

Kinlochleven - by John Simpson



## The Gwydyr Mountain Club Newsletter.

February  
2024

Edited: Chris  
Harris

### Coming soon: (details on meets list on GMC website)

- 5 March Social Event at Gallagher's: Peru Trek Talk - Adele Samuel
- 8-10 March Hut weekend
- 22-24 March Hut weekend
- 23 March GMC Annual Dinner - Adele Samuel
- 26 March Annual General Meeting - David Lane-Joint
- 29 Mar-1 Apr Hut Weekend: Easter Meet
- 29 Mar-1 Apr Easter in Little Langdale - Teresa Peddie
- 6 April Lantern Pike and Cown Edge - Mark Barley

### Articles this Month:

- 1) 2024 Ben Nevis Hotel report - Chris Harris
- 2) Chno Dearg and Stob Coire Sgriodain by Chris Harris
- 3) Winter Climbing on the Ben Wed 21 Feb by Helen Grant

Note: This will be my last Newsletter as the supply of articles seems to have dried up. Many thanks to those that have contributed to the newsletters to date.

### 1) 2024 Ben Nevis Hotel

The regulars on the winter meet will know that the Ben Nevis Hotel and Spa is not perfect but at less than £40 per night Dinner, Bed and Breakfast with Pool, Sauna, Steam room and gym it's still a bargain.

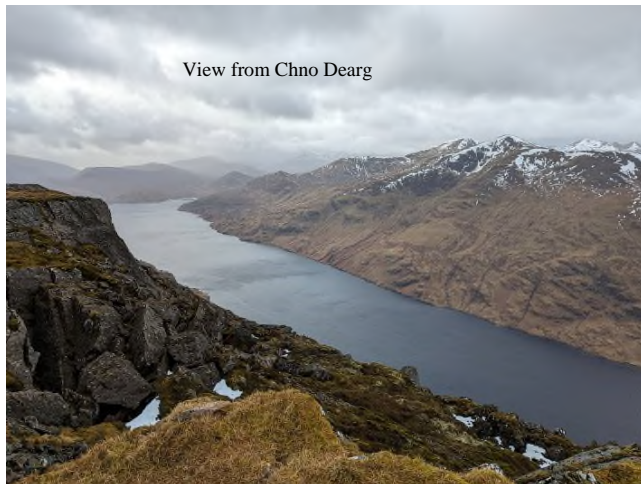
This year's winter storms were not kind to the hotel. High winds damaged the roof of the "new" section and a tree fell on it so it was uninhabitable by guests and staff, but somehow they squeezed us into the new building.

The staff were excellent this year, attentive and friendly. The food seemed a little better, there's never been anything wrong with it but it just seemed better. Service in the restaurant was brisk and efficient. This may have been due to the fact that the hotel was at 30% capacity.

On the down side was the "hot" water which was tepid for the first 2 days and then virtually cold thereafter. This may well have been down to storm damaged equipment as there seemed to be temporary boilers in the car park. The gym was not available and the spa is looking a bit scruffy.

Apparently they are hoping the insurance company will let them demolish the damaged building and rebuild new, so I guess repairs are a bit basic at the moment. However if you take out the value of the food and the free miniature of Whisky (no wine this year) the accommodation is virtually free.

## 2) Chno Dearg and Stob Coire Sgriodain - Chris Harris



Last year a large group of us climbed Stob a Choire Meadhoine alongside Loch Treig but were unable to get across the ridge to the second Munro Stob Coire Easain due to high winds. but we could see across to Chno Dearg and Stob Coire Sgriodain which John Simpson achieved with ease and so we put them in the diary for this year. The forecast for the week was pretty poor - very windy with frequent rainfall but the Monday looked like it might be the best for summiting 3000 footers.

Richard Smith, Helen and I made the 30 minute drive to the large parking area by Loch Treig for an early start.



Walkhighlands said "Steeper ground on the ascent of Sròn na Garbh-bheinne and some rocky terrain between the hills; otherwise a gentle but very boggy hillwalk" and thanks to months of rain, the bog and streams did not disappoint.

There are no paths shown on the map so Walkhighlands notes were very useful, ably read by Helen. Gullies and bogs negotiated, we climbed up the "nose" of Sròn na Garbh-bheinne and onward to Chno Dearg. Wind was tolerable, rain on and off but stopped for us well before the summit. We had excellent views of cloud covered hills all around us but amazingly Chno Dearg and Stob Coire Sgriodain were cloud free and it stayed that way for the rest of the day.

The ridge walk to Stob Coire Sgriodain was pleasant with excellent views and a bonus of nearly treading on 2 Ptarmigan sporting their winter down jackets. Second lunch on the second summit was foreshortened by a wintry squall and the initial descent was across a decent sized snowfield which smoothed out the rocks and cushioned our descent. Then it was on to bogs, streams rivulets and hunt the path. Again we had good visibility which probably didn't matter as there was no path anyway. Back at the car we had clocked 9.2 miles and 3135ft ascent.

<<< Interesting signs sighted as we exited the area. It's good to know that The Scottish Sports Council Lottery fund is paying for signs saying that they are paying for signs.





### 3) Winter Climbing on the Ben Wed 21 Feb - Helen Grant

An opportunity to be a mock student for Tom came up while we were in Fort William. He was looking for someone with crampon and ice axe experience and also done some trad climbing. I thought let's give it a go as I've always wanted to climb more of the gullies on the Ben having had a taster when GMC did the Douglas Boulder on a previous meet.



Spoke to Tom the night before and discussed what was possible with the weather forecast we had which was mild at first, heavy rain in the morning, sleet, gusty south westerly winds until lull later in the day. As the gully is northeast facing we would be sheltered from the wind until we topped out later in the day. Plan A was to do Number 2 gully a grade 2 route in winter conditions. UKC describe it as 'a nice aesthetic grade II gully. be sure to keep left at the cornice!!' We ran through kit check usual belay jacket, helmet, harness, crampons, waterproofs, lots of spare gloves, 2 climbing axes (which I borrowed from Tom very nice Petzl Quark and leash) food etc.



As early a start was needed as possible so we left hotel at 7.30. We met Hannah the other climber who was joining us at the lower North face car park at 8am. She was returning to climbing after injury and has just been invited to join mountain rescue and was one of the organisers of the Nevis mountain festival that had been on the week before we arrived.

We set off up the path in the drizzle that eventually leads to the CIC hut but crossed the river before reaching it to begin the walk up scree and rock to the snow line in Coire na Ciste. Here we geared up for the climb which was done as quickly as possible as it was raining at this point.

It was great to see all the famous routes from the Coire such as Tower ridge which was pretty clear of snow. We then set off up the approach slopes to our gully refreshing our crampon technique as we went and walking on short rope. As it became steeper Tom set up a buried axe belay.



Eventually we reached the start of the gully and Tom set up the belay points and we moved up the gully which gradually got steeper and narrower as we reached the crux. We had a good view of the cornice still intact and moved safely off left and over it to reach the zigzags path. As we had climbed up the gully Tom had shown us various different anchors, how to use ice screws, place pegs, carve out ledges and much more while Hannah

and I climbed in parallel on each pitch. The snow was soft given the milder conditions but firm enough to grip crampons and axe.

Fortunately, the predicted lull in the wind had arrived but the forecast temperature drop had arrived so we quickly made our way down the zigzags in crampons until below the ice line and veered off left past the lochan. We then took a shortcut across the boggy moorland by now head torches were required and eventually crossed the river to join the return path to the car park. I arrived back in time for dinner after an epic day out.