



K M C

2007/08 SEASON 5

November 2007

#### 2007 - 08: DAY TRIPS

Sunday 2 December Ochils followed by Xmas Dinner

Sunday 20 January Ben Lomond

Sunday 16 March Stob Binnein and Ben More

Remember to contact Heather to find out where the more informal Sunday meets are going or check your email.

#### 2007-08: WEEKEND TRIPS

The intended programme is as follows:

3-4 November Pottery Bunkhouse, Laggan (Organiser: Cedric Davies)

15-16 February 2008 Glen Doll (Organiser: Jean Keddie)

2-5 May 2008 Inverey Cottage (Organiser: Steve Turnbull)

23-26 May 2008 Knoydart (Organiser: Sandra Owen)

26-28 September 2008 Inchnadamph (organiser Frank)

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.

Inchnadamph want a significant deposit in the near future so if you wish to go there (remember only 8 places booked) then get your deposit to Frank soon.

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.

## SOCIAL EVENTS

'Slide' Night will be at Kirkintilloch Camera Club Thursday 15 November 7.45pm.

**Christmas Dinner** will be at the Tormaukin Inn in Glen Devon on Sunday 2 December 5.00pm. Cost £15.00. If you intend to come please let Eunice know in advance with a deposit of £5 per head in order that she can give the establishment an idea of numbers.

### Menu

Roast parsnip soup

Pheasant terrine, red onion jam

Smoked Salmon Fishcake

Turkey ballontine, bread sauce, roast potatoes, root veg

Pan fried salmon, leek mash

Belly of wild boar, celeriac mash, black pudding, roast apple

Tagliatelle, sundried tomato pesto, rocket

Buccleugh sirloin, field mushroom, balsamic tomato, red onion salad, chips (45 extra)

Christmas pudding, brandy sauce

Chocolate mousse, orange shortbread

Spiced pear, vanilla pancetta

All the above feature in the recently published 'Ma Broon's Cookbook'

## REPORTS

### TO REST IS NOT TO CONCA

#### GR 20 CORSICA SEPTEMBER 2007

Despite what I had read about the hills of Corsica I was totally unprepared for their steepness and the rugged rocky summits. Corsica is basically a huge rock rising out of the Med reaching for the skies. There is a coastal strip where all the main towns lie, beyond this there is a band of forestry and deep vegetation called maquis enhanced by the smell of larico pines and scented plants. Above this is the Cuillin transported to the warmth of the Med. The GR20 is not one continuous range (as in the Cuillin) but a series of climbs and descents over several mountain ranges which run from N.E. to S.W. - the route running North to South (or S to N) up and down over these ranges. The total ascent for the whole thing is some 42,000 feet and the distance 120 miles. Navigation is simple - just follow the red and white flashes on the rocks. You could almost do the whole thing without a map - perhaps useful for some KMC members - we certainly found it so.

We arrived in Calvi Airport late on Monday September 3<sup>rd</sup> by a variety of routes - John B having found himself the cheapest route by far! Three minutes after we had collected our baggage the airport was deserted and locked up for the night which was quite disconcerting since we were standing outside waiting for a taxi with none and no one in sight. However, after about 10 minutes, one did arrive and took us to Calanzena, the village at the north end of the walk.

The continental 'up-at-five-and-away' routine is a shock to the system - particularly in the refuges where you want to crawl further into your sleeping bag and pretend you can't hear all

the racket. However, Calanzena was a gentle introduction- it didn't start until 6.00am. Having breakfasted and bought provisions for the 2/3 days we set off in high spirits. Day 1 took us up to 5,000 feet over Bocchetta (a pas or a col) a un Bazzichellu - (we were to cross many of these) through an area of fairly exposed scrambling. The refuge for that night was a welcome sight. After a beer, always available in the refuges, a wash in cold water and a change of clothes we eagerly looked forward to a meal and our first night in a refuge.

Refuges are for the most part wooden, remote, most have electricity run from generators, always welcome sights with beer in prospect and run by wardens who were invariably characters. A great many people camp outside the refuges rather than stay in them. This is probably for a few reasons: there is no guarantee of getting a place in the refuge - when they are full, they are full so having a tent does give you somewhere to sleep, the meals and beer at the refuges are available to you and you don't have the dawn reveille inflicted upon you. Also for those who actually want to camp and carry all that extra gear, camping is only allowed in designated areas, usually outside the refuges.

The evening meal on our first night was spaghetti and pesto, which cheered up Iain and John not at all - it was the first of quite a few pasta meals and there was no meat, apparently an essential ingredient of any meal! In actual fact, considering the logistics of getting supplies into the refuges, the meals we had were excellent, substantial, nourishing - the most memorable being for me a bean stew and on another evening a meat and lentil broth/stew. This warden was a lively, animated lady who made the most delicious sponge cake as pudding. Considering where we were and the facilities available to her, an amazing feat.

The next 2 days we were up before the larks, breakfasted - the quality of which varied from dry biscuits to bread and jam with tea or coffee, and away back onto the rock towers, spires, ridges, rock stairways, slabs and boulders always with a view out over the sea at Calvi for in distance terms we had travelled little of our 120 miles.

The end of day 3 saw us descend to Haute Asco. I use the term descend loosely for it's a small ski resort of 3 buildings situated way up in the hills - perhaps our nearest equivalent would be Glenshee Centre. One building was a refuge and one a hotel. The refuge was an upmarket one for it had running water ie. coming out of taps and hot showers! Oh, the luxury of it!. In addition we were able to eat in the hotel and choose from a menu. Another memorable meal was had here, hot goat's cheese salad. I do have other fond memories of the walk itself - not just the food.

Day 4, Friday Sept. 4<sup>th</sup>. We had all read about the Cirque de Solitude. What a misnomer, Cirque des Masses would be more appropriate. So we set off with some trepidation. Up and up and up we climbed onto a very narrow col and then looked down into the abyss - the ground fell away from us for thousands of feet. Cameron McNeish described it as an ugly chaos of rock and scree and so it was. In actual fact you only descend about 650 feet before traversing and climbing up to another bocchetta - but that 650 ft starts with chains down rock slabs. When they run out you have to steel yourself to creep down the rest over the rock and very loose scree, scared you might kick rocks down onto the people below you and even worse, scared the people above you will kick rocks down at you. Every so often another rock would go hurtling down into the depths. Lingering was not an option. Once completed, most people stopped with a sigh of relief for a well earned break and a proud "I did it" moment. The rest of that day was spent "on a high" in every sense of the phrase. The beer was well earned that day.

Some days such as day 5 started with a descent into the forestry and then back up onto the rock before another descent. This day we descended to a Gite d'etape at Hotel Castel de Vergio. Gites are part of the hotels but offer hostel-type accommodation in addition to ordinary hotel rooms. Added bonuses are hot showers, hot water for washing clothes and meals in the hotel - all very civilised. By this time we had realised that accommodation could be a problem, as I said before, when the refuges or gites are full there is no alternative. We had heard a rumour that the gite was fully booked so we had raced round to beat the crowd to hopefully get places. Luck was with us - there was room at the Inn! And we had a room to

ourselves - so no 5.00am reveille. Wonderful food, showered, clean clothes and a good nights sleep, what more could a body want?

Day 6 was Castel de Vergio to Refuge de Manganu, a more gentle day and Day 7 took us to Pietra Plana. This was a day of many ancient glacial lakes and steep sided gullies. This was also the day we hit the highest point of our walk, 7,300 feet on a pass where the view of ranges and ridge after ridge unfolded before us. The down side of this day was arriving at Refuge Pietro Plana to find the warden had disappeared for the day and would not return until 8.30pm, which meant no beer, no shop, no evening meal and just to complete the tale there were only 3 beds left. Jean and Ian opted to carry on to the next refuge and were rewarded with beer, an evening meal and plenty of space. Overnight we experienced the worst and wildest weather of the holiday. The remaining 3 of us were up before first light, away by 6.15am and heading downhill before climbing through wonderful forestry to the refuge Jean and Ian had reached the previous day. Here we stopped for breakfast and to watch the pigs and adorable piglets who were roaming around the refuge. After breakfast we climbed steeply back onto the rocky ridges and then back down through easy forest trails to the hamlet of Vizzavona, a veritable metropolis with 2 hotels, a train station and a shop. John had a dip in a mountain stream en route but since the battery ran out on my camera there are no pictures. He also decided to feed some of his lunch to a pony which, with another pony, decided to corner him and demand more, even delving into his rucksack before he managed to escape. Many people do the GR20 in 2 stages, ending their first stage at Vizzavona using the train to return to civilisation. Three of us stayed in a dortoir - sleeping accommodation within the hotel grounds. Jean and Ian treated themselves to a night in the hotel.

From Day 9 we were covering greater distances each day. On Day 10 to actually "bag a top" on this walk, Rebecca, John and I climbed over Monte Renosa. We stopped at a Bergerie for a drink before our final climb of that day and John was bitten! (honestly) by a pig he was feeding his sandwich to. He obviously hadn't learnt any lessons about feeding animals.

By now we could see the sea on the east coast of the island, a mental landmark.

On day 13 we again chose a high route through the Augille (peaks or spires) de Bavella - an exhilarating area over and round rock spires before dropping to the village of Col de Bavella, a very popular area for the Corsicans for day trips in the hills. There was no room at the Inn. Our initial consternation was allayed when we were offered a dilapidated caravan - to us it seemed idyllic - after the refuges, having space to ourselves was a reward for past good deeds

Day 14 - our last day. We knew we had a long day ahead of us. The sun beat down on us mercilessly, but it was our last day and the ups and downs and twist and turns of the route only enhanced the "final stretch" euphoria (at least I think it was euphoria - maybe it was a touch of sunstroke). At last we dropped down into the village of Conca, journey's end. Guess what - there was no room in the Gite d'etape so we were all forced to stay in a hotel - a very strange one with no visible staff. Lots of other people we had met along the way were there too having finished that day so there was air of contented achievement in the village and particularly in the bars and cafes.

The following day we made our way to Bastia and then back to our starting point, Calvi. Wednesday was spent in Calvi and very early next morning we were at back at Calvi airport on our way home.

## Peter's 60th (From George)

Tuesday 22nd August - Heather, Liz, Barbara, Sue, Helen and George headed for Achlean where L and B, set off and were chuffed to climb Mullach Clach a' Bhlaire in poor weather. H,S,H&G were less adventurous but did get to the top of Carn Ban Mor, before deciding that navigating was difficult in the poor visibility and retraced their steps to Achlean. Must say the colours on the hillside were magnificent.

Wednesday 23rd August - Part of the morning was spent following the sculptures trail around Mill Cottage. ( I was back there last week and full experience much more interesting and thought provoking). On Heather's suggestion, Heather, Peter, Liz, Barbara, Alastair, Helen & George headed for the Forestry Commission car park near Loch Laggan and spent a fine day on the forest walks there. The highlight to me was an extensive area of heather covered in cobwebs and the dew on the cobwebs sparkled in the bright sunshine. Of course the cameras had been left in the cars. (This in an area that requires more exploration). Day completed with L, B, H&G having coffee & teacakes at the Monadhliath Hotel while the others headed for Fort William. Another excellent day in glorious weather.

From Heather:

Thanks George for the above report. Ian, Jean, Alastair, Stewart, John and Peter also headed off into the wind, rain and mist on the Feshie hills above the cottage - this time following John (Peter's apprentice?) on an uncharted route. Ian and Fay had better views on their walk. Steve peddled off to do a Corbett - again into the mist. Mill Cottage was an excellent venue and Peter certainly had his birthday well marked - a special event to remember. Thanks to everyone and here are just a few of the limmericks which were recited during the meal.

By Barbara:

There was a young fellow called Peter  
Who enjoyed drinking beer by the litre  
He rushed up hill and dale  
Then drank pints of real ale  
That's why he don't get any neater

By Fay (1)

There was an old man called Peter  
Whose presence made life ever sweeter  
But Heather I fear  
Came second to beer  
For that mountainous old chap that is Peter

(2)

That really old man we call Peter  
His presence makes life ever sweeter  
His life on the tops  
And his intake of hops  
Is what we all think about Peter

By Eunice:

Hair of grey and feet of clay  
That's what the future holds for you today  
Ginger snaps and afternoon naps  
No time now to study maps

You'll sit by the fire and dream  
Of all the wonderful places you've been  
Cocoa at night with your glass of whisky  
And bugger all chance of being frisky

And then its off to bed you'll toddle  
Eh? Who together this did cobble?

WAIT A MINUTE .....IT'S THE WRONG ONE...

Okay Peter you're the man  
For going up hills without a plan  
Straight up routes as yet uncharted  
Where mountain goats have never started

Up hills and bens  
Through dales and glens  
Why would you want to go  
The route that other mortals go?

I don't think he'll ever change  
Over mountain and hill he'll aye range  
Talking of pylons and boarding school  
Although the talk of thongs - well that was cruel!

Here's to you Peter, long may you reign  
The bronzed goddess, the great big wean,  
The acknowledged King of Haute Couture  
And a true pal - that's for sure.

### **Trip to Northern Ireland In June 2008**

I am planning a 4 night 5 day trip to Northern Ireland in early June 2008. Thinking of taking car/s over on the ferry from Troon to Larne and heading down to the Mountains of Mourne - excellent bunkhouse for 2 nights and two day's walking. At the end of the third day, drive up in the evening - eat on way- to the Antrim coast west of Ballycastle at Whitesands. There is a delightful small youth hostel on the beach for 3rd and 4th night beside the coastal path. Options for walks are along spectacular cliff tops, beaches, the Carrick a Rede rope bridge and Giants Causeway - all supported by the coastal causeway bus which will drop us off at the start and walk back to hostel. Late ferry back on day 5 - probably 5.30pm from Larne. If you are interested, please let me know by the end of November.

( This was tagged on anonymously at the end of Heather's email so I assume it is she herself who is making this invitation. Anything to dilute Peter's company perhaps. Ed.)

### **Here We Go Again!**

I woke to the lashing of rain on the bedroom window of my brother's house in Kingussie and recognised it as the sign of a KMC last Munro. When I reached the car park at Glenmore I remembered the other pleasure of last Munros – the midges. But, of course, my lasting memory of a KMC last Munro, as always, will be the laughter, banter and camaraderie in the face of the elements.

Approximately 24 friends and fellow walkers of Mike McGavigan successfully completed Bynack More and helped celebrate his completion of the Munros which he had begun as a young boy in the early '50s. At the viewless summit, as we downed an assortment of goodies including, champagne, wine, whisky, strawberries chocolates and cakes in a soaking rain, we boosted our enjoyment with accounts of previous wetter and colder last Munros.

The journey down marked another KMC tradition – at least for some of us, including the new Munroist himself. We took a different route from the well- marked, well- trodden route and,

instead, found ourselves tramping over bog and rough ground. I'm not sure we convinced the non- KMC walkers with us that we were in control of the situation, although they did talk of coming walking with us again

I don't think it was the weather, the views, or our map reading skills which allowed us all to enjoy the day. Perhaps it had more to do with the excellent evening buffet provided by Molly and Mike in the Pizza restaurant in Aviemore, where the good fellowship of the day continued in more pleasurable circumstances. Congratulations to Mike and here's to many more KMC last Munros!