



2005-2006 SEASON - ISSUE NUMBER 3

AUTUMN 2005

Dear Member,

2005: DAY OUTINGS

23 October Black Mount area

2005: WEEKEND TRIPS

11/12 November Glen Feshie (organiser - Jim Bunney)

2006: WEEKEND TRIPS

3/4 February Tranearth, Coniston, Lake District (Organiser: Eunice)

24/25 March Ratagan Hostel (12 places)(Organiser: Helen)

28-30 April Ullapool Scotpackers Hostel (12 places)(Organiser: John)

26-28 May Achinver Hostel, Achiltibuidhe (Organiser: Helen)

(possibility of extending time in North West by staying at Inchnadamph hostel. Anyone interested, please contact Committee member)

22 -24 September Torridon Youth Hostel (12 places)(Organiser: Steve)

November Section of Southern Uplands Way (details to be discussed and confirmed)(Organiser: Eunice)

Suggestions for 2007 programme include: Skye, Achnashellach and Strawberry Cottage, Glen Affric. Any suggestions for either day outings or weekend trips, please contact a Committee member.

Bookings for weekend trips should be accompanied by a £5.00 deposit to the trip organiser. Early bookings appreciated to give ample time to adjust numbers, if necessary.

7-10 June 2006 - Hadrian's Wall (Walk the Wall)

Anyone interested in walking along Hadrian's Wall, please contact Heather Willimot. So far, Heather has 9 names (Helen, George, Sandra, Eunice, Rebecca, Liz, Fay, Ian and Heather) and she wishes to book accommodation as soon as possible. The party are thinking of driving to the west end near Carlisle and then taking the train to Corbridge to start the walk. The walk back to the cars should take in Chesters, Housesteads and Vindolanda (as well as Once and Twice Brewed).

REPORTS

Canada (Reporter: Eunice Coop)

Where do I begin to tell (cue a song!) you all about the holiday in Canada? Do I tell you about the abundance of flowers, the animals who put on a show for the visitors from Scotland, the rugged shattered limestone rock towering to the sky, etc.? To give you merely a litany of what we did each day would not suffice. I'll try to keep the superlatives under control.

The Rockies rise dramatically from rolling foothills along a fault line to tilted grey limestone peaks where older rock was forced above younger rock. And this was our first view of them travelling from Calgary to Canmore for our first night. Erosion and folding over millions of years has further enhanced the ruggedness of the ranges.

The holiday comprised 5 separate sections. Kananaskis Provincial Park to camp for 4 nights was our first destination and my introduction to the need to make constant noise to warn bears we were coming. Here, we were joined by Liz, John and Scott, 3 friends of Jean and Ian, who climbed with us each day. I had been told before going to Canada of the forestry at the bottom of every mountain - what an understatement - the forestry is vast - the whole of Alberta and British Columbia is forest through which man has cut sufficient space to build or lay a road. Each day comprised climbing uphill for 1-2 hours before emerging above the treeline to meadows of beautiful flowers. Many, many pictures/slides of these flowers were taken so our next slide show should be a feast for the eyes. Above this level is shale-y, loose scree-y rock making it hard work to gain the top. The views are phenomenal - huge, jagged, rugged, snow-capped mountains and vast glaciers.

The animals did us proud. On day 1 in Kananaskis, a grizzly bear strolled across the road, a pica ran across the rock: on day 2 we saw white tailed deer and a Canadian robin: on day 3 we saw a coyote/wolf, a moose, big horned sheep and countless ground squirrels.

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This was also my first introduction to Canadian campsites. They are simultaneously very organised and very basic. Each campsite is laid with a specified number of pitches and there is no random camping. There are water taps, toilets which require gas masks and bear proof bins. Some have shower blocks - some don't.

Stage 2 of the holiday was the 4 day Rockwall Trail. The Rockwall is an exception to the shale-y peaks. It is a sheer limestone cliff over 900m high in places extending along the boundary of Kootney National Park for over 40k. The trail parallels the base of this cliff for much of its length. There are 3 high passes, alpine meadows and views of glaciated limestone peaks. It's always a good feeling to leave civilisation behind, put your rucksack on your back and set off for a bit of self reliance for a few days. Our last camp on that trip was at Helmet Creek where we were rewarded with a sighting of a mountain goat (a considerably bigger creature than our mountain goats) by the side of Helmet Falls. The trail finishes at Paint Pots ochre beds. The clay of the Ochre Beds is stained red and yellow by iron oxide carried in spring water. The Kootney natives collected the clay from which they derived a pigment used to make body paint.

Now it was time for stage 3 of the holiday. Luxury was called for. We went to Lake Louise Hostel where they have beds, electricity, hot water and showers! Lake Louise is sometimes thought of by Canadians as the birth place of hiking as a national recreation. After the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) in 1885, tourists began to make their way into the area and the village grew from the need for accommodation and facilities. Today, the trails in this area are the most heavily used in the Canadian Rockies although quite a few were closed or had restrictions on them because of bear activity. To say that the view of Lake Louise and the Chateau is picturesque is an understatement - it is stunning. Liz, John and Scott, who had accompanied us on the Rockwall Trail, finished their holiday and set off on their journey home.

There is so much to do in this area it is difficult to choose. However, we climbed Fairview Mountain and Cirque Peak both with views of Mount Assiniboine, the "Matterhorn of British Columbia". Here, saw us on Sunshine Meadows amongst beautiful flowers (note for Iain Keddie - 20+k is not an easy day!). Paget Peak deserves a separate mention. Having driven over Kicking Horse Pass to reach the peak, we were able to look down from the top onto the Pass and watch the trains making their slow progress up the Pass and into the Spiral Tunnels. Because the trains are so very, very long the front re-appears at the exit of the tunnel before the back of the train has entered into it.

Spiral Tunnels are a tremendous feat of engineering. The gradient and the danger of avalanches made this section of the CPR's line a nightmare to negotiate. The 2 tunnels built deep into the mountain and forming a figure of eight added 7k to the length of the line but considerably reduced the gradient. We also went later to a viewpoint to watch the trains make their slow way through the tunnels. Cedric has lots and lots of slides! (Ed - train-spotting is an honourable pre-occupation by the way before any of you good folk sneer at it, with similarities to Munro-bagging if you think about it).

Our next day, Wilcox Pass, was also memorable because of the views it afforded of the Athabasca Glacier.

During this period, we were daily treated to fantastic views, beautiful flowers and the animals came up trumps too: 2 black bears, a mule deer, marmots, Clarks Nutcrackers (birds) and an absolutely magnificent elk.

Now it was time for stage 4 - making our way gradually westwards to Vancouver. We walked and drove a little and camped each night. We drove down Route 99 at one point alongside the tumultuous Fraser River marvelling at the deep valley it had carved for itself. We took the gondola to the top of Whistler and walked out to Flute Peak and watched the mountain bikers hurtling at death defying speeds down the mountain.

From there, it was on to Squamish which styles itself the climbing capital of the world. (Squamish probably deserves this claim more than Kirkie's claim to be the canal capital of the world). There is a huge rock face called the Chief where climbers, like tiny insects, can be spotted by the eagle-eyed. We actually climbed to the top of this rock - but not up any of the direct routes! Here also, Jean took us to Diamond Head, to a remote cabin way up in the hills at a place called Elfin Lakes. Jean had been there many times in younger days and modestly related some of the trips she and friends undertook including being stranded out for 2 nights in the snow in the depths of winter before battling back to the cabin just before the mountain rescue set out to look for them. A remarkable woman this Jean Keddie! A mother ptarmigan with chicks wandered onto our path just to complete the animal count of the holiday.

From there, we moved on to stage 5/6 doing the tourist thing in both Vancouver Island and Vancouver itself.

There is so much more I could say or tell you about this holiday. Suffice to say, I feel I simultaneously celebrated a banquet and sampled but a few crumbs of the feast that is Canada.

A Last Munro, or just a New Beginning? (Reporters: Jimmy and Joyce Maclean and Sandra Owen)

Jimmy and Joyce write:

And so the year turned and it looked like 2005 was going to be the one when we might finally finish our first round of the Munros. All that remained was to keep well, hope for good weather, get out with the KMC as often as possible and climb the seventeen remaining hills.

It all sounded straight forward enough but as is often the case, we suffered a bit of a slump into the New Year. Between Hogmonay and late April, we managed one day out in the Fannaichs. A smashing winter's day out Beinn Liath Mhor Fannaich which, while very enjoyable, did nothing for the dreaded "tick list". Easter We knew we wouldn't get any ticks over Easter as we were headed for France and a walk in the gorges of Haut Provence. We managed two hills in April when we made a day trip from Tain to climb Aonach Beag and Aonach Mor, which we did from Steall in Glen Nevis. The sun beat down on us all day long and we enjoyed magnificent views of the Ben and Carn Mor Dearg from the start to the finish of the walk. There was hardly a cloud in the sky and the lingering spring snow was in brilliant contrast to the blue of the sky.

The season really got properly under way at the splendid KMC May weekend at Mar Lodge on Deeside. Splendid, that is, for the good walking weather on the Saturday, the palatial accommodation and, of course, the company. We set out in a large group on the Saturday (also including Sandra, Helen, Richard, Jean, Ian and George) for Beinn Bhreac and Beinn a' Chaorainn. The wind was keen and from the north but the air was sharp and clear and we could see for miles. Things were looking so good that Joyce and I decided to also take in Derry Cairngorm. After a luxurious bath, a fine meal and a good nights sleep we awoke with ambitious plans for the Sunday - that is, until we saw the state of the weather! The cloud was down and it was going to take a bit effort to achieve what we had in mind, namely the round of five Munros in the Glen Ey area - An Socach, Glas Tulaichean, Beinn Iutharn Mhor, Carn an Righ and Carn Bhac. At breakfast, one or two eyebrows were raised at this plan and, we were wished an enthusiastic, if sceptical, farewell in the drizzling

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rain. We cycled up Glen Ey in deteriorating conditions and left the bikes at Altanour Lodge by now in the pouring rain. River crossings were difficult but eventually we proceeded up An Socach as the rain and mist got steadily worse. By the time we reached the summit our spirits were as damp as our clothes and we knew that unless there was a sudden and dramatic change in the weather, we probably weren't going to achieve our goal. On descending, we decided to cut our losses and struck out for Carn Bhac in the knowledge that the other hills would be there for another day. We were glad to have the bikes to return to for a speedy run back down the glen. On returning to Mar Lodge, nobody said "We told you so!" but we were sure they were thinking it and rightly so. This would have been a huge day even in good conditions and the more experienced walkers in the Club certainly knew better than we did.

The Monday began no better than the Sunday and we decided to bag The Devil's Point in the Lairig Ghru which had been a thorn in our flesh for too long. The day started wet and continued like this until well into the afternoon. We achieved our hill (Yipee! - into single figures) and beat a sodden trek back home to Tain and a hot bath.

The three hills missed on the Sunday did not evade us for long. A camping trip to Pitlochry with some old friends afforded us the opportunity to have another go at them in early June. This time, we cycled in from Spittal of Glenshee up a very bumpy track almost to Loch Nan Eun, then climbed Beinn Iutharn Mhor, Carn an Righ and Glas Tulaichean in turn. Yet again a fine day with the cloud level just above the summits.

The start of the summer holidays at the beginning of July saw us off to Mull for a few days camping and cycling and, of course, another tick for Ben More. We took a colleague's advice and climbed Beinn Fhada first and then on to the A'Chioch ridge. This provided a very fine scramble and was certainly more enjoyable than our descent by the "Tourist Path". Unfortunately, the mist hung about the top all day and, consequently, the views from the summit to the west evaded us. For the rest of the week, the cloud descended to the extent that, a trip to Staffa four days later, saw the hill mist turn into sea fog! We, therefore, beat a hasty retreat to the east where the weather was glorious. We camped near Newtonmore with the intention of climbing Carn an Fhidleir and An Sgarsoch from the Glen Feshie side. Prior to this, we climbed the three northerly Monadh Liaths, as Joyce could not remember whether she had done all three or not (there's honesty for you). It, apparently, had been in the days when she followed others and didn't really have a clue where she was! (Ed - Jimmy's words). I was delighted to do the hills again as the last time was a fairly hard winter's day in late December. The contrast could not have been greater. It was so hot and we could have been walking in the south of France (no bother). The very next day, we cycled up Glen Feshie and had a twelve hour outing to achieve Carn an Fhidleir and An Sgarsoch (Ed - and I thought I was the only one daft enough to do these big days!). Glen Feshie was superb and the weather was fine and dry but the wind had freshened up and it was a good bit cooler. It was grand to get these two remote hills completed. Next time, we may do them from the Braemar direction.

OK - only three Munros to go now and still five weeks of summer holidays left! It sounds tough I know but we try not to complain - after all someone has to do it!

The third last and penultimate hills were Ben Avon and Beinn a Bhuird. These were done from the Tomintoul side and once more, we used bikes. This was another glorious day with wall-to-wall sunshine but also with a stiff westerly blowing. The arrival at Beinn a Bhuird summit was a reflective moment as it now became clear that we were going to finish on our chosen day in late August. There would be no new Munros to climb again - ever! (unless, of course, SMC revises the list again!). It was just as well we finish on the 27th as the Kingussie hall and the food and ceilidh arrangements were all in place.

The final Munro beckoned but not without another "insurance" job on Sgurr na Ciste Dubh on the Five Sisters of Kintail the weekend beforehand, once again in glorious weather.

Sandra writes:

A motley crew of walkers, ranging from very experienced to complete novices, set out on Saturday, 27th August, to accompany Joyce and Jimmy on the ascent of their last Munro, Beinn a' Chaorainn. Included in the crowd were hill walkers who had climbed with them since the '70s, 17 KMC members (the most experienced, of course), non-hill walking friends and members of their family, the youngest being only eight years old.

A festival atmosphere prevailed as we struggled to find places in the car park! This was going to be a fun day out - Joyce had promised us an easy Munro! The slight inconvenience of the midges, which chased us from the car park, was quickly forgotten as we wandered along the track towards the cairn which (according to the Munro book) marked the firebreak, which led to the open hillside. Some dissension among the ranks of experienced walkers resulted in a split in the party with one group, led by Peter (who else?), ignoring the cairn and opting to find an alternative route onto the hillside. Perhaps, for once, Peter chose the lesser of two evils. Certainly, a rude awakening awaited the others, who quickly discovered that the firebreak was, in fact, an unavoidable swamp. As they floundered in knee-deep water and mud, perhaps the inexperienced walkers had their first inkling that this day was going to be more of a challenge than they had expected. But, I'm sure, as they were sprayed with mud by a Labrador dog who was having the time of his life running back and forwards through the quagmire, they must have been reassured that the carnival experience still prevailed.

On reaching the open hillside, order was restored. As we ascended the relatively easy slopes to the South top, we were lulled into a sense of false security. Admittedly, the visibility was poor and a steady drizzle meant that full waterproof gear was necessary. The poorly equipped were now grateful for Joyce's distribution of waterproofs, courtesy of Golspie High School, and they were to be identified throughout the day by their standard issue blue coloured outfits.

But, at the first top, reality hit! This was no longer a fun day family outing. We were now faced with the conditions KMC members have come to expect on last Munros! Novices to hill walking now had to experience horizontal rain, zero visibility and plummeting temperatures. It was a lesson for experienced and inexperienced alike - even in a crowd, Munros, in bad weather, are lonely places. When, with a sense of relief, the summit was found, a determined effort was made to revive the party spirit. Champagne bottles were opened, traditional shortbread feet were passed round and there were valiant attempts by Jimmy and his son, Colin, to render a tune on the bagpipes. The conditions, however, forced a hasty retreat and an untimely end to the celebrations.

I'm glad to report that all descended safely and there was no need for Mountain Rescue to dispatch a helicopter. Moreover, the compass skills of the experienced walkers meant that we returned by a different route - discovering a drier firebreak! (Were the inexperienced among us really convinced this was intentional?). The evening entertainment provided by Joyce and Jimmy more than made up for the curtailed celebrations at the top of the mountain. Both experienced and inexperienced walkers and dancers were able to enjoy the buffet and ceilidh. But, I wonder, how many walkers decided that they, as well as Joyce and Jimmy, had climbed their last Munro.

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Jimmy and Joyce write:

Suffice to say, it was very humbling to see how many of you turned out to share our last Munro with us and it certainly made it a day for us to always remember.

We know that our first round of the Munros would not have come about without the members of the KMC. We were made most welcome from the very beginning and have enjoyed so many great days out in your company. The crack is always good and the good humour and fun really does make a day out, or a weekend away, with KMC something to look forward to. We feel we have become, at last, full members of the Club in that we can truly call ourselves "Completists" and not just the unashamed "Baggers" that we have been for the last few years.

A Rum Doo! (Reporter: Steve Turnbull)

The KMC elite whittled themselves down from 15 to nine for the trip to Rum. Had the call-offs heard something we had not? Three car-loads arrived safely at Mallaig in time for the 12.40pm crossing. With high winds blowing, there was some initial doubt as to whether the ferry would sail. Sail we did and the crossing was rough. The ferry rocked on its heel as it turned into the wind outside Mallaig harbour but the best was yet to come. Unlike the uninterrupted sunshine and sea-calm of KMC's last Rum excursion in September 2001, the white horses rolled towards the ferry as it ploughed its way westwards. Occasionally, it met a series of big waves head-on and the boat would rise and crash down throwing great flumes of spray across the deck. Inside the warmth of the cabin, the motion was making a handful of people feel distinctly ill, whilst outside, others were enjoying the fresh air and a mouthful of salt water. Other than these ups and downs, the journey was uneventful and we landed at the new Rum jetty in Loch Scrisort. There is always an interesting way to land on Rum. Last time, it was disembarking from the ferry onto the island shuttle boat, then disembarking again onto a rubber dinghy. This time, a dip in the ferry's ramp meant we would have to wade through a couple of feet of sea water to gain dry land. The islanders had the solution. Two Landrovers drove onto the ferry, loaded people and gear and reversed back onto the jetty, whereupon we all got out and started the walk to Kinloch Castle. Some of the KMC members managed to whistle up a lift to the Castle! That evening, we ate in the bistro.

Next morning, the clouds were touching the tops of the Corbetts and it was still windy. Two groups emerged: Peter, Sinclair, Liz and Jack walked to Kilmory (the deserted village on the north of the island), then continued west along the cliff-tops to Guirdil before returning to Kinloch over the hill track. Meanwhile, Chris, Mike, Molly, Josh and Steve climbed Hallival, contemplated continuing along the ridge to Askival, but decided to return to Kinloch instead. Josh and Steve walked about half way to Kilmory until the rain started later in the afternoon. The day ended over the usual KMC communal meal. That night, Josh (whose first KMC weekend this was) was introduced to KMC snoring! He told me he could not stand it and made off to find another room in which to sleep. He had to return to the torture. (No names, no packdrill).

On Sunday, Liz, Jack and Sinclair used the landrover track to walk to Harris and back, a distance of about 14 miles. Mike, Molly, Chris, Josh and Steve walked to Kilmory and sat in the sunshine for a while eating sandwiches and looking over the sandy beach to Soay and Skye. After a fruitless walk along cliff-tops in search of a double arch, they returned to Kilmory to see the old graveyard, then walked back to Kinloch. Peter had decided to spend the night by himself at the Guirdil bothy and with a heavy headcold disappeared over the hills alone. That night it was very wild but Josh slept easy. The gales had returned with a vengeance. It was no surprise the next morning that we were informed that the Mallaig ferry would not be leaving Mallaig. The rain lashed the island all day and there was nothing for it but to make our own entertainment for a day. Part of this came in the form of a midday raid on the island's shop which was opened specially to allow the stranded guests to buy provisions. Liz and Steve were first in the queue and managed to acquire enough to put together another communal meal (a bit like the cookery programme where the chef has produced a number of ingredients for a fiver and conjures up a tasty bite!).

The forecast for the entire week was dire with gales every day. We might be stranded for a week! On Tuesday morning, we did not touch the beds, just in case we had to spend another night. However, to our relief, the ferry was coming out to pick us up. It stopped first at Eigg, then came to Rum before heading further west to Canna. The sail to Canna was rough but the 2-hour return leg to Mallaig was a wonderful journey. Although the boat was riding the seas, the wind was behind and pushing us toward the mainland. The colours were fabulous - shafts of sunlight percolating through the cloud base, sparkling over the waters, squalls passing over Rum with the hills in silhouette, and rainbows everywhere. The extra day was really neither here or there. Someone asked Steve if he was concerned that he would not be able to get into the office. What a silly someone! The man who had come to Rum on a day trip on Saturday managed to return to Mallaig three days late. For some reason, he was not well pleased. Then again, he had come all the way from Sussex and only had a week's holiday in Scotland. C'est la vie. We all got off the island and lived to tell the tale.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Canada - Ross has also been in the Canadian Rockies (I'm not sure if he picked up his specs left behind last year!)

Himalayas - Charmian (and Kerry from our Lake District trip) are shortly off to trek and climb and the KMC wish them well and best of luck. We look forward to hearing about the trip and an article perhaps.

Tanzania - Paul will be nearing the end of his trip to climb Mount Kilimanjaro with his parents. We all hope his trip was successful.

SOCIAL AND PROMOTIONAL EVENTS

Friday 28 October - KMC slide evening. Venue: Kirkintilloch Camera Club, Eastside at 7.30pm

This is a Members evening. Chris Thirkettle has kindly agreed to talk about his erstwhile walking trips to the mountains of Corsica. This will be followed by Peter Willimot giving us a short talk on the activities of the MCofS. Thereafter, other Club members will have the opportunity to show slides taken over the last year or so. I would be grateful if members wishing to show slides, etc could contact me beforehand so that I may compile a running order. Peter will be using a laptop for his Powerpoint presentation. Should anyone else wish to use this technology, please contact Peter beforehand.

Wednesday 2 November - Autumn Club Discount Evening at Tiso's, Couper Street, 6.30-8.30pm.

See details for Discount night at Buchanan Street.

Saturday 5 November - Climbing lecture by Dave 'Dumby' McLeod in the main function room of Hillhead Library on Byers Road commencing at 3pm.

Dave will talk about the processes and challenges in progressing to new levels and areas in climbing and his approach to them. He'll also discuss his own efforts to put Scotland back on the map in world climbing standards. The lecture will be illustrated by slides and

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video footage from Ben Nevis, Cairngorm, Dumbarton Rock, the Lake District and other routes around the world. Spaces are limited and tickets are available for Cotswold Outdoor Ltd, West End Retail Park, Crow Road at a cost of £5 each. To reserve tickets, call Cotswold on 0141 357 5353 or visit the store.

Wednesday 9 November - Autumn Club Discount Evening at Tiso's, Buchanan Street, 6.30-8.30pm.

10% off books, maps, canoes and GPS systems, 15% discount off all products, 25% off mountaineering and climbing equipment plus special club night bargains.

Sunday 18 December - pre Christmas KMC meal at the Carbeth Inn on the Stockiemuir road. Please contact Eunice if you wish to attend as soon as possible.

Friday 24 February 2006 - KMC Biennial Dinner at the Kincaid House Hotel, Milton of Campsie

Deposit per person may be payable in advance. Details of menu, etc will be published in the next newsletter.