

Trip Report: The Glencoe Weekend

Date: 21st-24th September 2006

Group: Mike A, Colin, Jim G, Lesley, Bob & Jenny (honorary BUM)

Route: See below

Total Distance: See below

Total Ascent: See below

Weather: Brilliant - considering the forecast

Preamble

Here's a good question for the next Tennis Club Quiz!

What's the connection between the BUM's weekend in Scotland and the Labour Party conference? You don't believe it? Well - we didn't either. Following months of careful planning, we were informed about 2 weeks before departure by Tony that the entire security system at the Labour Party conference in Manchester would probably meltdown if he couldn't be around on the Friday to press a few keys on his laptop. Exit Tony & Lynn. And that wasn't the end of the personnel changes. Bob produced a late addition in the form of Jenny (a very welcome addition if I may be so bold). As usual Colin remained elusive up to the eleventh hour and on the Monday, Jim's car decided to take a long-term rest. This proved once again there is no point in making any sensible logistical plans well in advance of any trip - seat of the pants arrangements always seem to work best. Anyway, that particular theory would be well tested on Thursday.

Thursday 21st September

Despite the grim weather forecast for Thursday & Friday, Les & I plus Jim set off in the swelteringly unseasonable temperature of 23C. It remained warm and dry until we were north of Glasgow where it became warm and wet. While checking in, we discovered we had just missed the deluge. Apparently it had been raining for 36 hours solid.

By 1700 the Capes party had arrived and so the five of us strolled to Glencoe village in the evening sunshine, calculating there would be sufficient time for a swift pint at the Glencoe Hotel before returning, to coincide exactly with Colin's arrival. He had allegedly put in a full morning's work but was still peeved to find himself 1 drink down so early in the proceedings.

We spent the evening in the Clachaig Inn bar trying to make some inroads into the 120 malt whiskies and selection of fine ales (yes it really was Scotland and the beer was better than the Dysart!).

Friday 22nd September

The forecast had been abysmal but the Clachaig Inn weather report was much better - sunny & breezy. We didn't altogether trust this so we took up Bob's offer to lead a low level walk above Kinlochleven. Following the traditional breakfast fry up, we drove over to park outside the indoor ice climbing wall (something for the future?). Bob tentatively navigated up onto the hills above the town where we had a great view of Loch Leven (pictures of this and the rest of the weekend have already been circulated). From there, we followed a track west to Loch Elide Mor, and then south and east towards the Blackwater Reservoir. This part of the route followed an old pipeline to the reservoir that had been built about 100 years ago. It looked a doddle on the map, but the reality was a tedious slog following the minute rise of the pipeline around the contours to the reservoir at about 1000ft, the highest point of the walk. It just kept getting further away instead of closer, but finally we arrived at our lunch stop before setting off back down the valley to Kinlochleven. We followed the River Leven through woods and past waterfalls - the most scenic section of the day, which almost made up for the pipeline. The whole thing was about 12 miles.

The evening was a repeat of Thursday except that even more alcohol was consumed and we also enjoyed live music, courtesy of Graeme Pearson, a multi-instrumentalist Scottish folkie, complete with sense of humour. A great evening's entertainment.

Saturday 23rd September

Big greasy breakfast with dodgy hard boiled / fried eggs helped to restore the party, and, coupled with a reasonable weather forecast meant planning for a high level "munro" walk. Jim decided the famous Aonach Eagach ridge would be risky if the wind gusted, so it was the Buachaille Etive Mor ridge that we headed towards. Bob and Jenny decided to do their own thing. As far as I know they found a canal and walked all day. Perhaps a "B" trip report could be supplied? Anyway the 4 of us drove up the valley to park at Altnafeah ready for some munro bagging.

We took a route up the Coire Na Tulaich valley to arrive on the ridge where we took the northeast route up to the summit of Stob Dearg, at 1022 metres, the highest point of the day and our first munro.

Unfortunately the top was covered in mist but at least it wasn't raining. We then retraced the route back to the col to follow the ridge south west to Stob Na Doire (1011m), Stob Coire Altruim (941m) and finally munro number 2 Stob Na Broige (956m) at the end of the ridge. There were superb views back to Stob Dearg and beyond to the west, Glen Etive

and Loch Etive in the distance. By this time the cloud had completely lifted.

Having scaled 4 "STOBS", we were pleased with our progress and with lunch taken, we decided as an act of human kindness to ring Tony on his birthday to commiserate with him and tell him we were having a great time etc etc. Unfortunately for Tony, his cover was completely blown by his daughter who explained that Tony was busy walking with his "friends" in Wales. It looked really bad for him and there was talk of summary dismissal from the BUM's but that was considered too good for him. Fortunately, he turned up at the meeting on Monday, brought everyone a pint and was instantly forgiven. Even treachery is acceptable at the right price.

We returned along the ridge to Coire Altruim where we headed down a sheer grassy / scree slope to Lairig Gartain where we followed the River Coupall back to the road. This section turned out to be a tortuous boggy flog for about 3km and which has a similar soul destroying effect to the previous day's pipeline. However, it couldn't detract from a great walk. The evening was spent in the bar for a change, sampling more malts and ales and entertained by the Jack Daniels Trio, who played R&B classics that had everyone "dancing in the aisles"

Sunday 24th September

We departed soon after breakfast and immediately ran into some serious wet weather. This summed up the luck we had had - not a drop of rain during the walks. So, as well as actually seeing the spectacular scenery, we had enjoyed superb hospitality at the Clachaig Inn, with good food, great alcohol and entertainment combining to make a great holiday. I for one would recommend we make this an annual BUMs visit.

Mike A