



“Mountain Thyme”

Autumn 2022



Mountain Thyme is published by

Blairgowrie and District Hillwalking Club.

The editor welcomes comments and contributions from all members.

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PRESIDENT'S INTRODUCTION

Ian Richards President

Those many fine and warm summer days are now but distant memories, clocks have gone back but we can hopefully look forward to some 'proper' winter weather and those snowy, crisp days that many hill-goers consider to be the best ones.

The club weathered the dark pandemic days better than many would have predicted with membership numbers remaining healthy and with several new members having joined us in the last few months as a very welcome bonus. All eyes are now on the future, we have an excellent and varied programme of walks and events remaining on the calendar. One change has been made and we believe it to have been in everyone's best interest.

The spring weekend away has always been a very popular event but it's traditional timing coincided with bank holidays and an increased demand for accommodation, particularly in these days of staycations (yuk!). Please note that the date for the Ullapool weekend next year has been brought forward by three weeks and will now be held on the 12-14th May. This has meant swapping with the Linn of Dee/BeinnBhreac walk, now re-scheduled to the 4th of June.

The committee remains ever mindful of maintaining the health of our bank balance, the relationship between the increasing costs of coach travel and revenue from seat sales is the single most important factor. Previous membership surveys have always demonstrated that coach rather than car travel to our destinations is a key factor in ensuring membership satisfaction.

In view of the deteriorating (but not yet critical) gap between the two, it has been decided to amend the programme and the Backwater Dam walk on the 20th of Nov will now be by car. Hopefully as this this is a very local walk it will not be too much of an inconvenience.

It's an obvious fact that the more coach bookings are made the less will be the subsidy. The more attractive the walk programme the better the bookings, this is a key criterion when deciding the walks, it was very interesting to note that one of the best attended walks was the Scotways Rights of Way walks on local and largely untracked routes. The club always invites members to put forward their suggestions ahead of the meeting where the programme is put together, please do help this process when the time comes later this year.

Maintaining high membership numbers is of paramount importance, in Kerry Lindsay (Vice President) we have someone who is not just very well practiced in the black art of social media and digital communications but also possess a very creative mind and has injected new spark into the committee's thoughts. One new idea, the newsletter, in its second edition, has just been mailed to all our members. The first met with universal praise. As a chatty/short term newsy e-mail it really complements our ever-popular Mountain Thyme publication with its longer, more meaty pieces reflecting members' adventures. We believe that alongside both the website and Mountain Thyme, it will add a lot to our attraction as a club and can only help with recruiting new members.

ARRAN WEEKEND

Ian Richards (from the blog)

Twenty-four club members made their way over to Arran, most on Friday 3 June with a few stragglers on the following day.

The majority elected to climb Goatfell by a more challenging route than the usual tourist route from the grounds of Brodick Castle. Instead, they took the route from Glen Sannox, for some members it was their first taste of hands-on rock scrambling as they made their way to the summit. The weather, as it remained for a full four days, was perfect with great visibility as a bonus.



Kerry and Sandra conquering Goat Fell

While most were on Goatfell, Iain and Jane opted to climb Beinn Tarsuinn from Glen Rosawith spectacular views of Cir Mhor and Jura. Later that day the entire group met for the traditional Saturday evening meal, this

time at the impressive Auchrannie Resort restaurant. Organised as usual by Evelyn Menzies, it turned out to be an inspired choice and enjoyed by all.

The Sunday saw most of the group heading to the west of the island to climb the hills east of Pirnmill, including a Graham (BheinnBharrain) – the views across to the Goatfell range were stunning.



*On BeinnBharrain above
Pirnmill*



*From BeinnTarsuinn towards
Jura*

After the Sunday, some members reluctantly headed home with others staying for the following week and others returning on various days within it.

Monday saw many of the group enjoying an exciting paddle across to the Holy Island from Lamlash, the sea helped any nerves by being flat calm.

The weather held until the Tuesday night with Wednesday being a bit of a wash out, but the remaining days improved, and various parties undertook more hill walking. The remaining members together with visiting family enjoyed a social evening together in one of their rented holiday homes.

The remaining days whilst windier, remained largely fine and a number of walks were enjoyed, including a trip to the Holy Island via the local ferry and a wee climb to its peak – Mullach Mor. In addition, a paddle boarding excursion was enjoyed as well as beach walks and visits to various tourist attractions. Ken and Roddy enjoyed what they described as one of the best days ever on a scrambly route around Cir Mhor.



Arran truly lived up to its reputation as being ‘Scotland in miniature’.

NEWTON STEWART WEEKEND

Ian Richards (from the blog)

It had been some years since the club had chosen the SW of Scotland as a weekend venue, the trip was well overdue. The area is comparatively quiet and offers superb hill and coastal walking, often in remote areas.

Sixteen members made the journey on Friday 16th September, some returning on the 18th, others staying longer. The group was based in Newton Stewart which providing lots of alternative walks, high and low. These weekends are about walking but also socialising, the entire group meet in a suitable hostelry on the Friday evening where different groups agreed their programme of walks for the weekend and beyond. The social highlight is always the Saturday evening when, on this occasion, everyone met for a very enjoyable meal and blether at the Crown Hotel in Newton Stewart.

The weather was kind on both Friday and Saturday but with clag down on the higher tops on the Sunday.

The walks enjoyed were as varied as the terrain in the area and included local hills as well as some very enjoyable coastal walks, one group took time to explore the Burns country in South Ayrshire on its way home.

For many, it was a hill walk on the Saturday and a more relaxing coastal walk on the Sunday, the remainder enjoyed the hills on both days. Hills included the highest in southern Scotland, the Merrick a Corbett. The A Group tackled another Corbett, Shallochon Minnoch, three Donalds and a Donald top.

Others were happy to have reached the top of the Merrick, a fine hill and vantage point.



Rhoda's return from injury on the Merrick

On the Sunday, three members climbed the Corbett, Corserine, but were unlucky as hill fog obscured views. While they were in fog the rest of their party, walked up a hill to the south, Bennigineia, with good views of Clatteringshaws Loch, and the Galloway Forest Park.

Finally, a fourth Corbett climbed was Cairnsmore of Fleet. Close to its summit is a memorial to the crews of no less than 8 aircraft that came to

grief on the hill in WW2, there were no survivors. On the way down the walkers came across several Cherry Laurel trees, covered in cherries but sadly not of the edible type.

All-in-all another very successful club weekend to add to the club's list.

MAR LODGE

Mike Morris

What do Australia House, the Waldorf Hotel, Mar Lodge, and the Fife Arms Braemar have in common? The answer is Alexander Marshall Mckenzie, who also designed Crathie Kirk and Marischal College in Aberdeen.

Having previously won a weekend sailing on the west coast this year I won the star prize in the club's fund raiser, a package of a guided tour of Mar Lodge followed by tea and scones at the Fife Arms Hotel in Braemar. Who's a lucky boy?

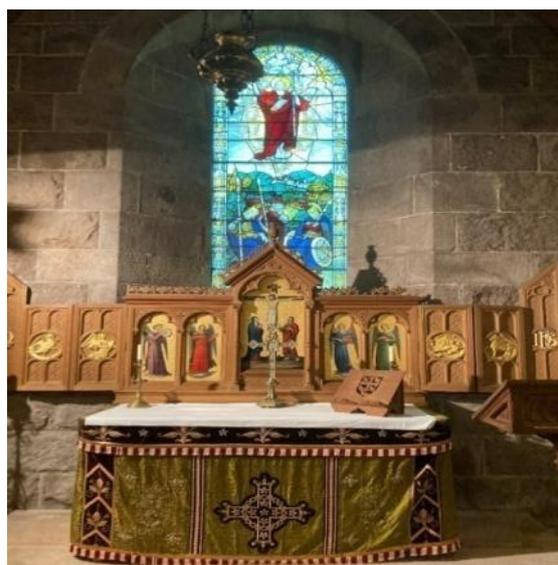
We took old friends who have recently returned to Scotland after living in Canada. We have known them for forty odd years dating back to Edinburgh days.

So, on the 27th of September, a rather driech day, with promise of more to follow we set off through Glen Isla and Glen Shee to Deeside and the Lodge. It is a scenic drive even in bad weather. Visibility was good and the tops were clear. We followed the Dee to the Victoria Bridge. It dates from 1905, the original was destroyed by the Muckle Spate in 1829. As we were guests of the estate, we ignored the private notice and drove across it and on to the Lodge where we were greeted by the Ranger, Andrew Painting, who wisely suggested we start with the Lodge as the rain was by then rather heavy.

The current Lodge is in fact a third iteration, the first being built in the 18th century and was badly damaged by the Muckle Flood. The second Lodge was destroyed by fire in 1895. The third Lodge was built between 1895 and 1898. We visited the drawing room, the library, dining room and snooker room downstairs and upstairs we were shown round the passages lined with old photographs and paintings. There were pictures of the Royal Family, the Duchess of Fife was Louisa, granddaughter of Queen Victoria. Interestingly there was also a picture of Napoleon. The

downstairs had been badly ravaged by fire and rebuilt as near to the original as possible. It was fascinating, several centuries of history on the walls.

From the lodge we went to St Ninians Chapel, built at the same time as the third lodge to be the chapel for the Fifes. It is attached to the Episcopal Church and is still used for weddings. An attractive building and has exposed roof beams and traditional pews.



Next was the Ballroom. Many people will have seen pictures of this building. It is free standing adjacent to the Lodge and is distinct for its wooden, red, lattice cladding. Inside you are immediately struck by the roof which has over two thousand deer skulls, some dating from the eighteenth century and some attributed to the shooter, mostly royalty. Historically this was the hall for 'staff entertainment' reflecting the mores of the time, i.e. Separate rooms for staff and guests.



As the rain was reduced to a Scotch Mist, we walked west along the north banks of the Dee along forest tracks. Andrew was a mine of information about the estate and made an excellent walking companion. We discussed and were shown examples of the regeneration programme of the estate. Historically, sheep and deer had destroyed the flora and fauna and much of the natural habitat of Scots Pine. The removal of sheep and culling of deer are recreating an environment where the deer and trees can live together. The culling is essential in this process because the deer no longer have a natural predator. As we walked, we saw evidence of new tree growth of mixed variety and many fungi. We continued along the river then headed north on another track heading in a loop back to the Lodge where we said goodbye to Andrew.

Mar Lodge is divided into several self-catering apartments, and there is also other accommodation in assorted estate properties. There is a business side to the estate, and it is used for weddings and other events.

Interestingly in 1962 two ski lifts and a ski trail were built by the then Swiss owners, who had planned for everything apart for the mild Scottish winters.

The next venue was the Fyffe (or Fife) Arms in Braemar, a boutique hotel, for tea and scones. Would Mr Mackenzie have recognised the term 'boutique hotel'? I think not. The weather was now clement, and we parked and had a dry walk to the hotel from the car park. Externally it has the appearance of an old traditional Scottish Highland Hotel, and indeed that is what it was. Constructed in the 19th century and designed by Marshall Mackenzie. Inside is a different story. It is an interesting blend of old and modern.



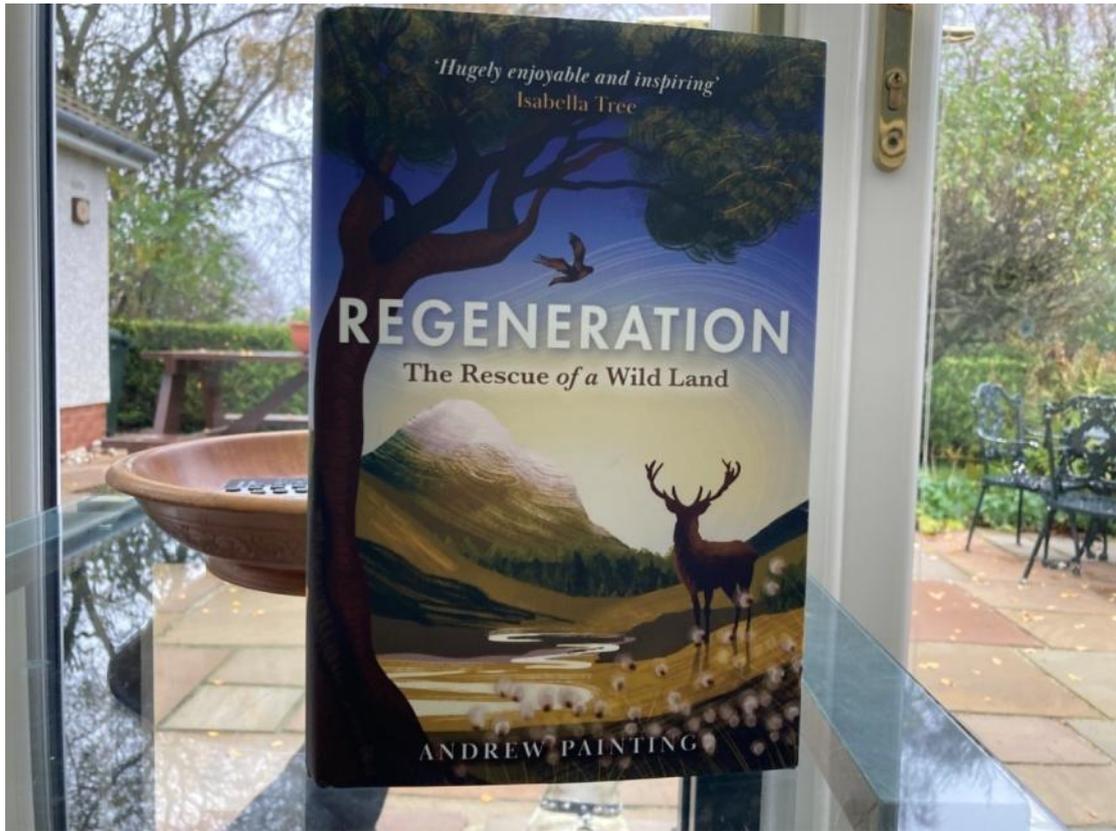
There is considerable use of tartan alongside open fires and what I, in my ignorance would call ‘modern art’ decoration to the ceiling. We were well supplied with scones and beverages by friendly staff. Unfortunately, despite being warned by friends we did not see any “celebrities”.

We had a great day out the weather truly reflected the geography and we helped with the “re-scotification” of old friends!



Winners at Mar Lodge

Thank you to club treasurer, Richard Townsend who secured this exceptional prize. There was also a second prize, a copy of Andrew Painting’s book “Regeneration” about rescuing wild land at Mar lodge. This was won by a friend of the editor and is proving to be an interesting read perhaps leading to a walk on the estate in Spring 2023.



GREAT GLEN WAY

Irene Rintoul

Four friends Pat Fraser, Jean Stewart Ronalle Walker and Irene Rintoul left Perth on 12th September to travel to Fort William to begin walking the Great Glen Way the following day. Six days walking. (79 miles or 127 km.)

They booked the trip through Easyways, who organised all accommodation, (as ladies of a certain age we wanted some luxuries), which was Bed and Breakfast each day, and apart from one establishment, this worked really well.



The weather was excellent until the last day when it poured with rain and brought the midgies out. A stop at Abriachan Eco-Campsite and Cafe made it all worthwhile though for the lovely soup and tasty lemon sponge.

Once we made our way to Inverness, we decided to stay there overnight instead of the bus journey home which we undertook the next day.

SOCIAL EVENTS

Club BBQ and summer walk Birkhill

Jane Clark

James and Lesley organised a summer walk and opened their house and garden for our annual BBQ. Blessed with a soft summer's day we explored the local path network, picking up former railway lines and

community woodlands. We enjoyed seeing new areas and, on this occasion, members brought their dogs before returning to the BBQ with tasty food for all palates. Thank you, James and Lesley, for your hospitality and nice to see Rhoda and Kirsty out walking after injury and illness.



Club night Little Sherpa foundation

Jane Clark

Whereas most club members had heard about the devastating earthquakes in 2015 in Nepal, and some may have donated to the relief efforts, at our October club night, we heard from James Lamb, how he was so moved by the loss of friends and the plight of Sherpa people especially those living in Phortse, that he co-founded a charity to help those whose lives had been so badly affected.

Illustrated by beautiful photographs of mountains, disturbing images of devastation, video clips from the Adventure show, James told the story of setting up the charity. His talk was interspersed with anecdotes of listening to what local people said they needed, including inputs from monks, widows, village elders and young people. Combined with tales of approaching Governments and sponsors to donate goods and services towards rebuilding homes, schools, health centres and providing essential services lost in the earthquakes, James showed us what had been achieved. So much more is needed to support education and build a brighter future in the Solukhumba for the Sherpas.

A truly inspiring talk from James about the Little Sherpa Foundation, based in Dunkeld. Members rallied at the end to make donations and buy stationery and craftwork. We raised £550 for the Foundation and if you want to find out more, please visit website www.littlesherpafoundation.com



Club president, Ian Richards with James Lamb



Making selections of some of the craft work for sale

Club photography night:

Trekking in Greenland (article prepared by the editor using notes from Norman Smith)

Norman gave us a splendid account of a walking adventure this year with Jinty, Jenny and Jed. He set the scene by introducing us to the Scottish Arctic Club, founded in 1970 by a group of enthusiasts including Jinty's father, Iain Smart. Showing us the tricky, trackless terrain, where they camped and occasions where they met residents of Angmagssalik island, southeast Greenland.

Norman illustrated his talk with wonderful photographs of stunning landscapes, tundra vegetation and icy seas. Their base was the town of Tassilaq population 2000.



Starting the second half of our trek looking back towards Sermellik Fiord.

Also at the club photograph night, the editor gave members an illustrated summary of walks in 2021-22 showing highlights and good weather on the club weekends and regular walks and some very wet walks that tested our waterproofs and driving skills of our bus driver!

BDHC Calendar for 2023

To illustrate the club's 2023 calendar, members brought prints of their photographs and the most popular were selected by the members. Excellent images from around Scotland with many capturing landscapes on club walks. Many thanks to Morag Henderson who organised printing of the calendar -copies are available priced £10 from Bruce Henderson. 07976 509826 or brucekinabalu@btinternet.com



SNIPPETS

Scotways survey of routes between Dunkeld and Kirkmichael
Jane Clark

Four groups of Club members walked routes between Alyth, Butterstone, Dunkeld, Dowally all finishing in Kirkmichael on 17th July. This was a practical contribution to checking the condition of all Scottish rights of way so that the new edition of 'Scottish Hill Tracks' will be as up to date as possible.

We completed survey sheets for each route and submitted these with photographs and grid references of any obstacles or poor signage. An interesting exercise with some routes straightforward but others needing better signposting at the start points and some stretches were impeded by deep heather. We look forward to seeing the new edition of Scottish Hill Tracks.

Midsummer/sunrise camp **Norman Smith**

The midsummer sunset/sunrise camp on 19/20 June was planned for the summit of Creag nan Gabhar which has a clear outlook to the Cairngorm massif to the north. Unfortunately, Jinty and Norman were the only folk who turned up. It was very windy in the evening which necessitated the building of a low stone shelter. Photo of the sunrise proof that we saw it and the other the evening before. That's ice on the bottom of our bivvy bags in the morning. There was too much cloud for a sunset. Braemar can be seen top left.



From our newest members

Megan and Tom Eggeling

'Well, yes, we were very apprehensive about joining the Blairgowrie and District Hillwalking Club. It wasn't as though we hadn't walked hills

before. Far from it. A few Munros, randonnées in the Swiss Jura mountains, scrambles up rocky peaks in the Falklands, we'd done them all. But then we were younger, intrepid, full of stamina. How would we fare, now at our advanced ages, in the Highlands of Scotland? We were to find out...

Our first walk was somewhat bewildering. No hill, no walking. Rather miles of prickly heather and an exercise of leaping over it to land in waist-deep bogs! We felt more like army cadets on an endurance training course. Mercifully, we discovered this experience was a one-off. Thus, we would persevere. We did and discovered the real delights of hillwalking in Scotland

That's not to say we actually climb hills, rather we walk round them, keeping to the lower slopes to discover enchanting forests and charming places to stop for lunch by pleasant pools where we have time to read information boards enlightening us to the history of the area. Yes, our 'C walks' are pitched just right, we find, so that they do not result in aching legs and blistered feet but allow us time to share together in our group, specialist knowledge of birds, fungi, flora and aspects of geology. So rewarding. Glen Feshie, The West Highland Way from Crianlarich, Glen Lui-Glen Quoich and even Drumochter in the rain, all so lovely to be able to walk with fellow enthusiasts.



Megan in red and Tom with Pat Townsend on the West Highland way

The Club, moreover, as we discovered, covers so much more than essential walking. There was the most enjoyable barbecue and what a treat to be taken trekking in Greenland or Nepal via film shows. The ‘Away Weekends’ we have yet to experience but know all will be carefully planned.

We are so glad we decided to join the Club, not only for the actual walking but also for the warm friendships we have made within it. Thank you, BDHC.

Discovering Blairgowrie

Jane Clark

In mid-October, club members attended an event hosted by Blairgowrie and Rattray development trust for local clubs and societies to promote activities in and around Blairgowrie.

It was a good opportunity to raise the profile of the club, meet people and learn what is happening in the town and surrounds.



Raising funds by picking blueberries

Jane Clark

Club member, Peter Thomson, opened his blueberry fields throughout the autumn to encourage local charities to pick blueberries that sadly would have gone to waste. On a lovely sunny afternoon in November, club members filled their containers raising £132 for club funds. We look forward to home baking and preserves and very many thanks to the Thomson family for their generosity.



Richard and Irene picking blueberries

CLOSING REMARKS FROM THE EDITOR

Jane Clark

I hope you enjoy this edition of Mountain Thyme summarising some of the activities of club members since Spring 2022. Certainly, a variety of activities. As well as some stunning days, we have had wet walks in stormy weather with some resulting in shortening our routes, early returns and even stops for coffee on the way home!

I welcome articles and feedback – so I know what readers like. Next edition will be mid-2023. Chat to me on a walk sometime or email jane.clark164@gmail.com

After each walk on the programme, there is usually a short piece uploaded to the club's blog on the website www.bdhc.org.uk, a report submitted to the local newspaper the Blairgowrie Advertiser some notes and photos added to the club's Facebook page.