Ptarmigan Hillwalking & Mountaineering Club

Website: www.ptarmiganmc.org.uk

Monthly Newsletter May 2025

The Meet on Sunday 4th May is to Glen Nevis

DETAILS OF THE MEET

The bus will leave Waterloo Place at 07.30 and travel via Shandwick Place (bus stop opposite Boots), Haymarket, Roseburn, PC World and with a comfort stop at Callander or Tyndrum, to arrive at Glen Nevis (Poldubh car park [NN146683]) at approximately 11.00 – 11.15.

The bus will leave Glen Nevis at 17.00 prompt. This timing matters for our driver Jim to comply with the law on driving hours. Please choose your walk accordingly.

Bus convener: Alex Williamson 07931 371985

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

Main map required: Map required: **OS Landranger Sheet 41: Ben Nevis**

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

This is one of our most ambitious destinations, with the bus able to reach the large car park at Poldubh. It's a long journey but the mountains rise directly from the road; so single or paired Mamore objectives are quite do-able, although THE Ben, Ben Nevis, is just a bit out of reach in the time available for all but the very fittest.

There are a huge choice of Munros and Corbetts en route. In the first section to Killin there are Ben Ledi, Stuc a' Chroin and Ben Vorlich and the Lochearnhead Corbetts Meall an t-Seallaidh and Creag MacRanaich. On the next stretch to Crianlarich, there are Sgiath Chuil, Meall Glas, Beinn nan Imirean and Ben Challum to the north of the A85 and Ben More, Stob Binnein and Cruach Ardrain to the south. From Dalrigh there is access to Beinn Dubhchraig and Ben Oss, Beinn Chuirn and Ben Lui. Beyond Tyndrum there are groups of Corbetts both east and west of the road, plus the Munros Beinn Dorain, Beinn an Dothaidh and Beinn Mhanach. Beinn Chreachain and Beinn Achaladair can be approached from Achallader farm.

Of the Blackmount hills, Meall a' Bhuiridh and Creise should be within range. In Glencoe itself, on the south side, there are the two Buachailles, Bidean nam Bian and Sgor na h-Ulaidh, and the Corbett Beinn Maol Chaluim. On the north side there is the serious challenge of the Aonach Eagach or a gentle stroll (usually) up Beinn a' Chrulaiste.

Ballachulish Munros: Beinn a Bheithir**,** which offers two Munro summits**:** Sgorr Dhonuill, 1001m, NN040555 and Sgorr Dhearg, 1024m, NN056558.

From Glen Nevis

Munros
Ben Nevis, 1344m [NN166712]. Faster parties can climb the Ben via the tourist track starting opposite the Youth Hostel in Glen Nevis. Owing to the time available a return by the route of ascent is recommended.

Sgùrr a'Mhàim, 1099m [164667]) and the top, Sgùrr an Iubhair, 1001m, are approached from just east of the bridge at Achriabhach. The first hill gives a long haul up, and is linked to Sgùrr an Iubhair by the splendid Devil's Ridge, which gives some enjoyable scrambling. Descend by the path on the E bank of the Allt Coire a'Mhusgain. Fitter parties may be able to include Stob Bàn, 999m, in this route.

Mullach nan Coirean, 939m [122662] and Stob Bàn, 999m [147654] can be climbed separately or combined to give an interesting day. The first can be approached from Achriabhach. Stob Bàn may also be climbed direct from Achriabhach via its N ridge or via the Allt Coire a'Mhusgain path.

Corbetts
Mam na Gualainn, 796m [115625] (see Through Walks and Lower Level below)

Grahams
Tom Meadhoin, 621m, [087621] could be combined with an ascent of Beinn na Gucaig, 616m [062653] or either of these hills could be climbed on their own with a descent through the very attractive Gleann Righ.

Other hills
Meall an t-Suidhe, 711m [139729] can be traversed from the Distillery, descending via the Ben Nevis tourist track to Glen Nevis.

Through-Walks and Lower Level

There are also plenty of low-level options. There are cycle or footpaths from Callander to Killin, and through-routes between Lochearnhead and Callander and Ledcharrie and Balquhidder, notably by Kirkton Glen. Further west large sections of the West Highland Way are accessible, with possible detours east into Auch Glen or west from Victoria Bridge. In Glencoe there is a possible – though potentially boggy – circuit of Lairig Gartain and Lairig Eilde.

Possible through-walks include leaving the bus at North Ballachulish and walking along the B883 to Callert, then over the right of way to Lairigmòr and picking up the West Highland Way over to Glen Nevis. For faster parties the Corbett Mam na Gualainn could be added on to this route or taken as a target on its own. A slightly shorter and easier variant is to leave the bus at Inchree and walk through to meet the West Highland Way at Blar a' Chaorainn.

Alternatively, the Glen Righ forest offers various low-level attractions in its own right.

There are low-level walks in Glen Nevis and the Fort William area, the pièce de résistance being the spectacular Nevis gorge with its (in)famous wire bridge and waterfall at Steall.

The Club's Code of Good Practice (available at our website https://ptarmiganmc.org.uk under the Membership tab) lists the clothing and equipment to have on the hills. It is important to have warm clothing, good quality waterproofs and robust boots and to carry food, water, map, compass and a mobile phone. A first aid kit, survival bag, whistle and torch should also be carried.

Disclaimer: We do not have walk leaders, our groups walk as equals with shared responsibility for navigation and safety. The routes suggested 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 walkers to go on these routes. It is the individual and sole responsibility of each walker to choose a route that is within their capability.

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

Fraochaidh Foray - Glen Creran 6 April 2025

On Landranger maps Fraochaidh sits awkwardly at the intersection of three adjoining sheets so that the topography of the hill is not very apparent, but on the OS App the south ridge running directly to the summit from Glen Creran becomes obvious. It was this which drew my attention when considering options for the April meet. A search on the internet elicited only a single report from someone who had used that approach to climb the hill but his description suggested that it was a straightforward enough route. The only significant obstacle is the heavy afforestation in Glen Creran which makes getting on to the ridge itself problematic. From the map it appeared however that towards the southern end of the Glen the woodland is mostly natural rather than densely planted conifer plantation and I hoped this would make the route feasible.

Having put up a tentative suggestion on the WhatsApp group on the Saturday evening a number of people on the bus expressed interest in the route but in the end only Lynn R and Christine were brave (or foolish) enough to take the plunge and join me.

A waymarked trail starting from the Elleric carpark took us part way up through the woods but after about 10 minutes this swings definitively southwestwards and at that point we left the path and headed off into the trees. Initially these were indeed fairly openly spaced and although the ground was steep and uneven, the going wasn't too bad. Unfortunately with what might almost be construed as malign intent, the Forestry Commission had planted a broad strip of conifers on the slopes immediately above the natural woodland and progress through that was a bit more tedious. Eventually however we emerged onto the open grassy slopes of the ridge beside a steep bank carpeted with Primroses, Wood Anemones and Dog Violets.

From there a stiff pull took us up to the broad ridge where the line of an old metal fence leads directly to the summit. There is no path and the ground is tussocky with some boggy sections but there were no difficulties and the superb views all round helped compensate for our exertions. On the final steep ascent we disturbed a large herd of grazing Red Deer who were presumably not used to anyone approaching from that direction. Once on the summit

we found ourselves looking directly over Glen Duror to the steep southern slopes of Beinn a' Bheithir with the sharp ridge of the Aonach Eagach slightly offset to the right. To the west across Loch Linnhe lay the hills of Ardgour and Morven and in the far distance we could make out the jagged peaks of Rum, with the outline of Eigg visible against them in silhouette. The islands in Loch Linnhe, including Lismore and Kerrera lay clear below us and to the far south the Paps of Jura were easily identifiable.

The summit of Fraochaidh & the view across Loch Linnhe: Pictures by Colin Shepherd.

After lingering for about 20 minutes to enjoy the sunshine (and in my case to demolish a Cadburys Creme Egg) we retraced our steps, but found a slightly easier way through the woods which avoided the densest section of conifers. For anyone who wants to climb the hill from this direction I would say that the route is perfectly do-able. On the way up through the woods we roughly followed the course of the Allt a' Mhuilinn and Allt Coire Seileach but I would suggest staying on the south side of the burn until you reach the open hillside as there seems to be less in way of conifer plantation than on the northern side.

In addition to being a superb viewpoint, Fraochaidh sits geographically at the centre of the area associated with the murder near Ballachullish in 1752 of Colin Campbell, an incident which features in a fictional form in Robert Louis Stevenson's 'Kidnapped'. Campbell, known as The Red Fox, was Factor for the Duke of Argyll in the administration of the Appin Estates confiscated from the Stewarts in the wake of the Jacobite Rising of 1745. His home was in Glenure to the south east of Fraochaidh. Seumas a' Ghlinne (James of the Glen), the man convicted and executed for the crime, in spite of his innocence, lived in Glen Duror on the north side of the hill. It's a fascinating story and for anyone looking for more information on the event and it's political background, I recommend James Hunter's book 'The Appin Murder'. (Colin Shepherd)

Beinn Sgulaird

Alistair Haig writes: Beinn Sgulaird looked huge from the bus as we turned off the main road. It's a long journey from the Green Welly Shop to Glen Creran and it felt good to finally step out into the fresh air near a large house at Drumnavuic where Jim pulled in. In all, 19 of us set off to traverse the hill and meet the bus again at Elleric. The track quickly led us high onto a hill path, with the going easy on dry, rocky ground rather than the usual springtime mud. Within half an hour, great views opened up and we naturally split into three or four smaller groups along the broad rocky ridge.

The ridge of Beinn Sgulaird: Pictures by Katerina Gradeva

Jean and Alex chose not to complete the traverse, instead returning to the start to be collected later.
The rest of us reached the summit within three hours of steady walking. It proved to be a perfect lunch spot: the sky was cloudless and the moon up. Through exceptionally clear air we could make out distant summits across Rum and Jura, and as far as Knoydart. Ben Lui looked majestic to the south, and I thought of another club group who would likely be reaching its summit around the same time.

Alasdair's boot needed some "medical attention" mid-walk in the form of Compeed, and after lunch we headed east, skirting around the steepest ground. A gully descent led us down to the track towards Elleric. By now, Alasdair's other boot had also lost its sole — fortunately Alberto produced a roll of duct tape, saving the day.

The track at the end wasn't too long, and we all made it back to the bus not far after the planned departure time. It had been a brilliant spring day — one we made the very most of.

Alasdair's boots: Picture by Sara Knight

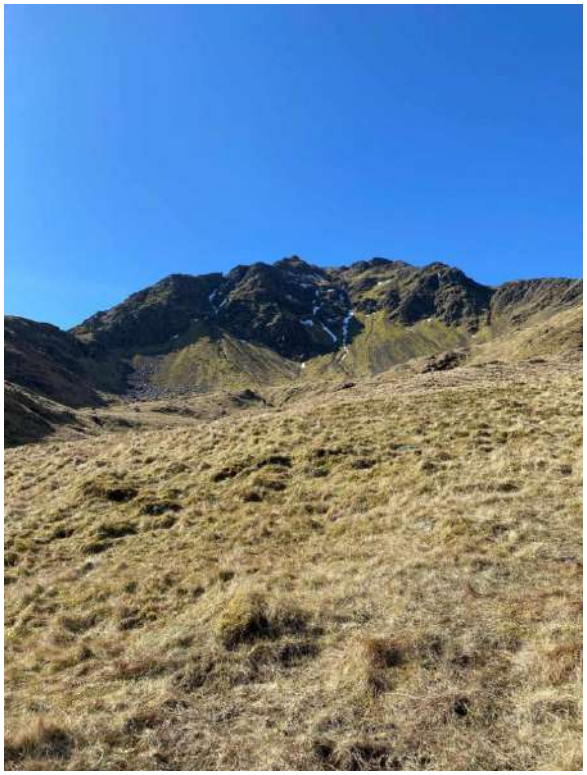
Postscript: Alex and Jean returned to Beinn Sgulaird the following Thursday and reached the summit in the same spectacular weather we all enjoyed on the Sunday. Well, we weren't going to let that one get away!!

Beinn Sgulaird Summit & Alex & Jean: Pictures by Alex Williamson

Summit view: Picture by Wendy Farmer

Lunch spot: Picture by Justin Elliot

Ptarmigans on Beinn Sgulaird: Picture by Justin Elliot



A couple of photos from Ben Lui & Beinn a Chleibh group: Pictures by Joanne Astbury

Meall Odhar Summit: Pic by Michael Gray

Meall Odhar and the Lead Mines

Our group disembarked at The Green Welly in Tyndrum along with another smaller group heading for Ben Lui. We - Elsa, Elaine, Leslie and I along with guest Coney - had slightly less lofty options as our target was the Graham, Meall Odhar.

We crossed the road to join the West Highland Way as far as Tyndrum Lower Station where we went over the level crossing, taking the track through the forest to reach the track from Dalrigh leading to Glen Connish. By this time the Glen Lui group had surged ahead. We were in no great hurry as the weather was fair with light winds and sunshine. Before reaching Connish Farm and the track to the gold mine we turned north over an area of rough pasture to go through a gate into the forest. There were some rumblings from the group who were unsure of my directions as we stumbled through the forest but shortly we found the 'obvious' firebreak in the conifers. We had a short drink stop in an open area before finally carrying on and heading onto the open hillside. From there it was then relatively straightforward to head up over the grassy and tussocky ground to the summit.

After taking an extended break on the summit we headed north east to Drochaid an Droma and at the insistence of Elsa ascended Sron nan Colan. At this point I discovered I had dropped my printed map and notes so the ever youthful and sprightly Elsa retraced our steps to collect it. We then continued and descended east to the old lead mines where there were a number of waste heaps but a very clear zigzag downhill path through the debris. This led to a faint grassy path. We had yet another break before heading under the railway and reaching the WHW which we followed back to the start arriving at the Tyndrum Inn with lots of time for a refreshment. The Ben Lui group eventually joined us whilst we waited for the bus and the main party's arrival after their travails on Beinn Sgulaird. A splendid day.

Michael Gray