



“Mountain Thyme” *Spring 2022*



Mountain Thyme is published by

Blairgowrie and District Hillwalking Club.

The editor welcomes comments and contributions from all members.

CONTENTS- SPRING 2022 ISSUE

President’s Introduction.....	2
Club walks in 2022/23	3
Update from the Treasurer	4
Ruby Rhoda	6
The Twixt Mystery	12
Gairloch weekend	14
Social events	15
Snippets.....	16
Closing remarks	18

www.bdhc.org.uk



@blairgowriedistricthillwalkingclub



@BDHC_Hillwalker

PRESIDENT'S INTRODUCTION

Ian Richards President

Unless, heaven forbid, there is a recurrence of the recent pandemic, this president should be able to enjoy a normal term in office, unlike his predecessor, Ian Cameron.



Two Presidents - Ian Cameron and Ian Richards

Half of Ian's 4-year tenure was affected by the Covid pandemic, a very trying time for the leader of any organisation, Ian managed it all superbly, navigating the sometimes not-so-clear official guidance regarding travel, group activity and geographic restrictions. We could not have had a more effective person to lead us. Always working within the rules, Ian took guidance from the committee on suitable venues and advice from both the Scot Gov and Mountaineering Scotland. We enjoyed maximum time on the hill and minimum risk following Ian's expert advice. A big thank you Mr Cameron from a very grateful membership.

Now to look to this year and the future, we have a full programme of both walks, weekends, and social events to look forward to in the next twelve months. Negotiations with the golf club have ensured that our social events will continue to be held there, well done Bruce for both that and his discussions with JP Coaches, in view of the recent upsurge of energy costs we had been prepared to see significant cost increases in the JP Coaches tariffs. The company has changed the basis of its pricing policy and whilst this will have inflationary effects these are not as significant as we feared.

The walk programme has recently been reviewed in the light of the new pricing structure but has been agreed without modification. Transport will remain coach based with a minimum number of cars meets, the latter usually based on the type of road access.

As mentioned at the 2022 AGM, the committee will keep transport costs under review, as always seat bookings will be crucial, the programme offers a wide variety of venues and will hopefully result in a high percentage of available seats being booked.

Not an innovation but walk authors will be paying the same attention to the C offerings as to the A and B routes. Following the retirement of most of the 'Ladies' as they were affectionately known, our C walks had often become almost afterthoughts as most walkers had preferred the other options. Thanks to Jean and Brian Ruffhead, the C routes will now be closely monitored and as a result are expected to become more desirable alternatives for members who might not wish to join the more demanding walks.

Although the Club Night is some way off, a gentle reminder to take plenty of photos for the photographic competition and a chance to have your efforts selected for the 2023 calendar.

See you all on the hill soon.

CLUB WALKS IN 2022/23

Bruce Henderson meet secretary

Following our AGM in March the new committee met to devise a programme for the 2022/2023 year.

We are hoping for a more normal year after the past two years' disruption, and the main influencing factors in agreeing a programme

were once again where we could take a bus and trying to find venues which would suit everyone. Hopefully we have done just that, and as well as some of the usual favourites such as Glen Clova/Glen Doll; Dunkeld and Glenshee, we have a few potentially big days going to Glen Feshie; Victoria Bridge and Beinn a'Bhuird.

The Victoria Bridge walk was in the syllabus pre-pandemic, but was rained off, and we instead tackled a section of the West Highland Way to Tyndrum. Another walk which was previously cancelled due to weather conditions was An Socach from Glen Clunie through to Glen Ey and this has been re-scheduled for October.

You may know that we have volunteered our services to recce and report on some rights of way for Scotways, and later this summer we will have a Club Sunday where we will be starting off at different points but all finishing in Kirkmichael. Norman is working on the detail, but this should be an interesting and different type of Sunday.

Something else new is a mid-summer camp/bivvy on Creag nan Gabhar between Glen Clunie and Glen Callater to enjoy the longest day, this will be weather permitting.

We also have a full social events calendar which we are hoping all Club members and friends will support and have added a Speaker Night in October, so suggestions of a suitable speaker would be welcomed. All the social events other than the BBQ, will be at the Golf Club.

James and Lesley have kindly agreed to host the walk and BBQ at their house in Birkhill, and this will take place on 13th August.

Our next two Club Weekends have also been decided:

September 2022 – Newton Stewart, Galloway.

June 2023 – Scourie, Sutherland

Those wishing to attend should consider sourcing accommodation early to avoid disappointment.

Details of all walks and social events will be available on the Club website: www.bdhc.org.uk

UPDATE FROM THE TREASURER

Richard Townsend Treasurer

There was a lot of ground to cover at our first AGM in three years!

Our latest accounts to the end of February 2022 reflect our partial return to normality after the pandemic. We raised just over £800: The Quiz Night & Calendar Sales generated nearly £300 each while £160 was raised from raffles at the Slide Night & BBQ. A welcome surprise was a £50 grant received from PKC in respect of a Summer Event in Blairgowrie which the club assisted. The committee had previously suspended membership fees for 2021/22 given the lack of club activity in the previous year.

Outgoings were over £1,400, £810 on the Transport Subsidy, the annual £456 on website maintenance and a new cost in 2022, BDHC membership of Blairgowrie Golf Club (£95 for the full year 2022 reflecting our use of the golf club facilities).

Given the above, funds at the bank declined by £646, from £5,270 to £4,624.

At the first AGM I spoke at in 2018 I confirmed total funds held of around £7,000. A question raised then was why we needed this level of funds? The last few years have arguably provided the answer: This balance has acted as a cushion, used either for exceptional planned costs or to absorb unexpected shocks.

For example, in 2019 we had an exceptional cash hit of over £1,500. £714 was planned, the 40th Anniversary Dinner, while the balance was unplanned, the £600 cost of migrating to a new website and a website prepayment of £228 as we switched to annual payments.

Similarly, in 2021 the Committee agreed to use the cushion to suspend membership fees and restart coach trips, with minimal income anticipated. We accepted that this could have seen our funds reduce to around £3,750 by the end of February 2022.

The transport subsidy continues to be by far our biggest cost. To state the obvious, this varies depending on the number of coaches we run, the average cost of a coach and the number of passengers. Costs are rising, especially with larger coaches being hired due to Covid. At the AGM it was agreed that the club will no longer pay a rebate for call offs, given that the club commits to payment once the coach is booked. The fare was kept at £12. We will keep this under review.

We have had around 46 members for the last two years. At the AGM our Membership Fee for 2022/23 was agreed at £16.45 Adult, £8.45 Concession, and £5.75 Youth.

Bank transfers are working well. I am not aware of anyone having problems, but please speak to me if you are. Please note that I am not issuing receipts for bus fares. Use of the reference facility when making bank transfers to clarify what it is for example, bus fare, membership, calendar payment etc, is very helpful!

For charitable payments we agreed at the AGM a return to our previous pattern of £50 to the Search and Rescue Dog Association, £50 to the Outdoor Access Trust and £30 to Scotways.

Please do not confuse the £10 per ticket for the Raffle Prize - NTS Mar Lodge / Fife Arms (being sold by Anne Crombie) and £10 for the Club Draw which, in a change for the coming year, will have a 1st prize £50 and 2nd prize £10 (no 3rd prize) to be drawn quarterly.

The Raffle offers a tremendous prize this year: The chance for up to six people to take a half day tour of Mar Lodge with a Ranger, including seeing inside the Lodge and the Stag Ballroom (not normally open to the public). There will also be a short walk, in nearby Mar Forest, and a talk about the work the Estate are carrying out and their 200-year plan to transform the pinewoods. In addition, the winner will receive a voucher for cream tea for six at the Fife Arms Hotel. There will also be a runners-up prize: An autographed copy of the recently published book by Andrew Painting, *Regeneration, The Rescue of a Wild Land*, describing how the natural landscape of Mar Lodge is being restored. The draw will take place in Arran in early June.

RUBY RHODA

Jane Clark

Rhoda was injured early this year and was forced to rest as her Achilles tendon mended. During our many chats I realised Rhoda had been in the club for a while and encouraged her to recall some memories. Clearly lots of fun, many great achievements and lasting friendships built over 40 years of walking with BDHC. “Interviewing” Rhoda was good fun and I hope I have captured the essence of our conversation and her indefatigable spirit.

Rhoda joined Blairgowrie and District Hillwalking club in 1982 and has been a regular walker ever since, completing her Munros in 1994 on Ben na Lap.



At Kynballoch Stone 2021

Her first walk was Kirkmichael to Dunkeld. This was a walk that Rhoda wanted to do for a long time. She saw it advertised in the Blairie and had a word with Graham Smith on the Friday night -the walk was not as she thought, in a week's time but on Sunday- "oh just come along you'll be fine".

Wearing "Hush Puppies" and a miscellany of gear - orange socks, her son Nigel's rucksack with an iron frame, and bright pink anorak she

presented herself on Sunday. Quote from some of the worthies (Tom Morrison/Danny Murieson)- she'll not be back; she is far too glamorous-how wrong they were although she maintained her glamour!

It was a muddy walk – up to knees in glaur- poor Hush Puppies were binned but that did not put Rhoda off hillwalking and indeed it was the start of a long and happy walking on club meets and with friends made in the club.

Next up, her first Munro, Ben Chonzie and an urgent tip to local outdoor shop, Rob Jackson, to get kitted out-for the next walk she sported waterproofs “like walking in poly bags” but with new boots, new anorak, and rucksack.

Another first was a club weekend to Ratigan – not sure of the dress code (in those days you did dress up to go out) and thought it might be quite smart. Rhoda packed a very nice, pleated pink skirt. On the way they stopped for a break at Landmark and Rhoda realised the pink skirt was not quite the desired outfit and fortunately had also brought a pair of trousers – it was a very wet weekend, but warm friendships made.

Another weekend was to Torridon youth hostel where you made your own meals and washed up afterwards. Rhoda was washing the dishes when Bruce played a trick on her and put his finger under the running tap spraying her. That earned him the moniker “you little brat” which he was called until his 60th birthday!

More fun on another club weekend this time to the Lake District. Rhoda had travelled to the Lakes with Iain Mitchell. It was a very windy weekend and, on the Saturday, even Iain was blown off his feet as had Liz and Terry Lonsdale. On the Sunday, Rhoda and Iain were up early, climbed a hill, came backdown had their lunch and thought still plenty time ... so, they went to the pictures.

So many tales we could tell but here's a selection. Rhoda and Jane climbed many hills together and one memorable time was on Creagan na Beinne, a Corbett reached from the road that runs on the southside of Loch Tay. Having reached the summit, we were making our way off when Jane stepped on a wobbly stone a crack and ouch, Jane had a very painful lower left leg. We hobbled off even managing to climb over a drystone dyke with barbed wire on top and through a field with a bull, to get back to the car. The drive along the south side of Loch Tay was slow – changing gear was painful, but we made it back to Blair. Rhoda later

confessed she was prepared to carry me off the hill but the thought of having to drive my car home was worse.

It was a wet day on a club walk to Glen Etive. Our group needed to get across the river Etive, and we chose a wide shallow area where we could loup from stone to stone. There was a yelp as Rhoda slipped and landed, uninjured on her back in the river with water filling up the space under her rucksack cover. I don't recall anyone rushing to her aid, but she managed to right herself and get to her feet. Muttering she was like a "backit ewe" in the water but her waterproofs kept her dry apart from one sleeve.



sketch by Gesa

On a very hot day, the Club meet was to Bridge of Orchy and the A and B parties were on Beinn Dorain and Beinn and Dotaidh. Getting back to Bridge of Orchy, Rhoda joined the C group, Betty, Isa, Dorothy, Margaret (and more) who, also feeling the heat, rolled up trousers legs and plunged their feet into the river to cool off.

Rhoda and Penny climbed many hills together and I was very fortunate to join them on a "Loaning Tour" to tick off some Munros in Torridon. One stormy day having made it to the summit of Maol Chean-dearg we had our lunch in the shelter of the summit cairn. Jane and Penny started their descent confident that Rhoda was just behind them. It was very windy, and Rhoda was working out how to get out of the cairn. After about 100

metres, when Jane looked back it was to see Rhoda exiting the cairn on all fours, backwards. Penny and Jane retraced their steps linked arms with Rhoda and carefully walked giggling like schoolgirls off the summit ridge to more sheltered ground.

Rhoda, Penny, Bruce, and Pam climbed the Skye Munros together having joined a party led by Jerry Ackroyd. Although rather daunted by these big and technical mountains and feeling a little unsure that this was maybe too much, they pressed on and had a great week completing all the Skye Munros. On the “In Pin” Rhoda was roped up and Jerry called – are you still on the end of the rope? Rhoda was sitting at the foot of the vertical blade waiting her turn with another in the party (a fell runner not from BDHC). Rhoda was having a sandwich and said to the chap are you having something to eat? Oh no he said I couldn’t face food -he was a tad nervous – well said Rhoda I am having a good tuck in – it might be my last!

Another example of Rhoda appearing very calm when others around her were rather apprehensive, was cruising up Loch Mullardoch on a small boat packed to the gunnels with BDHC folk. Some of the chaps prepared for sinking by loosening their boots to be discarded if the boat sank. Peter Kinnear looked nervous when perched on the petrol tank, but Rhoda with Pam and Penny seemed to enjoy the trip up the loch albeit in an overcrowded boat.



Boat on Loch Mallardoch 1992

On another weekend based at Cannich, Jane and Bruce planned to complete their last Munro, An Riabhachan. Unfortunately, it was very wet on the Saturday and mindful of this earlier adventure on Loch Mullardoch, the boat trip to reach the walk in was postponed. Not wishing to waste a hillwalking day, and despite it being very wet, a group set off to climb Corbetts – in the rain. Some slips on wet grass ensued but no injuries. Coming off the hill, making for Glen Affric we met flooded areas between us and the outward track. Iain M is at the front, followed by Jane. Rhoda is with Penny and Colin on a slightly raised bank. Iain decided to run through the flood- followed by Jane. Result - rather soggy Iain and Jane. Iain inquired did anyone take a photo? Rhoda thought that if that water was up to Jane's chest, she would have to swim so she stuck with Penny and Colin as they clambered over fallen trees. As Colin kindly inquired "are you all right Rhoda?" seeing her legs above her head on a fallen tree, he was met with "do I look all right?" No lasting damage – the next day was clear and bright and the whole party made it to the final Munro party.

Sometimes Rhoda found herself on club walks the only female, but she could certainly keep up often just a few steps behind the leader which could be a little awkward if he wanted to "hive off".

For Rhoda's 60th birthday Jane arranged a trip to Strontian for a party of 6 people. Unable to find accommodation for 6, she booked 2 bed and breakfast houses, with 3 men in one and 3 women in another. Thinking that Strontian was a small place these would be close – but no they were at opposite ends of the village. After we climbed Beinn Resipol, the men arrived on the doorstep of the girls' B&B and asked if the girls were coming out to play! We had an excellent and very filling meal in Strontian hotel, finished off with one pudding and 6 spoons after which Rob was heard to say, "lay me down but dinnae bend me".

Rhoda's last Munro was Beinn na Lap and a party made their way by train to Corroul station and walked in the Youth Hostel laden with bottles of refreshment, cake, and dumpling. We were made very welcome by the warden who turned a blind eye to the refreshments and together with his dog that followed Toby, the party climbed Beinn na Lap. It was another wet day, but Graham flew his kite and spirits were high.

Great achievement to complete the round of Munros in 12 years.



Island hopping trips followed to Small Isles, Inner and Outer Hebrides and the Northern Isles, enjoying coastal walks and climbing to the highest point on every island. Going by boat from Rum to Muck before the pier on Muck was complete, Rhoda was carried from the boat to dry land -no such chivalry for Jane and Penny who had to wade ashore. Chatting to Rhoda you hear more stories of fun, challenges, and achievements, learning about the geography and nature of Scotland and appreciating this wonderful country in the company of good friends

As Rhoda recovers from her injury, we wish her a full recovery and many more outings as glamorous as ever, up hills or local walks. Happy ruby anniversary Rhoda.

THE TWIXT MYSTERY

Bruce Henderson

A Covid depleted group met at the end of 2021 in Aviemore for the first Twixt trip in two years, and whilst the weather was cold, icy, and bright on arrival it soon changed dramatically with a 10c increase in temperature virtually overnight resulting in a rapid thaw. This did not deter the group

who set off from the Rowan Tree hotel, Alvie to climb the Corbett, Geal-Charn Mor, passing a frozen Loch Alvie on the way.



Geal-Charn Mor

There was a strange sight on the loch with what looked like several coconuts lying on the ice some distance out, but on the basis that there are no coconut palms on Speyside (at least not for several million years), we discounted that theory and continued on our way, still puzzling over what we had seen.

The weather deteriorated with high winds and driving rain for much of the ascent, and we all reached the top for some photos in between the squally showers.

Our descent on the same route again took us past the end of Loch Alvie, and we discovered more of the mysterious objects, most the size of a coconut but some as small as tennis balls. On closer inspection these spherical objects consisted of vegetable matter compacted into a tight ball, but none of the group had ever seen anything like it! Some online research was carried out back at the hotel and these mystery objects turned out to be larch balls, which are more common in North America than Scotland, and which are formed by the currents or waves of water swirling the larch needles into a tight ball – a new sighting for us all!

On our second day of the trip a smaller group ascended the Graham, Creag Dubh, south of Newtonmore a fine hill with great views up and down the Spey valley. No larch balls on this day, just feral goats!

Hopefully by the end of 2022 we will have full normality restored and have a healthy number attending future trips.

GAIRLOCH WEEKEND

Ian Cameron (from the blog)

The Club annual September meet was the first official weekend meet since September 2019, so it was a joy for all who attended to resume a much-missed tradition. The venue was Gairloch which provided an abundance of high hills and low walks for all. Most members travelled to the Gairloch and surrounding area and stayed in a variety of Guest Houses, Hotels, Self-Catering cottages and camper vans.

On Friday evening the group assembled at the Big Sands caravan park and discussed various options for the following day walks. Include in the walks completed were the Corbetts, Meall Ghiubhais, to the South of Loch Maree, Sail Mhor to the West of An Teallach and Beinn Airigh Charn to the North of Loch Maree. There were many low level and coastal walks also tackled and successfully completed.



Kerry enjoying the view over Loch Maree

The weather on Saturday was very favourable and excellent views were had from all the summits in every direction. On Sunday the weather was not quite so kind but didn't hinder those who wanted to go walking.

Several members extended their stay and had mixed weather and walking for the remainder of their excursion.

As tradition would have it, the group convened on the Saturday evening for a meal and social drink, when stories and adventures of the day were shared. On this occasion the meal was held at the Gairloch Golf Club, where members were made very welcome and served a most enjoyable and substantial meal.

SOCIAL EVENTS

Evelyn Menzies/Jane Clark

BBQ

In August 2021, the club held a BBQ in Dunkeld. Kindly hosted by Bob and Caroline Lindsay in their elevated garden above Dunkeld. The weather was unpredictable but did not dampen spirits on the walks where the walkers had good views from Newtyle hill.



On their return they were treated to an excellent spread.

Above Dunkeld – BBQ walk

Slide Night

In October 2021, the club held a successful “slide night” and from the many excellent photos submitted, selected a fine collection to feature in the club’s calendar, sold for club funds.

51 Club

In November 2021, immediately after storm Arwen, all 6 original members of the “51 Club” met with friends and fellow hillwalkers in Pitlochry to celebrate their 70th birthdays (below left). After a circular walk towards Killiecrankie (below right), they enjoyed an excellent meal at Pitlochry golf club. Well done Evelyn Menzies, Alice McLeod, Roddy Cameron, Jean Stewart, Jane Clark, and Irene Rintoul.



Quiz

At Blairgowrie Golf Club in January 2022, the club held a very successful quiz night. Roddy Cameron was quiz master, and the quiz was won by Anne and Rob Robertson.

As noted in the preceding article by Bruce Henderson, the club is looking forward to a range of social events in 2022 with plans for a summer walk and BBQ.

SNIPPETS

Jane Clark

Congratulations to:

Mary Connelly who celebrated her 99th birthday.



In recognition of long involvement with, and service to BDHC, Rob Robertson was presented with honorary life membership by founder member Iain Mitchell at the club's AGM. Iain and Rob, both Munroists had climbed many hills together and recalled some of their joint adventures.



Also at the AGM, Iain presented Patrick Hamilton with a book by Sid Scroggie. Patrick, who turned out regularly with the club, completed two rounds of the Munros and Corbetts and coached novices hill craft and navigation, has retired from walking with the club

Again, at the AGM, the following won prizes in the Club's prize Draw – 1st prize, Evelyn Menzies, 2nd prize Jane Clark and 3rd prize Dorothy Lothian

CLOSING REMARKS

Jane Clark editor

Forgive the tardiness of this edition of Mountain Thyme as the editor was rather busy moving house (twice). “Normal” service may follow! Good to see some new members in the club and perhaps they may offer some fresh material. After each walk there is usually a short piece uploaded to the club's blog on the website www.bdhc.org.uk and some notes and photos added to the club's Facebook page.