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Forfar & District Hill Walking Club

Newsletter 32 December 2008

President's Column

Well, we have almost reached the end of another hill walking year. If 2007 was to be remembered as the "year of the president's dook" then 2008 must surely be remembered as the "year of the wet stuff that falls from the sky". It wasn't great for walking and I think that this has reflected in some very poor attendances at club meets over the year.

But things will only get better: - some great bargains in gear are just round the corner and we'll be in shorts from April to October this summer! Petrol/Diesel will fall to 50p per litre. Only problem is that we won't see the hills for the Germans/French. They'll be here spending their strong Euros. Who would have thought that the Euro would be stronger than the pound? - maybe we should have joined the EMC after all - oh dear don't get political.

Changing subjects quickly, how many ticks did you collect this summer? No, Munro baggers, I'm not talking about summits, I want to know about the ticks with legs and a big mouth. The most bizarre tick this year must go to Scott Coull, a member of a Duke of Edinburgh Silver group from Carnoustie High School - who had a tick removed from his eyelid during the expedition. The reason I'm interested is, that I personally didn't collect as many as the past few years and I'm doing a bit of research - trying to work out if it is down to the wet season or my reduced intake of chocolate! After all if it wasn't the chocolate then I can start eating it again!

Hope to see you at one of the festive meets or at our big gathering of the year - the forthcoming High Tea in Glen Clova.

Best Wishes to all
Colin,
President

Christmas and New Year Meets

The traditional festive period walks will be held on Saturday 27 December and Saturday 3 January. Destinations being considered are the Loch Ordie-Mill Dam area near Butterstone and Glen Isla. Meet at the Myre car park at 8am.

High Tea 2009 - 11th January

Main walks leaving Myre car park by car at 08.00. If anyone fancies a shorter afternoon walk, please

contact the meet secretary who is coordinating the day. Tea is at the Clova hotel at 17.00. If tea is required (cost £9.75) please book with Bill Dryburgh as soon as possible, selecting your main course from the menu below.

- Home Made Steak & Ale Pie
- Deep Fried Haddock
- Gammon Steak with Pineapple
- Home Made Meat Lasagne
- Home Made Vegetarian Lasagne
(All the above served with chipped potatoes and vegetables of the day)
- Ham & Pineapple Salad
- Sirloin Steaks Available @ £5.50 extra

Tea, Coffee & Toast
Scones, Jam & Butter
Chef's Selection of Cakes

New Secretary required

Mel has announced that she will be standing down as secretary at the AGM in March 2009, due to her current commitments as a full-time student. Anyone interested, please contact Colin or Mel - we can arrange a short transition period. Honestly it's not as bad as you think. Hopefully the new web site (still under development) with its administrative login will help with some things. Anyone else who is interesting in "serving time" on the committee, please contact Colin.

'Far I wi Noo' plaque

Reminder, nominations for "incident" of the year are to be submitted before the AGM. Reminder that last year's award went to the president for "Sinclair's leap". Top contender so far is the wandering meet secretary on the April meet at Linn o' Dee.

Bridge Plaques

Bridge Plaques were replaced on the bridge in the autumn. Thanks to Steve and his neighbour, Ian.

Bourach Work Parties

Thank you to all who attended the 3 work parties held during August/September. The roof was re-turfed, walls strengthened and the door painted.

Data protection

Remember if you did not receive a club address list last June, it is because you have not signed a Data Protection form. You can opt out of having your details available to other club members but if

you do, you will not receive a copy of the address list. If you wish to opt in, see form on club web site. Complete it and send to the secretary. This is also the case if you want to opt out.

Photographic Competition 2009

This will be held after the open meeting on Monday 2nd February. Entries should be submitted to a committee member **by 28th January**. Note that you can submit up to 5 entries. Entries must be a **print** from any type of film or digital media. If possible please also submit a digital file (JPEG if possible – no raw formats please). This will be used by the judge in a slide-show. See full rules at the end of the constitution on the club web site.

Outdoor Meetings Reports

Edzell – 11th August 2008

A dozen members walked from the blue gate to the Rocks of Solitude. The group gathered afterwards in Panmure Arms, Edzell for a light refreshment and an informal open meeting.

The 50th Anniversary of the Loss of Five Men on Jock's Road 1 January 1959

(contributed by Steve Wilson)

The following account of the above tragedy is taken from the book 'The Black Cloud' written by Mr IDS (Ian) Thomson and published by The Ernest Press in 1993 (ISBN 0-948153-20-2).

Thursday 1 January 1959 saw five keen hill walkers leave Braemar Youth Hostel to walk to Glen Doll Youth Hostel in Angus. The planned route was to follow the A93 out of Braemar before walking up Glen Callater and then to take the high level track of Jock's Road through to Glen Doll. All were members, and indeed committee members, of the Universal Hiking Club in Glasgow. This was an active Roman Catholic club with about 80 members.

The 5 individuals were:

Harry Duffin - an engineer with Rolls Royce in East Kilbride (Club President)

Frank Daly - an Executive Officer with the National Assistance Board (Vice President)

Robert McFaul - a teacher at Coatbridge Technical College (Secretary)

Joseph Devlin - a plasterer from Clydebank (Hiking Convener)

James Boyle - an apprentice marine fitter from Dennistoun (Committee Member)

Frank Daly was in his mid 40's. Harry, Robert and Joseph were in their mid 30's. James was only 17 but he had been a member of the club for 2 years. Only Joseph was married.

The five left Glasgow by train on Saturday 27 December and had enjoyed a few days walking in the upper Deeside area.

It was confirmed they left Braemar hostel at around 9.00am on New Year's Day and attended mass and received Holy Communion at St Andrews RC church. It is believed they set off on their fateful journey at around 11.15am. The plan was to meet up with Louise Devlin, Joseph's wife, and other members of the club at the hostel in Glen Doll later in the day. Given reasonable conditions, the estimated arrival time would have been around 6.00pm, meaning the last 90 or so minutes of the walk would have been in darkness.

Although it was the middle of winter the group were not too concerned about the conditions as they were experienced walkers and were familiar with the route. Indeed some of them had enjoyed the same walk only a few months earlier. It is understood they were reasonably well equipped although none of them had waterproof leggings or waterproof trousers.

After leaving the A93 the men were spotted at 12.15pm by Charles Smith, a local shepherd, near his house at Auchallater. They were making their way up Glen Callater towards Lochcallater Lodge as planned. At this time, on the lower ground, it was cold and breezy with rain and sleet falling.

None of the men were seen alive again.

Reports at the time reveal there was already a substantial layer of snow lying on the high ground. A later study of the weather systems confirmed the men would have met horrendous conditions once they climbed out of Coire Breac on to the higher ground, with storm force 11 winds, deep and driving snow and severe wind chill (-25C). It has been suggested that even though the men were well past the half way mark of their route, they may have turned back if they were not due to meet up with their friends later in the day. Anyone who has not experienced such horrendous conditions just can't appreciate how tiring and difficult it is to make progress. Merely standing up is almost impossible and you are also trying to plot a route with a compass in almost zero visibility.

Friends, and family, of the men travelling from Glasgow did arrive at the Glen Doll Youth Hostel on New Year's Day as planned. That night, the weather conditions were so severe that, even at lower levels, the road out of Glen Clova became blocked with snow and the single telephone line to

the hotel at Clova was cut. It was reported in a local newspaper the wind was so strong that night it tore off the stand roof of a football ground in Forfar.

The storm, which was considered the worst for many years, continued for 2 days and it was Saturday before police in Kirriemuir could be alerted to the fact people could be missing. The same day a group of local gamekeepers, shepherds and those staying at the Glen Doll hostel attempted an unsuccessful search for the missing men.

A formal search co-ordinated by the police and involving RAF mountain rescue teams and members of other mountaineering clubs began on the Sunday 4 January. The 100+ rescuers encountered horrific blizzard conditions and deep snow. Amazingly, they found the body of young James Boyle above the head of Glen Doll near Craig Maud.

Many of the rescuers were camping near the hostel. It must have been very uncomfortable. That night a temperature of -19.5°C was officially recorded in Strathdon in Aberdeenshire.

The search continued on the Monday and Tuesday but was then abandoned as the frozen ground conditions made access to the hills difficult and dangerous. By then, it was felt there was little possibility of finding anyone alive.

In the weeks that followed, Davie Glen, a well-known local character with a love and in-depth knowledge of the hills in the area, often went out searching for the bodies. However, it was the end of February before a thaw set in, allowing some of the deep snow to melt and the ground conditions to improve. On Sunday 1 March, Davie Glen and a group of helpers found the body of Harry Duffin in a pool at the bottom of the White Water waterfall. The location was only 50m from where James Boyle had been found.

The thaw continued and subsequently a further formal search involving around 80 men was undertaken the following weekend. The body of Robert McFaul was found near White Water on the Saturday (7 March), it appeared he had been sheltering under a huge rock.

Davie Glen was out again the following week and, accompanied by two students he met on the day, found the body of Joseph Devlin on Sunday 15 March. He was in the burn, close to Jock's Road and about 400m from where Robert McFaul had been found.

It was to be a further five weeks, Sunday 19 April, before Frank Daly, the fifth member of the party,

was found. He was discovered in a metre of snow near the upper reaches of White Water.

The hills and mountains of Angus and other parts of Scotland give an enormous amount of pleasure to thousands of people. This tragic story is a very sobering reminder of how dangerous they can be. It certainly emphasises the need to check weather forecasts before venturing out into the hills and the vital need to make use of specialist protective clothing and equipment.

Social Walk Reports

These walks were introduced this year as a trial in order to encourage more members to participate in the club events. The two meets which were arranged were very successful, in fact attracting more members than the main meets. The programme will be expanded during 2009.

Sunday 31 August 2008 – The Airlie Ridge (attendance 11)

The group started at the Airlie monument and walked north crossing the Minister's path to Cairn o' Barns where they descended for refreshments at the Clova Hotel.

Sunday 26 October 2008 – Glen Isla (attendance 12)

Achavan to Tulcan Lodge – climbed Monega Hill (908m) to Little Glas Maol (973m) then down the south ridge. Weather was heavy snow showers. Stop in Glen Isla Hotel on return.

Meet Secretary's Report s July-Dec 2008

The weather seems to be following the same pattern as last year, with some very disappointing days in summer but some clear, crisp days as we head into winter.

Numbers on the bus meets seem to be down on last year. Is it the weather? Choice of hills? Distance travelled? I would like to hear any opinions on this.

6 July 2008 - Achallater (attendance 6)

Beinn a' Chreachain and Beinn Achaladair climbed. Weather was reasonable.

17 August 2008 - Glen Feshie (attendance 7)

Very unseasonal cold, windy weather reduced numbers drastically for this meet. The members all took the path from Achlean to the Monadh Mor plateau. A circuit of Monadh Mor and Sgur Gaoith was completed in very difficult conditions with the walkers almost being blown off their feet at times.

6-7 September 2008 Cannich (attendance 8)

A weekend meet based at Cannich Hostel. Saturday morning was bright and promised to be a good day until the Meet Secretary put on some sun cream which was the cue for the cloud to come rolling in! The members were well scattered, with two heading for Glen Affric, two on Carn a Choire Gairbh, three in Glen Strathfarrar and one taking a long walk along Loch Mullardoch to An Socach. The three Strathfarrar walkers believed they were well organised, leaving a car at each end of the long ridge, until they descended and found that one of the cars was several kilometres from the end of the ridge. The cloud was very low on Sunday and some of the walkers decided to go home. Three members stayed and climbed the Corbett Beinn a Bach Aard, with one adding a tree to the list of climbs for the weekend. One other member headed for Glen Affric to climb Toll Creagach and Tom a'Choinich.

21 September 2008 - Glen Clunie to Glen Muick (attendance 14)

The bus dropped us off on the north side of the Glenshee ski slopes from where a gap in the hills leads through to Loch Callater. After a break at Callater Lodge in very pleasant weather, the group followed the path up the slopes of Carn an t-Saigart Mor. Four members opted to descend from here to the Dubh Loch and walk along Loch Muick to the car park at the other end. The remaining ten walkers continued round the cliffs of the Staic, took a slight detour to claim the barely discernable top of the White Mounth before following the well-trodden and much loved route round to the summit of Lochnagar. After a long break at the summit the group decided to take the route down by the Ladder in preference to the Glas Allt path. Back at the very busy Loch Muick car park some of the members took the opportunity to have a look round the Visitor Centre.

19 October 2008 Stobinian/Ben More

A through walk was planned from the road end beyond Balquhidder over Stobinian and Ben More. The weather forecast was absolutely horrific with the result that only five members expressed an interest in going. The bus was cancelled as was the walk a few hours later.

9 November 2008 - Loch Tay to Comrie (attendance 11)

Another through walk by bus was planned on a day which promised the first taste of winter. The eleven walkers were split from the start, with three electing for the low-level right-of-way route from Ardtalnaig, on the south side of Loch Tay, to Invergeldie, at the end of Loch Lednock. The other eight walkers followed a parallel route over Tullich Hill and Creag Uchdag. In the event, the "low-level" walkers had the more adventurous day,

discovering that the bridge over the River Almond was down and having difficulty crossing the river and picking up the path in the snow on the other side. The threesome drifted too far west, ending up climbing as high as the other group and reached the bus almost an hour later than their "high-level" colleagues. After some debate on where to stop on the way home for refreshment, we ended up at our usual watering hole in Crieff.

22-23 November 2008 - Bridge of Orchy (attendance 10)

The club had enjoyed a weekend at the Glencoe Ski Club hut at Bridge of Orchy a few years earlier, indulging in pursuits such as roasting chestnuts in front of a very cosy wood-burning stove, and so it was with high spirits that the group returned in the hope of some good walking. They were not disappointed, with very cold but clear weather on the Saturday. The ground was frozen but very little snow was in evidence – a complete contrast with the other side of the country. Three members went west to Beinn Eunich and Beinn a' Choichuill, two were on a Corbett in the same direction with two on Bidean nam Bian and two enjoying a low level walk. A good meal at the Bridge of Orchy Hotel was improved even more when the South African waitress informed us that her country had given a nearby neighbouring country of ours a bit of a going-over at the rugby. On Sunday morning the group awoke to a covering of wet snow. Our intrepid Corbett-baggers ventured out again but the others all decided to head for home.

14 December 2008 Glen Cluny (attendance 4)

A terrible weather forecast saw the planned meet to "The Fara" aborted. Changed the venue to An Socach, in Glen Cluny at the last moment. Six turned up to travel in 3 cars. One car turned back at Spittal of Glen Shee. The remaining two carried on, crossed the bealach and the remaining 4 members climbed the hill in deep snow and crunchy ice at the top – severe wind chill. Nice warm fire at Spittal of Glen Shee later.