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2007/08 SEASON - ISSUE NUMBER 1.5

June 2007

Dear Member,

Apologies for the long delay since the AGM in getting this newsletter out. I have been busily engaged in settling the university careers and future life prospects of somewhere in the region of five hundred Scots school pupils; but enough of mere trivia and on to the important stuff. Eunice has sent out an interim newsletter, being impatient with my dilatoriness, so I have relied on that for most of the following information.

2007: DAY TRIPS

Sunday 29 July	Glen Etive
Sunday 26 August	Mamores
Sunday 14 October	Ben Lawers

Mike will be doing his last Munro, Bynack More, on Saturday 18 August 2007. All are cordially invited.

2007-08: WEEKEND TRIPS

The intended programme is as follows:

21-23 September	Gerry's Hostel, Achnashellach (Organiser: Frank McGavigan)
3-4 November	Pottery Bunkouse, Laggan (Organiser: Cedric Davies)
February 2008	Glen Doll (Organiser: Jean Keddie)
2-5 May 2008	Inverey Cottage (Organiser: Steve Turnbull)
23-26 May 2008	Knoydart (Organiser: Sandra Owen)
24-25 October 2008	Tulloch Station (Organiser: Eunice Coop)

Bookings: The Committee decided that, in future, weekend places will be booked for 8 beds rather than the former practice of booking 12, with the opportunity (perhaps) of increasing the number as members finally stir themselves. So if you wish to be sure of a place, get moving.

All bookings for weekend trips must now be accompanied by a £5.00 per night deposit to the trip organiser to secure a place (i.e. £10.00 for a 2-night stay or £15.00 for a 3-night stay). The reason for this change is to supplement Club funds as many hostels now require either full payment in advance or a higher level of deposit. We have to plan well in advance (sometimes over a year) to secure locations and ensure variety in the Club's weekend meets. Early bookings appreciated to give ample time to adjust numbers, if necessary. Late cancellations will have to pay full accommodation costs, unless this is waived by the hostel concerned.

BBQ: The BBQ will be held on Thursday June 28 at the Pascoes' in Killearn, starting at 7.00pm. Cost remains, as far as I know, at £5, but don't take my word for it, come with a loaded wallet/purse. Volunteers would be appreciated to make a variety of accompanying

puddings and salads, the latter of which can be usefully composted by Ian later. If you are intending to come along, please inform Eunice as soon as possible.

REPORTS

Skye in May

KMC's first visit to Skye since the highly successful Loch Coruisk outing in May 2004. The weather proved changeable over the course of the weekend.

Steve, John and Charmian met up late on the Thursday evening at Lundie beside Loch Cluanie and settled down in their respective vehicles for the night. Earlier, Steve had climbed Beinn Loinne which lies south of Loch Cluanie – a surprisingly long walk (over the dam) over rough ground and taking well over 5 hours.

On the Friday morning, Steve bade John and Charmian farewell and headed off in search of a new Corbett leaving the intrepid pair to position cars at either end of their intended walk which would take them over 5 Munros - Carn Ghluasaid, Sgurr nan Conbhairean, Sail Chaorain, A'Chralaig and Mullach Fraoch-Choire - popping in and out of the mist to emerge on sunny tops. Steve, meanwhile, cycled up Glen Elchaig near Dornie, leaving his bike near Carnach and at the foot of a stalkers track. Continuing north east passed Iron Lodge, he first climbed Aonach Buidhe, then Faochaig in mist. While eating lunch, a fox trotted up the path to within feet of him and both were as surprised as the other. The fox retreated hastily over the hillside. At the second summit, the weather improved providing good views to the west and a third Corbett, Sguman Coinntich. That peak (the best of the three) was also taken in before returning to the bike, Killilan (where the car was parked) and arrival at Portnalong after 9pm where the rest of the KMC members had arrived, including Iain and Jean who had climbed Belig and Garbh-bheinn that day.

The hostel is in new ownership and a large party who were supposed to have arrived for the weekend (not KMC members) did not appear at all, leaving the poor new owners counting the cost in their first week of operation. What befell the Lothian teachers?

On Saturday, the wind got up and the clouds were covering the hills. Nonetheless, the intrepid KMC members shot off in various directions with 'ASCENT' in mind. John and Charmian had the most "interesting" day in attempting (and succeeding) to climb the two southernmost Cuillins – Sgurr nan Eag and Sgurr Dubh Mor. The weather deteriorated during the day making route finding in the craggy unpredictable hills very difficult. Anxious KMC members (anxious enough to eat their evening meal) were relieved to see John and Charmian return safe and sound well after nine in the evening, wet through. It turned out that some climbers had become rock fast and the mountain rescue team were out most of the night trying to find them. They were found safe, though hypothermic, the next day. While all of this was going on, Steve climbed Garbh-bheinn in mist with a couple from Lancashire and shared a cuppa in their camper van afterwards (a new sport he is perfecting after a similar encounter recently in Sutherland). George and Richard made for Sgurr nan Gillian but were beaten back by the weather. The other folks climbed Bruach na Frithe. Sinclair joined the gang after his drive up from Lenzie.

The weather on Sunday again proved changeable. A rare weekend event occurred when all the KMC members drove in convoy to Portree for a civilised cup of coffee at the Aros Centre, then to the Old Man of Storr where the heavens opened! However, the squall passed by and most climbed up to the Old Man – a very impressive rock formation by massive cliffs. Next up was the Quiraing where a number of members (not including the writer of this article, who abandoned the walk before leaving the car park - perhaps he was seeking out a camper van and a 'cuppa'? Ed.) went for a blustery walk under the crags of the Trotternish Ridge.

Monday arrived all too soon and it was time to depart for home. Iain and Jean drove north (closely accompanied by five stones of potatoes Ed.) to meet the famous McGavigan Brothers, all with the intention of circumnavigating the 'Fisherfield Six'. This was achieved over two days, leaving Mike with a solitary Munro (Bynack More) to claim the Round. Iain and Jean also knocked off Beinn Dearg Mor and Beinn Dearg Beag to get nearer their target of

completing the Corbetts. Charmian employed a guide to climb Sgurr a' Mhadaidh and Sgurr a' Ghreadaidh via An Dorus and then Sgurr na Banachdich. Sinclair drove back to the Old Man of Storr with a camera while other members drove home. Steve climbed Glamaig in the morning (a nice pair of gentleman's trainers hanging from the summit cairn – too large for Steve), then Meall Dubh during the afternoon - two easy 'going home' sort of hills.

Steve

STRAWBERRY COTTAGE

On Friday 25th May thirteen of us made our way into Strawberry Cottage by various means - walking, cycling and for a lucky four, driving. The cottage is in an idyllic position at the west end of Loch Affric surrounded by huge mountains. (Now there's a surprise for a climbing club outing! Ed.)

Knowing the forecast for Sunday was dreadful everyone was up bright and early on Saturday and soon on our way to various Munros and Corbetts. In the course of the day we were rained on, blown on, hailed on and snowed on and in between times the sun shone on us. Sandra, Joyce and Jimmy did a 9½ hour day. We ate well that night (as always), although we had no water the following morning for tea, washing or toilets! The spicy bean soup, chicken casserole and rhubarb crumble were perhaps not our best choice - on second thoughts- yes they were - they were delicious. Several buckets of water from the river solved the immediate problems and after Iain and Charmian did sterling work on deciphering the instructions they had the pump taking water from the river and filling the water tank.

Sunday defied the forecast and on the whole was bright sunny. Everyone, once again, was out making the most of the day, Charmian doing 12½ hours. We had a short round of Trivial Pursuit that evening where Steve showed his prowess at pursuing trivia.

Monday morning and we had no water again - more bucket filling and more pumping of water ensued before some people headed for home and others took to the hills again. On the hill that day I found I had the wrong jacket. Judging from the size of the one I had it was made for some big handsome hunk. As it turned out it was Richard's. (Well you can't win every time. Ed.)

Eunice

Campsie Amble

Time: 06.50

Setting: Black sky. Black rain. Black wind.

Mood: Black. Why am I doing this? Why go out from the warmth of bed, wander about in driving rain, sweat into a sodden cap and see nothing?

07.10. Have to leave in about 50 minutes. Get dressed. Have breakfast. Make and pack sandwiches. Assemble all the stuff I need and pack sack. Unpack sack. Unwrap sandwiches, smear on another smidgeon of mustard. Repack sandwiches. Repack sack. Wasted six minutes. Retrieve boots and gaiters from hut. Consider boots. Get out Cherry Blossom from cupboard and polish boots. Another eight minutes gone. Finally crack open door, hunch against wind and rain and load car.

Traffic lights at green. Slow down...third...second....there you are... red. Always a long delay here. Green. Move on, slowly. Woodhead. Paperboy approaching. Might to want to cross road. Must be about thirty yards away, better slow down, just in case. Past the Puffer...

08.04. Close enough to 08.00 to feel aggrieved the buggers haven't waited for me. I said I would be here. Into the car park. Damn...damn...damn, the buggers have waited. Christ, you can't rely on anyone these days.

Plan A was The Brack. Abandoned because of inclement weather i.e. it's pishing down. Plan B (Peter's) is an amble over the Campsies. No-one has a map of the Campsies. It's Groundhog Day. Gone into oblivion are memories of previous Willimott 'ideas': the Grey Mare's Tail diretissima; the stroll around 'Beinn Hump' in Glen Nevis involving a vertical ascent of a waterfall and a trip half way up the Ben. Apparently Peter now has an interest/obsession with land slip and there's a new one at Strathblane. Well whatever turns you on. In most middle-aged men it's a trim female figure and firm young flesh, but this is Peter. Perhaps as other aspects of your physical life 'slip', libido etc. massive mountain ejaculations come to have some kind of symbolic significance for you. Anyway off to Strathblane we head, John B, Peter and self, if not clueless certainly mapless.

As we wend our way up past the landslip (Peter, I am sure, I spotted drooling) John excitedly draws our attention to a hovering 'peregrin falcon'. This magnificent creature in its two variants, the Emperor Peregrin and the King Peregrin, is peculiar to the Campsie Fells. It is breathtakingly exciting to watch its 45mph stoop, stunning any targeted rodent, vole or occasional pheasant, before battering its prey about the head until dead, with its webbed feet. (And yes I know Frank, a vole is a rodent, but I needed the rhythmical addition of another noun for effect) Those whose past-time is scuba diving in the Blane and Glazert Waters can also thrill to the peregrin's flowing, swirling 15 knot pursuit of baggy minnows and other denizens of the not-so-deep. Unfortunately the species is under threat, not only from collectors keen to augment their collection with its 50gm egg which it uniquely carries ensconced between its feet and belly when in flight (sadly the population also suffers depletion at the 'feet' of those peregrins who neglect to lay the egg aside before kicking their prey to death), but in addition, from the depredations of the Less-than-Common Seal, accidentally introduced to these waters by a purblind fisherman from furth of Scotland.

But to return to the main and gripping narrative. Just as we crest the ridge the mist rolls in necessitating consultation of the map which none of us have. Three compasses, one GPS, but no map. We head north across the thin covering of soft, wet snow aiming (rather broadly I thought) to end up on Dumgoyne. The path divides. Hesitation. Thought. (Not a lot right enough.) Go right. Fifteen minutes pass. Another path division. Right again. Ten minutes. This time a path crosses ours. Oh good, four choices this time! That way. 'We want to head north-west,' says Peter. 'What does the compass say Sinclair?' 'North-east.' 'Close enough.'

The path seems to curve back on itself, but a fainter track heads off into the white wastes. Do we take it? If Frost had written his poem 'The Road Not Taken' up here, it would be thirty ruddy verses long, not four! Finally a cairn or something looms (if something so small can justifiably be said to be capable of looming) at the top of the rise. Right we're here. Where's here? God knows. Present analysis of the situation. We don't know where we are. We don't know where we are going. Ergo wouldn't the wise move be to head west, down hill, out of the mist, towards the road? Reluctant agreement. Head west. Find track... with line of boot prints in the snow! Comforting feeling of justification and assurance spreads. We're not lost. He's going somewhere. It's probably where we're going. Discard GPS and compasses, back to fundamental basis of navigation: follow someone else's footprints! Twenty minutes later, amazement. Dumgoyne looms (it does a better job of looming than earlier cairn) out of mist just about where it would have been if we had known where it was.

Stop for bite of lunch. John looks at me. 'Do you really want to go up?' 'No. Just as happy to walk round it and back to the car and a pint.' Peter interjects, 'Now that we've found it we're as well going up it' One in favour of going up; two in favour of going round. KMC democracy at work. We go up. No view. There's a surprise. Treacherous mud makes descent worst part of the day. Then back along the pipe track. Final obstacle of the day. Kissing gate and can't be bothered unslinging sacks. I slip through. Slight wriggle of torso and out other side. John follows. Brief jam, but sharp intake of breath and he flows through. Peter moves forward. Positions self in V and swings gate back. Jams. Forward movement impossible. Backward movement impossible. Firmly lodged like a cork in a bottle of his favourite rioja. Ah well comes the time to us all when not just the land slips, but everything else slumps to the power of gravity.