

Ptarmigan Hillwalking & Mountaineering Club



Website: www.ptarmiganmc.org.uk

Monthly Newsletter

December 2023

The Meet on Sunday 3rd December is to the Ochil Hills

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 16.00 prompt.

Bus convener: Douglas Tullis 07847254204

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

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

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.

Members are reminded that the mountains are now in full winter mode. Ice-axe and crampons must be carried if you're walking above the snow-line.

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. Thereafter the route is largely trackless and 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). *(Please note: This route uses a track, not shown on the OS 1:50 000 map, to go back to the eastern end of the reservoir. This route would avoid a potentially difficult river crossing, but adds distance - probably more than 15 mins).*

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 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 with your mobile number and **you** will be sent a link.

What we did last month

Colin Shepherd writes: Absolutely perfect day for our November meet in Blair Atholl, with brilliant blue skies overhead and beautiful autumnal colours in the glens. Our group of nine followed the public road up Glen Fender as far as Tomnaguie, then took a muddy track heading towards Meall Dail Min, at the end of which our way was blocked by a large new deer fence. We'd earlier met someone who told us that there was an extensive area of mixed tree planting from Upper Glen Fender over to Glen Tilt. Having successfully, if a little precariously, climbed the fence, we made the final few metres of ascent to the summit of Meall Dail Min through short heather, where we had spectacular views not only of the nearer hills, including Beinn a'Ghlo, Carn a' Chlamain and Ben Vrackie but also of Schiehallion, Ben Lawers and even of the very distant Grey Corries. We could also hear the distant roaring of stags from the other side of Glen Tilt. The low autumnal sunshine helped pick out the remains of numerous long abandoned shielings or townships dotting the landscape. (Some of the earliest large scale Highland Clearances were ordered in the Glen Tilt area in the late eighteenth century by the Dukes of Atholl)



Lawers Group to the left, Schiehallion to the right: Picture by Alex Williamson

After a short coffee stop, we followed the line of an old fence and drystone dyke onto Meall Bhlair and Meall Duibhinidh, then descended slightly to Caisteal Dubh where we had lunch on the site of an ancient homestead with splendid views up Glen Tilt towards Forest Lodge. A short, steepish descent took us down to the Glen Tilt track near Marble Lodge and from there it was an easy walk back to Blair Atholl and the Atholl Arms Hotel, Blair Atholl, where we were able to partake of some Moulin Ale or other beverages, before sitting down to a very convivial high tea.

Here is Richard Loves take of the same walk:

After all the rain we've had recently it was a joy to experience balmy autumn sun, mist and trees all shades of red, yellow and brown. Not only that but we had a good turnout of 21 for the high tea and, presumably, the hillwalks. My group, which started off as two, gradually snowballed to nine (Peter, Alex, Cherie, Cathy, Lesley, Elsa, Coney joining us). The whole busload initially set off up the road towards Fenderbridge, cutting off along the way, depending on whether they were continuing to Beinn a'Ghlo or Beinn Mheadhonach.

We, following Colin's pre-planned route, carried on past Tirinie then headed uphill past a large wood onto Meall Dail Min, a relatively insignificant lump with spectacular views all around. This entailed crossing a new and high deer fence, protecting an about to be planted woodland (images can be supplied). A short coffee stop here recharged our batteries and we continued in a generally up and down route over Meall Bhlair and Meall Duibhinidh, where we got a view of the, still intact looking, Creag-choinnich Lodge nestling under the flanks of Carn Liath.



Ptarmigans on the summit of Meall Dail Min with Beinn a'Ghlo behind: Picture by Colin Shepherd

As our aim was to eventually get down into Glen Tilt, we descended a little to reach an old, prehistoric homestead above Marble Lodge, where we took lunch and one of our number questioned what was all this up and down about? That's hillwalking, Lesley, replied Colin with remarkable presence of mind. Notwithstanding such debates, we found a manageable descent route on grass through an accessible gate in another deer fence, which picked up an old track down to the main Glen Tilt road.

Elsa, in her own inimitable fashion, was determined to hail and potentially interrogate those we passed on the way back to Blair. One young couple by the river, who looked to me as if he had just proposed (something) and she had turned him down, was then hailed by our intrepid investigative reporter, trying to get some response, of which there was none. When a second, older couple had caught up with us, Elsa asked if we should talk to them, which she of course did, to our amusement. I was about to intervene and say 'you are not obliged to answer any of these questions' when they happily gave us the information our chief interrogator had demanded, then left us in good spirits, probably thinking 'what a lovely bunch of people'. Oh yes!

Pressing onwards, we took the higher track to the right over Gilbert's Bridge, which brought us out at the ruined chapel and family grave of the Dukes of Atholl. A short step down, change of footwear and clothing (for some) prepared us for a relaxed couple of pints in the bar before we were summoned for an excellent high tea – unfortunately in the absence of Agnes and Anya, who had to miss the meal and just managed to navigate along the road in the dark from the only Munro bag of the day. Good to see them safe though.



The only Munro bag of the day: Beinn a' Ghlo: Pictures by Anya Martin

Blair Walk: Angie, Catherine, Sheona, Graeme and Alistair

As the bus climbed into the sunshine past Pitlochry we were treated to a temperature inversion with cloud carpeting the glens. A prompt arrival at Bridge of Tilt had us walking shortly after 9:30 and allowing time for some longer walks. I had in mind a route to Beinn Mheadhonach incorporating a long loop up Glen Tilt. Walking with others setting out for Bheinn A'Glo and Meall Dail Min. Five of us soon arrived at the marker for the old right of way skirting the hills to the south of the Tilt. A new route for me. The morning mist had cleared and we were treated to resplendent autumn shades on our route to the bridge near Marble Lodge. At this point some of us noted an appealing path back towards Blair Atholl along the north side of the river. We continued further up Glen Tilt. Shortly after the marble lodge I realised that we had in fact overshot, adding to our planned 25km plus route. So we retracted to pick up the path, identifying the woods and contours of the foot of Gleann Mhairc.



Bridge over the Allt Mhairc: Picture by Alistair Haig

Gleann Mhairc: Picture by Emily Russell

The autumn weather was good and happily my companions were still speaking to me! The paths were reasonably dry and we progressed upwards to the charming “new” bridge high in the glen. Here we had some lunch in the sunshine before the steady pull to the summit. On the approach we met the other Ptarmigan party on Beinn Mheadhonach. Having considered some challenging circuits, they had decided to return by their route of ascent. Our group had time for more tea and lunch at the summit with fine views to the central highlands, snow-capped Cairngorms and even south to the Lomond Hills. Our return to Blair Atholl was unhampered by navigational errors. I enjoyed the loop! Darkness descended just before 5pm so we intruded on Blair Castle’s garden. This scenic short cut had us installed in the Atholl Arms just after 5 and nicely on time for the high tea, just in time to indulge in the controversial culinary practice of scones and jam for starters which I consider justified after a 31 kilometre day. Probably the longest route I have done on a bus day and hopefully not too long for Sheona and Graeme on their first outing with the club. (Alistair Haig)



Tea & lunch at the summit: Pic by Angie Main



Shadows on Beinn Mheadhonach: Pic by Emily Russell

High Tea at the Blair Atholl Hotel with happy Ptarmigans: Picture by Wendy Farmer

