland beyond. From then on we were fully exposed to the strong wind but otherwise the conditions were good and it remained dry and bright throughout the day.

By the time we reached the Loch the wind was noticeably stronger, funnelled through the bealach between Meall na h-Aodainn Moire and the main summit, and we were buffeted as we walked across the low dam, with waves being



blown forcibly against the dam wall and splashing over the path. Nevertheless we decided to proceed to the summit, the route climbing steeply ahead of us. For most of the way we were relatively sheltered, protected by the bulk of the hill, but on reaching the summit ridge we were suddenly exposed to the full force of the gale. Staying upright on the summit proved a challenge but just a few feet below we were able to sit in relative comfort on the lee slope, enjoying a fine view southwards along the course of the River Tummel and Silvery Tay (© W McGonagall) with the water glinting in the low autumnal sunlight. The hills around were completely bare of snow other than a very light dusting on the summit of Beinn a'Ghlo.

At this point Lynn and Tim split from the main group and set off along the north east ridge for a route which took them to Blair Atholl via Shinagag, Loch Moraig and Fenderbridge, while the rest of us retraced our steps down to the Loch. From there we took the path which cuts round the Loch, across the slope of Meall na h-Aodainn Moire and ultimately down to Killiecrankie. This route was much boggier than the well constructed path up from Moulin and evidence of the recent heavy rain was apparent in deep trenches which had been gouged out on steeper sections of the moorland track. Inevitably on the long descent the group split so that by the time we reached Killiecrankie the vanguard was out of sight. This gave four of us, Agnes, Carol, Adrian and myself, an excuse to stop off at the NTS Visitor Centre for coffee and cake!

Batteries suitably recharged we followed a path down through the woods into the gorge to view The Soldier's Leap, but decided that on the whole the bridge slightly upstream at Killiecrankie village presented a safer option for crossing the river. From the bridge we followed a quiet road along the south west bank of the River Garry towards Blair Atholl and recrossed the river by the footbridge there.

Anticipating a refreshing drink, we entered the Atholl Arms Hotel only to be told that there was no space in the bar and that although there were tables outside, we couldn't order anything to be served there! It must be said that the bar was very busy when we arrived and the waitress was clearly rather stressed, perhaps not helped by the fact that our forward party had already commandeered a table and were crowded round it. We retreated outside to sit rather gloomily eating the remains of our packed lunches but fortunately within a few minutes the waitress reappeared to tell us that an inside table was now available. Greatly relieved we re-entered the bar to sample some fine beers from the Moulin Brewery and shortly after Lynn and Tim appeared having successfully completed their cross country route.



With everyone off the hill in good time, we were able to set off from Blair Atholl at 5pm and round off a very successful day with a short stop for fish and chips in Pitlochry, arriving back in Edinburgh around 7 o'clock.



Programme for 2022

January	No meet
February	Arrochar/Butterbridge
March	Lowther Hills/Wanlockhead
April	Taynuilt
May	Loch Arkaig
June	Coire Cas
24-26 June	Kintail weekend
July	Glen Creran
August	Glen Muick
September	Kinlochleven
October	Linn of Dee
November	Luss/Arrochar with High Tea at Balloch
December	Moffat