

MAY 7/8/9/ 1999 Fri/Sat/Sun Fisherfield Forest Ruadh Stac Mor
3014ft/918m, A'Mhaighdean 3173ft/967m, Beinn a Chaidheimh 3000ft/914m, Sgurr Ban
3194ft/989m, Mullach Coire Mhic Fhearchair 3326ft/1019m, Beinn Tarsuinn 3070ft/936m

It was a mirky, foggy Thursday evening more like mid Nov. than May. The telephone rang, it was Jill Donaldson wishing us well for the following Fisherfield meet. She reassured me best she could that part of the North quite often held pockets of good weather. I was unconvinced and moaned that my pack was like lead and hoped I had taken all the right changes of clothes.

As planned Colin Johnson, Paul Kerr, Martin and Jean Wigglesworth, Jean P (Smith) Jim and Ryan Scott and Dave Rodgeron all met next day 7am. The weather still dreck and misty. Wagons roll we were off on our journey - Harry Ramsdens, Inverness here we come for our breakfast stop. In fact it turned out to be closed until 11.30 but a nearby restaurant fixed us up with full English breakfast. As we approached the Corrie Hallie by River Dundonell the beginning of our trek the sun struck out in glory, ton weight ruck sacs were hoisted aboard our backs and as our legs buckled under the unaccustomed weight we crunched up the landrover farm track at the beginning of Gleann Chaorachain. The first obstacle was a high padlocked metal gate with an up and over we wobbled back onto the track and trugged uphill for ages passing beautiful ancient silver birch trees which were now in bright Spring green leaf. We soon left the copse of trees and grazing sheep trekking up hill until we regrouped at a convenient large boulder stone, then a slight decline over boulderous, peaty, mossy terrain and approx. 4 mls later we arrived at Shenaval Bothy. Martin pointed out that the scattering of trees here were like those in Lanzarote as they were surrounded by a low circular wall. We inspected the old bothy which was plain basic as one would expect it to be. Most of us ate a light lunch and then continued the trek. River Abhainn Scrath na Sealga flowing into Loch na Sealga had to be crossed and although it was fairly low waters Jean W. tried out the new clubs wader walkers and her feet were dry but it was not possible to throw them back across the river for anyone else.

After approx 7mls. the track veered SSW, when Gleann na Muice Beag intercepted Gleann na Muice we set up camp. Tents sprung up like magic coloured musherooms, the rucksacks further ransacked in order to prepare for the first two munroes that very day. Jim said he would stay behind and make us a fire for our return.

It was 5pm before we hit the trail up Gleann na Muice Beag passing Clach na Frithealaidh. Dave took up task of leading 'stag' and with his familiarity of these rock bound hills we threaded, weaved and bobbed in his agile, athletic style making a bee line for Ruadh Stac Mor. The weather was still warm and Paul even wore shorts. Soon it seemed we reached the square trig point cairn of Ruadh Stac Mor. Eventually we worked our way across to A'Mhaighdean scrambling up a mass of boulder stones to the summit which offered us astonishing views of Dubh Loch. By this time swirling, enveloping mists of evening were arresting the scene, the sun was weakly winking and peeping from the cloudy mass, Puffing Billy blasts of dragons breath struggled for an escape from the glen far, far below. Several of our group sat

sillouetted on a rocky platform veiwing the scene. We were stood on the most remote of all munros at even time. Colin phoned home on his mobile and so I think did Dave. It was love on the mountain top, but not for long as evening closed in we scurried down Abhainn Gleann na Muice for 5mls or so till darkness fell and boulders appeared to be the camp site and the odd dead sheep stank in the night air. Head torches had to be used to secure our way along the rough pot holed track. By this time it was very difficult to see in the case of the two Jeans so Paul, Ryan and Martin nursed them back to base where Jim had a beacon already lit bonfire lit. The time was 11pm the eveing strole had taken 6hrs! We now had to prime our stoves and guzzle tinned mince and potato smash(ing).

Morning soon came, a duller day but fine the group was joined by Robin, Chris and Christine they had travelled up later and had had to camp just before Shenaval Bothy. Anyway they pitched their tents again by 9am ish. Robin struggled after a hard week at the office and collapsed corpse like at the top of Gleann na Muice, Dave didn't like the looks of the situation and left me at the rocky Pollan na Muice for us all to regroup. He took Robin back to base camp and the rest of us continued heading for Beinn Tarsuinn, Jean W. squealled at this pointed,eroded ridge and Martin helped her across the pinnacles,Chris. took up a hand like forceps position behind her and everybody else helped one and another along. We reached the summit and didn't stay long but made our way to Mullach Coire Fhearchair which presented steep bouldery slopes. The mist was thick and foggy and concentration was needed to slog ones way to the large summit cairn. Jean P (Smith) was a little behind with the effort and she and Jim Scott appeared several minuits later on the scene donning a school marm hat and with gritted teeth she lectured us all on the golden rules of hill walking. A bit of CHC cod and she put away her big stick and explained how a large eagle had swooped down on them and perhaps she was worried that it could have pecked off her nose or stolen her contact lenses. Much sweetened and calmed we continued down a very erroded steep scree slope and pulled our way again in mist to the flat topped Sgurr Ban which didn't take too much effort. From here Beinn a' Chaidheimh was something else with miles of shattered, sharp boulderous rock traverse, we made our way to a resting point and Jim felt he'd had enough by now so he took himself back to base camp. We headed to the slopes of Beinn a Chaidheimh and who should pop up but Dave who had set off again from base camp after settling Robin in his tent. He had been already to the summit and warned us there was a longish descent before another sharp pull up a boulderous slope to the summit cairn.

We were all tired by this time and were anxious to make our way back down the hill before our legs siezed up for the night.

The walk back took ages it was steep, rugged and unrelenting. However we reached Gleannna Muice and finally the tents. It had taken twelve and a half hours it was approx. 9.30pm.

Primus stoves lit and more tinned mince and smash(ing) potatoes.

A few whiskies were sipped around a new camp fire, not enough for Martins liking as he had the bottle to carry back out the next day.

And by the way that night the heavens opened and nobody slept for the deluge. Breakfast and packing was swift. The sun sprung up and so had the level of the river. Jean W. wore her waders again (well she'd carried them in) but the problem was that Jim thought the waters pull may have carried her away down stream so the gentleman he is escorted her across. By the time photos snaps had been taken of this Jims feet were frozen and saturated. I offered him thanks and a dry pair of socks but he wrung out his wet pair and had a spare pair of dry ones himself.

Martins massive pack was just as heavy on the way out, he had been a marvellous sherpa to Jean W. having carried all the extra bits. We all had a long way to walk with the sun now beating down on a much amused, beautiful An Teallach. We rested by the river amongst the bright fresh blooming yellow broom - and we said to ourselves 'what a wonderful world' and hardly a midge in sight and only four and a half miles to go!

Jean W

PS Many thanks for all the helping hands on the trek.