



“Mountain Thyme”

Spring 2023



Mountain Thyme is published by

Blairgowrie and District Hillwalking Club.

The editor welcomes comments and contributions from all members.

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RETIRING PRESIDENT'S RAMBLINGS

Ian Richards Past President

It was good to receive an invitation to write a piece for this edition of the Mountain Thyme, unexpected and perhaps unusual but also welcome, that both the past and current presidents share their thoughts.

On reflection we shouldn't have been too surprised, Jane, as editor, on taking up the role some time ago, threw herself into it with her traditional determination and enthusiasm.

It's thanks to Jane that our Mountain Thyme has gone from strength to strength under her tenure and am sure I speak for everyone in offering her a great big thank you, keep up the good work Jane!

My year as President really flew by, emerging from the various restrictions imposed by Covid at the start of the year, it was a real pleasure to lead the club as we all returned to a 'normal' not enjoyed for the previous two years. As always, new recruits have not only kept our numbers at a healthy level but have added to the character of the group and in turn strengthened it. The social aspect of being part of such a group should never be underestimated, we all enjoy chatting to different folk as the walk progresses, at least when our fickle weather allows!

Thank you all for your friendship and support during the year and best wishes to Kerry during her two years leading the club, we all look forward to her stewardship – I am certain that Kerry will keep those good ideas coming!

Note from the editor: many thanks Ian for guiding the Club as we emerged from Lockdown. I am sure the committee and our new president valued your wise counsel and cheerful approach providing continuity and willingness to embrace new ideas.

INCOMING PRESIDENT'S INTRODUCTION

Kerry Lindsay President

To say it is slightly daunting taking on the role of President is an understatement! The club celebrates its 45th anniversary this year and many have come before me to sail the ship successfully to this point. I very much hope over the next two years I don't sink the ship and instead

pass it on to James in the same excellent condition that Ian passed it on to me.



President and Past president

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Ian Richards for all the advice, support, and words of wisdom he has given me and the club over the past year. He has been very gracious in my constant stream of new ideas and very gentle in telling me either yes or ‘are you having a laugh’! So far, he hasn’t blocked my phone calls, but that day may come.

It is incredibly big shoes to fill, however, since joining this club five years ago it has felt like one big family. Everyone is welcoming, supportive and you always find someone willing to teach new skills or part with information. As we move forward and aim to attract more members to the club, I know all new members will receive the same warm, friendly welcome that I did – although they may not moan as much as me.

So much work goes into the club from people dedicating their time to bringing everything together. A huge thank you to Jane for producing Mountain Thyme twice a year, all the committee, those who help with our events and every member who participates in club activities, Even Dave the driver feels like an honorary member who goes above and

beyond regularly. We'll all miss his cheery face when he retires later this year.

We have a great walk programme ahead with some brilliant events and fantastic weekend trips. I very much look forward to seeing everyone over the coming year.

Note from the editor (prepared after the Ullapool weekend) – well done Kerry – off to a flying start planning so many extra activities for those lucky enough to extend their visit to Ullapool and thanks to for revising the newsletter and introducing What's App chat for club photos – all helping to keep members engaged.

AGM REPORT FROM THE TREASURER

Richard Townsend Treasurer

I suggested at the AGM that as I was preparing my Treasurer's Report, the film Groundhog Day kept coming to mind given the sense of déjà vu evoked by the contents!

Since 2017, we have seen a steady decline in the Club's funds from over £7,000 to just over £4,000 by February 2023, with a decline in the last year of around £500.

In terms of income, 2022/23 saw a considerable increase over the previous (Covid affected) year, with the return of membership fees of £664, and over £1,500 raised in other income including from the NTS Raffle, the Quiz Night & Calendar Sales, raffles at the Slide Night & BBQ, the Christmas meal, berry picking and the Club Draw.

Unfortunately, our outgoings also substantially increased! In addition to our regular website maintenance cost, we have our golf club membership and the return of charitable donations: But, as ever, the largest cost was the Transport Subsidy, a record breaking £1,860.

The subsidy varies depending on the number of coaches we run, the average cost of a coach and the number of passengers. As I mentioned last year, coach hire costs are rising, each hire set to cost £435 in the coming year (including a tip for the driver).

The committee has been closely monitoring the subsidy and decided to pull two of three "levers" that could be pulled, with the third (the £12 coach fare) under ongoing review. The two levers are an increase of the threshold for cancelling the bus from 12 to 16 passenger bookings and a

limit on the number of planned coach trips to 12 in the coming year (12 coach trips were run in 2022/23). If we ran a coach with only 12 members paying a £12 fare each, a bus in the coming year would cost an eye watering subsidy of £291. Interestingly, if every member had gone on one extra coach trip in year, we would have had no funds reduction in 2022/23!

While for coach trips members are asked to pay their fare at the time they book on the coach, for car meets members are asked to pay their fare to the driver on the day. The driver is not required to pay, retains their fuel costs from fares received and pays any balance to the club.

If a coach is cancelled (due to a lack of numbers) the car meet rules for paying fares apply if the destination is unchanged. If the destination changes, then any arrangement is between members and no payment is due to the club.

At the AGM, the BDHC fees for 2023/24 were set at £16.85 Adult, £8.85 Concession and £6.25 Youth. Mountaineering Scotland fees are Adult £20.15, Youth £11.75. An amendment to the Constitution with a pro rata reduction for new members joining between the 4th and 6th months of our financial year was explained and agreed.

Given all the above, the club is very open to suggestions for fund raising! This year we see the return of the popular NTS Raffle, with an opportunity 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 four at the Fife Arms Hotel. This is likely to be the last year of this prize, as the NTS will not be able to offer the Club a discount in future years.

The winning number for the NTS prize was drawn on the Saturday evening at Ullapool – congratulations Morag and the quarterly winners of our Club Draw (1st prize £50 and 2nd prize £10). Congratulations Peter Thomson and Ian Cameron.

Bank transfers continue to work well. A wee reminder that I am not issuing receipts for bus fares. Use of the reference facility when making bank transfers to clarify what it is for, e.g., bus fare, membership, calendar payment etc, is very helpful!

CLUB WALKS IN 2023/24 SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

Bruce Henderson meet secretary

The 2023-2024 year is now upon us, and based upon suggestions received the committee has tried to create a programme which will be attractive to both existing and new members. There are some old favourites such as Mount Keen (Munro) and Farragon Hill (Corbett), and something completely new, Pressendye (Graham) in Aberdeenshire near Tarland.

Linear walks such as Jock's Road (this time from south to north), and a Christmas walk on the Cateran Trail in December back to Blairgowrie with the appropriate festivities at the Golf Club. Once again, we have An Socach to Glen Ey on the calendar (third time lucky!), and MeallCuaich, Drumochter which we previously abandoned in monsoon conditions, hopefully this time we won't need the shelter of a bothy!

Ever fancied a walk on a train?

Well, we have one arranged for this summer. The plan is for a Saturday walk where we join the northbound West Highland line train at Crianlarich, and alight at Corroul where we spend the day climbing hills, before having a meal at Corroul Station House and taking the evening train south to Crianlarich. A day not to be missed!

In addition to the usual social events such as a coastal walk; BBQ; Quiz Night etc. we have two special events this year:

On 21st October we will be holding our 45th Anniversary lunch at Little's Restaurant. This is as much as fund-raising event as a celebration of 45 years, and we are hoping to see as many members as possible both past and present at the event.

The other one-off event will be the hosting of the Mountain Mind Quiz in March 2024, when our Club will host walking/rambling and climbing clubs from all over Tayside and Fife.

The full programme is on the Club website, and we hope to have another successful year.

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

ULLAPOOL WEEKEND

Kerry Lindsay President

For those who travelled to Arran last year and were treated to blue skies, fantastic walks, great company and fine food, I think we all approached the Ullapool weekend slightly nervous it would be a damp squid after the success of the year before.

However, it did not disappoint. The forecast changed a few days before and for most of the trip we were treated to beautiful sunshine and a strong breeze! The walks were stunning and plentiful, the company excellent and the activities delightful. Trying to put all that happened in to just a few words is tricky!



Kerry, Madeleine and Anne on Ben Hope



Sandra and Richard on An Teallach

I do also have to add that several of us while close to Lochinver also took the opportunity to visit the infamous pie shop.

A great array of hills were climbed over seven days, including BeinnEnaiglair, An Teallach, GlasBheinn, Ben More Coigach, Braebag, Ullapool Hill, CulBeag, Canisp and Am Faochagach to name a few! Also walks to Scoraig, Lael Forest and Auchindrean, Cuileig Gorge and Rhue Lighthouse, and on the Saturday five members drove north to conquer Ben Hope.



Assynt from Cul Beag



Quinaig from GlasBeinn



Ben Mor Coigach



On Canisp

The camaraderie was as the Irish say, ‘great craic’. We have Terry Lonsdale and Jinty Smart to thank for the yellow welly theme that took over the week and the club now have their own mascot, in a pair of yellow wellies. It’s difficult to pinpoint exactly how this came about but I do believe started from Terry meeting a man called Bill Smith, who was an arctic explorer, while en route to the Man of Stoer. While the story was recounted by Anne Crombie over drinks later that evening, Jinty remembered having read an article about this man. A quick google search later revealed a shirtless man in a kilt wearing yellow wellies and from there our yellow welly fascination was born!



Group on StacPollaidh



Iain naming Assynt hills from StacPollaidh

For me a personal highlight of the week was a trip to Handa Island. Never did I think when Bruce recommended a trip to the bird nature reserve that we would be on a rib landing on the most beautiful beach with blue skies above us. And we saw the puffins! From what started as a freezing cold miserable day turned out to be a delight. After which several club members left us to start the journey back home.



Group on Handa Island

Ullapool really did have something for everyone. There were many wonderful local walks for those wanting a gentler day and with 27 members travelling to the area for the weekend (many staying a full

week), there was always a variety of company on hand for whatever type of walk you fancied.



Ullapool Hill



Bone caves at Inchnadamph

As is becoming a new tradition, for those staying the full week, there was a get together for a BBQ on the Wednesday evening which was an excellent way to find out about each other's walks and hear the stories.

With two excellent Spring weekends behind us I cannot wait to see what the Lake District has in store for us next year. Bring it on. And the yellow wellies will be coming too!

WINTER SKILLS AND NAVIGATION TRAINING

BDHC encourages members to be safe in the mountains. Most years the club promotes and subsidises winter skills training. Here, **Douglas Raereports** on behalf of six members who attended a course by Mountaineering Scotland in February.

After a well co-ordinated meeting in the Wellmeadow at 7:30am and picking up Sandra in Ballinluig at 8:00am we had a relaxing trip up the A9 to arrive at the Tiso shop in Aviemore just before 9:00am.

Our instructor Ben Gibson, was not far behind and the course kicked off shortly thereafter, accompanied by good coffee, teas and pastries (not included in the course price).

Located in a quiet, closed-off area of Tiso, Ben passed around maps and compasses for us to use in a warm and friendly environment. During the ensuing 3 hours of classroom work we learned all about assessing the weather conditions on the hills, risk of avalanche, deciding on the most appropriate route to our destination and how to use a map and compass to get there.



Ben had some rather interesting analogies, comparing increasing wind strength to the number of pints of Guinness consumed, and the risk of avalanche to the potential of getting involved in bar fights! Apparently, he harks from the border town of Pettigo in Northern Ireland, the only village on the island of Ireland to be divided by the river Termon.

Following the theory work we headed off to the Cairngorm Mountain car park to put what we had learned into practice - the 5 As (angle, altitude, aspect, architecture and adaptability) and the 5 Ds (distance, duration, direction, description and danger). In the boulder fields we also learned about how best to place our feet by thinking - ledge, edge or wedge!

From the car park we headed west along the path to Coire an Lochain, then went off track around Allt Creag and Leith-chointo find some snow patches with enough slope to practice using our ice axe and crampons.

The weather was perfect for navigation practice - cold, breezy, and misty with snow showers! We tried some pacing and timing with various degrees of success, returning to the car park around the 5:00pm mark. A full day's training which was much enjoyed by all. We said goodbye to Ben and thanked him for his instruction and headed back to Blair for that much anticipated hot shower and the mandatory G&T!

WEST HIGHLAND WAY AND BEN NEVIS APRIL 2023

Note from editor, on hearing a new member walked the West Highland Way in April, I invited him to share his experience, mindful that several Club members have walked the Way, and some may feel his pain and share his sense of achievement.

Bruce Burns

Since leaving Bradford University in 1979 a group of us fourteen former students have held regular reunions in various places throughout the UK. This year it was decided that six of us, 65 plus year olds, felt fit enough to embark on the West Highland Way 96 mile walk challenge over seven days and climb Ben Nevis on day eight. All the hotel, B&B accommodation and baggage handling was carried out by Macs Adventures which worked out extremely well and comes highly recommended.

Getting to the starting point at Milngavie by bus from Broxden/Glasgow was the lowest cost part of the expedition price £1 booking fee with my bus pass!! We all assembled at the start some with knee and ankle supports all smiling and commenced the first 12 miles through the countryside to Drymen which turned out to be straightforward and uneventful.



Myself, Ken, Alan, Eric, Dave and Martin

Day 2 was a different story especially for me. It started well and we climbed Conic Hill to get our first spectacular views of Loch Lomond albeit quite low cloud it cleared just at the right time, and we had glorious views over the big pond and surrounding countryside. What a fantastic start until the strong wind on the summit blew Ken's hat off and, in his attempt, to catch it, he managed to accidentally hit me with his hand and gave me a bloodied nose!! Onwards and downwards 14.5 miles to Rowardennan Hotel halfway up the side of Loch Lomond. The last few miles were my lowest point of the whole trip with very sore little toes and a hip pain which I have never experienced before. The disappointing thoughts going through my mind was that I am not going to be able to carry on!! That evening whilst we all recovered with a pre meal beer Dave from Wales a regular cold-water swimmer invited me for a swim in Loch Lomond and so always up for challenge I had a quick dip and boy it was Baltic but refreshing. Next day I felt rejuvenated after a good night sleep, the hip pain was gone, and I put the blister plasters into action for another tricky day up the second half of Loch Lomond on a somewhat undulating rocky path. There is a low and high footpath option and where they meet I started chatting to a rather small young lady carrying all her rather heavy looking camping gear and food for the week attempting her third WHW!! A bit further on I was speaking to her brother who mentioned she had picked up a groin injury and was heading back to Glasgow on the bus. I did admire all the many walkers carrying their camping gear as that is a real endurance feat. Near Ardlui we summoned the ferry by raising a small buoy on a flagpole to the much-welcomed hotel on the other side of the Loch. I must admit didn't realise how busy the WHW would be, and we met and chatted to fellow walkers from the USA – a group of 20 (apologies Leith but we could always hear them coming before we saw them ha ha), Germany, Holland, Austria and an Australian couple with a 9-month-old baby. We would continually bump into all these groups over the 7 days, and it really was an enjoyable part of the walk meeting all these different people.

The absence of foliage on the trees and no midges in April along the side of Loch Lomond certainly made the views so much more enjoyable. There was quite a bit of early flora to take in, noticeably an abundance of primroses on the damp, steep rocky banks along with a variety of wildlife including wild goats, golden eagles and snow bunting which all helped distract from those sore feet.

Over the following days we got into our stride and advanced through Tyndrum, Bridge of Orchy, Rannoch Moor and into Glencoe. The longest day was the 19 miles between Tyndrum and Glencoe with three of our

crew opting for the 6-mile bus ride between Tyndrum and Bridge of Orchy. Eric and Martin had genuine fatigue and carrying injuries whereas Dave our Welsh pacesetter for all the trip and fittest amongst us quite rightly just fancied an easier day followed by an evening of good-natured ribbing. A golden eagle soaring in the distance was spotted going over Rannoch moor on the hottest day of the trip which meant lashings of sun cream and some lunch time sunbathing.

Arriving in Glencoe was one of the trips highlights as it is such a magnificent setting surrounded by rocky peaks which has inspired me to return and hopefully climb a few. I thoroughly recommend the Kingshouse hotel which was a real opulent oasis after a hard day's wilderness trudging. Maybe it was just the day's exercise, but my rib of beef was one of the tastiest meals I have had for a very long time and the glorious evening sunset view down the glen from the restaurant setting will certainly entice me back again.



Fully rested and fortified with Guinness, red wine and malt whisky we all set off up the Devils staircase to Kinlochleven. On the high ground we bumped into the couple with their baby that had started to cry as it was quite cold and windy for everyone this early in the morning. Quite unphased the mum unloaded the child from his special backpack seat, wrapped him up in a baby sling and he quietly snuggled up and off they trotted with dad carrying quite a heavy rucksack no doubt full of baby supplies. We never saw them again, but that baby must have been one of the youngest lads to complete the West Highland Way. On the final push to Fort William, we had about thirty minutes of very light drizzle which was the first rain in seven days which must be a record for the west coast of Scotland. It didn't even justify taking out our waterproofs all though a

few did after spending a fortune on new kit as they had rightly planned for the worst. Arriving in Glen Nevis was another memorable occasion a second golden eagle was spotted, and my team Newcastle thrashed Tottenham 6-1 that afternoon having listened to the match on the radio whilst walking. Fort William was a welcome sight as this walk was much harder than anticipated for most of us and I would be inclined not to tackle this mileage again on consecutive days.

Alan and I felt we still had some power left in the old battery packs so the following day we set off for Ben Nevis from the hotel in a taxi!! It ended up a four hour climb to the top and not surprisingly about the same time to get back down. We encountered all four seasons weather including a blizzard on the way up and we certainly needed our waterproofs and warm clothing. It was arctic on the top, we estimated about minus 10 with wind chill and we were struggling to eat our sandwiches with such cold hands on the summit. There had been a fresh but light snowfall the night before so the final stretch to the top was walking on snow covered icewhich was not expected, and I really should not have left my crampons in the hotel!! The cloud cover was in our favour most of the time and we enjoyed a wonderful Alpine vista over the surrounding area. Dave and Martin left that evening by sleeper to London and the rest by train the following day to Devon, York, and Liverpool. I had the luxury of my son collecting me by car and a final day's exercise mountain biking with him and his friend on the new Blue Doon run on Aonach Mor. Thankfully there is a chair lift to get up to the top, but a challenging bike run down on what I think is a somewhat very dangerous and much more difficult than its blue class intermediate track rating. I was fortunately warned in advance about this from a young Sottish lad who I met on the WHW, he was the tour guide for the Americans, so I was taking it very cautiously on my first run down and watched over by my son who will easily tackle the world championship course at this location.

All in all, a fantastic nine-day adventure and we now have future plans for walks in the Cotswolds and the North Devon coastline.



SOCIAL EVENTS

BDHC Quiz 2023

Roddy Cameron

The annual quiz night in January was again a fun get-together with 13 teams taking part. It's a great benefit to have the golf clubhouse for our social events and the occasion was successful in raising £299 towards our general funds.

Our quiz has become an established event since it started in 2008 through our local contact with journalist Evelyn Hood. She has provided her experience of setting general knowledge questions for 'Top Club', a quiz tournament which ran between 1971 and 1998 and was rated the most watched light entertainment programme on Grampian Television. This year, four new rounds of questions were added in the style of different television programmes - 'University Challenge' which began on ITV in 1962, 'Mastermind' on BBC1 in 1972, 'Only Connect' on BBC4 in 2008 and 'Pointless' on BBC2 in 2009. There is a continuing popularity of quizzes!

Many thanks Roddy as quiz master and supplier of the essential screen to show slides!

SNIPPETS

Jane Clark

Congratulations

Mary Connelly

Congratulations to Mary Connelly who celebrated her 100th birthday in February. Mary was a stalwart of the "C" group climbing hills and walking with this group in all weather and joining them on their holidays exploring the Scottish islands and further afield in the Isles of Scilly.



Margaret Young and Joyce Coupar

Another two members of the original C group celebrated birthdays recently. Margaret Young, a founder member, and Joyce Coupar both turned 90 and met up with old friends to share fond memories of outings.

Ladies you are an inspiration to us all, thank you for your friendship and we hope you will continue to enjoy walking.



Margaret (in red) and Joyce (in Yellow)

10,000 steps every day in March for SCAA

The Scottish Charity Air Ambulance is based at Scone and this year it issued a challenge to raise funds, by walking at least 10,000 steps every day for the month of March. I accepted the challenge and those who see me out and about recognise that walking 10,000 in a day is not a big challenge for me but doing so every day, consistently for a month, while still getting on with my life, visiting friends and going to various appointments in Edinburgh is tricky.

I tracked my steps and turned in a respectable total of 515,847 steps or 231 miles. I raised around £600 – with over half of this coming from BDHC friends thank you. I counted my steps on one of our hill walks – a snowy day in Glen Shee. We were encouraged to post photographs of our daily walks on Facebook. I made a new friend, a blind lady who liked my descriptions of flowers and features around Blairgowrie. In total, the challenge raised £45,851 and this should keep the helicopters flying for a wee while.



Fife Coastal Path - finished at last.

When living in Edinburgh, I joined a walking club and they walked stretches of the Fife Coastal Path, mainly on the south coast of Fife. We travelled there by bus or train. This whetted my appetite to do more, and I planned day trips to fill in gaps. Some stretches I did on my own, others with one or two friends from Edinburgh or Blairgowrie and one part with BDHC from Leuchars to the Tay Bridge. My approach was a little haphazard and, for the most part, relied on public transport to get to the start points or ferry me back to Edinburgh or Blairgowrie.



Fife coastal path finished!

Readers may recall I walked the Fife Pilgrim Way with two friends from Edinburgh (much more systematic and organised) and we realised that we had all walked most of the Fife Coastal Path but none of us had walked from Tayport to Newburgh. After COVID restrictions were lifted, we planned the final leg, in two parts. The first part from Tayport to Brunton was straightforward. However, we met some difficulties on the very last part from Brunton to Newburgh, a lower leg injury and then a cancelled train postponed our progress but at last we met up and completed the final section, taking in Norman's Law. From Newburgh, I had a short bus trip to Perth and transfer to Blairgowrie. The excellent "app" TravelineScotland helped me plan the routes using my bus or rail pass. The full route is 116 miles, I really liked the rugged coastal stretches around Crail and Elie (it is on our programme in July yippee) and I recommend the walk and the maps from the Fife Coast and Countryside Trust.

CLOSING REMARKS

Jane Clark editor

I hope you enjoy this edition of Mountain Thyme with some new contributors adding to the mix of varied articles. As ever, I welcome feedback and I aim to publish the next edition after the September weekend so let me know if you would like to write up an adventure. I enjoy hearing from our new members especially those who are tackling hills I may have climbed many years ago.