 **Black Dog Meet**

**No. 234 Torridon**

**22nd – 24th April 2022**

**In Attendance**

Charles Alexander, David Cameron, Owen Clark, William Clark, Wull Clark, Valerie Inglis, Liz

Kennedy, Richard Marwood, John McGill, Peter Robertson, Alan Sewell, James Yeats

# **Hills Climbed Climbing Routes Completed**

# Sgurr Mhor 986m

Tom na Gruagaich 922m

# Maol Chean-dearg 933m

# Little Wyvis 762m

# Rhuaridh-stac Mor 1010m

Spidean Coire nan Clach 993m

Meall a’ Ghiubhais 887m

Sgorr Ruadh 962m

# Beinn Liath Mhor 926m

# Sgurr Ban 970m

Sgurr Nan Fhir Duibhe 963m

Fionn Bheinn 933m

# Bidean an Eoin Deirg 1045m

# Sgùrr Chòinnich 999m

# Sgùrr a'Chaorachain 1053m

Carn a Caim 941m

Seems the same HVS 5a \*\*

The Deerstalker VS 4c \*\*

Rowantree Crack HVS 5a \*\*

Incognito E1 5b \*\*

Skye and Kyle against Trugs HVS 5a\*

Mechanical Sheep E2 6a\*\*\*

Hadrians Wall E1 5b\*\*

Mr Bean VS 5a

Wriggle VS 4c

Bleached Whale E2 5c \*\*

The Knob HVS 5b\*

Cetacean corner HVS 5a\*

**Weather**

Friday through Sunday some cloud early morning towards the east clearing by mid-day. Otherwise blue skies; cold easterly wind but warm in the sunshine; no rain.

i.e. Glorious!

**Torridon**

Torridon in April with blue skies above

Tops remain cold so pack hat and glove

The strain to the top

Will soon be forgot

As the views become all that you speak of

**Friday 22nd**

James & Owen Maol Chean-dearg 933m

Set off from the sunny East coast at 06:30 on the four hour drive to Torridon.

Arrived at the carpark at approx. 10;30 and started walking from Coulags following the waters of Fionn Abhainn. We had a good path underfoot and blue skies above and despite the car journey to get here a wee spring in our step. Three kilometres in and we pass the remote yet well maintained Coire Fionnaraich bothy. Another half kilometre (or so) beyond the bothy we paused to admire the unique stone feature where legend has it that a giant tied up his hunting dogs (if you look closely you can see the rope marks still on the rock). Soon we leave the floor of the glen bearing west up towards Bealach a Choire Ghairbh.

The path remains very good underfoot which is fortunate because as we gain height it is impossible to tear our eyes from the views opening up all around us. A breeze picks up here and becomes a constant companion for the remainder of the hike; somewhat welcome given the strong sunshine. A couple pass us as we have a wee bite to eat also on the ascent.

At the bealach approx. three hours into the hike we were compelled to pause once more to take in the views to the West and the North-East. Here we met a mountain biker who had just descended from Meall nan Ceapairean and to our astonishment promptly set off cycling (and very soon pushing) his bike up Maol Chean-dearg. After a couple of wistful thoughts of youth we set off in his wake for our final ascent.

The terrain was rough broken rock and loose in places but fun nonetheless and we made good progress passing some fellow climbers who were descending and eventually the now bikeless youth as he headed back down to find his abandoned bike. The top was breath-taking! Torridon is a place I have visited many times over the years yet it never disappoints and on this day it was truly magnificent. Could it get any better than this…

Many snaps and a well-deserved chocolate brownie later we began our descent.

Initially keeping to the route we had followed on the ascent but a wee deviation just above the bealach allowed me some delightful (for James perhaps less so) scree sliding. Stepping from the scree onto a beautiful piece of quartzite bedrock I paused to (also let James catch up) observe a party on their ascent one of whom was carrying a large unicorn balloon. I mention this because the day was oddly bereft of fauna and also it was a first.

At the Bealach we met and chatted to a chap who had just come off An Ruadh-Stac. We left him in good cheer and began our final descent. Fuelled by that brownie we set of at a blistering pace and were soon passing our fellow hikers. On the final stretch just after the bothy we passed a group of six; we were then commended by another (solo) fellow for our blistering pace and leaving the youths in our wake. The irony was not lost on me as he then left us in his… All in all a fantastic day and a great start to the weekend.

Charles Little Wyvis 762m

I strolled up Little Wyvis (Corbett, 762m) on a very good vehicle track in beautiful weather. Starting from Silverbridge House. Interesting wildlife was ptarmigan and a white deer.

I had an interesting chat with the farmer who has been farming his rough hillside organically for 15 years. He is a very keen wildlife photographer and attracts all kinds of wildlife to his land so that he can photograph them. Contrary to the old Corbett book he is happy to see considerate walkers.

Val, Wull and Davie Sgurr Mhor 986m and Tom na Gruagaich 922m

Set off early for Ben Alligin wondering if it was going to be too breezy for the approach over the horns. But we threw caution to the wind (so to speak) and decided to go for it.

The horns were a little airy, and it was a great route up to the first of the two Munros. The views over to Beinn Dearg and the bigger Torridon hills were fabulous. We saw very few people considering the wonderful weather and had the summits more or less to ourselves.

Great day and great hills.

**Saturday**

Charles, Peter, Bill and Liz Rhuaridh-stac Mor 1010m & Spidean Coire nan Clach 993m

Beinn Eighe - Munros - Rhuaridh-stac Mor 1010m and Spidean Coire nan Clach 993m

Great hills, excellent weather and stunning views.

Richard, Wull, Val and Davie Meall a’ Ghiubhais 887m

Meall a’ Ghiubhais (Hill of the Pine) 887metres. Corbett. (“only 90 feet short of a Munro” – Richard; “some chuffin’ Corbett” – Wull)

The joy of this Corbett is that it is climbed as a spur off the “Mountain Trail”, itself part of the Beinn Eighe National Nature reserve, which was developed in the 1950’s. The Mountain Trail is a moderately strenuous four-hour circuit, from sea level on the shores of Loch Maree, with a half-way viewpoint at around 530 metres. A finer view of the Beinn Eighe massif from the north could not be imagined. Although waymarked with subtle cairns, careful attention must be paid to the route and to footing, and hand on rock is required in a few places. The Mountain Trail’s handbook details the natural history and geology of numerous sections of the route. A highly recommended walk even taken on its own. The day was spectacular and route-finding, even on the Corbett spur, was never an issue. No midges, no clouds, no worries. We saw a population of smooth newts in a high lochan, and met a ptarmigan already halfway through changing from its winter clothes. Allegations of a human poo in a high rock shelter proved spurious, fortunately. (Spoor-ious?)

James & Owen Sgorr Ruadh 962m & Beinn Liath Mhor 926m

An early 07:00 start from youth hostel, coffee not quite kicked in but a stag running alongside the car finished the wakeup process nicely! Parking up at the westerly Beinn Eighe carpark we crossed the road and set off up the stalkers path passing Lochan an asgair and Ling hut. The sky is bright again this morning but there are a few clouds hanging around the summits and a steady cold breeze from the east. The path is good under foot but in the shade of the mountain making it feel quite cold. As we dipped in and out of the wind at the whim of the topography I found myself struggling to regulate my temperature; too cold one minute too hot the next. This continued all the way to the bealach where we encountered some runners descending at a pace far greater than that of my ascent. Reassuringly they reported the terrain beyond the bealach to be in bright sunshine and we pushed on emerging from the shade eventually into the promised light.

 Since Beinn Liath Mhor was stubbornly holding onto its morning cloud we flipped our route and headed off towards the clear summit of Sgorr Ruadh. Leaving the Bealach and heading up a distinct but grassy track on to the ridge. Here the path became fainter as the terrain became increasingly rocky and loose underfoot. The final ascent to the summit giving some nice easy scrambling as we completed the first Munro of the day (approx. 11:00). As we ate our elevenses we were rewarded with superb views across to Maol Chean-dearg (Friday’s hill) and Liathach and Beinn Eighe to the north. To my surprise the cloud on Beinn Liath Mhor was beginning to lift and our second Munro revealed itself for the first time.

The ptarmigan

The noble ptarmigan reside

High upon the mountainside

On other fowl down they look

From their lofty rocky nook

Retracing our steps we left the summit behind pausing on the steep section to chat briefly with a curious ptarmigan who happily posed for a photo approx. 3m away from us; until eventually strolling away from our path and allowing us to get back underway. Further into our descent two more ptarmigan this time on the wing flying like a couple of RAF fighters in tight formation. The remainder of the descent to the bealach was uneventful and we soon found ourselves back at the lochan where we paused to refuel and watch a dipper playfully doing what dippers do.

Setting off once more up an obvious path from the lochan towards Beinn Liath Mhor quickly finding ourselves in steep terrain where the path all but disappears. While James looks to where the path might lead a group of small birds catch my attention. They are chasing each other just above us landing too briefly for my eyes to really capture them and in flight they are a blur of frenzied energy darting through the sky. Dark backed and blonde chested with a pair of white bars in their tails my best (post hike) guess is a Whinchat. Distractions aside and route chosen up we go ascending very steep and sometimes difficult terrain. Passing over the coll at 769 before descending and then ascending Beinn Liath Mhor itself. Again the initial terrain just above a second lochan was very steep and tricky. Here we met our first and only Munroists of the day as they descended. Now the going became much easier and opened up onto a beautiful sandstone plateau before giving way to the white quartzite and the final steep ascent to our second Munro of the day.

We arrived at the summit approx. 13:30 where well-earned brownies were devoured and magnificent views all around were offered and admired.

We descended back to the plateau from which we plotted a North-Westerly route (veering east when encountering crags) aiming to re-join our morning stalkers path at around the 500m mark and avoiding both the return to the bealach and the nasty terrain in-between. With the exception of finding the wettest ground and the longest heather James did a great job in navigating through the rough terrain; only once feeling obliged to indicate where a hole was lurking by ending up with one leg down it. It was rough but worth it passing along sandstone bluffs and crags. Soon we were once more firmly back on a path and passing ducks and wading birds arriving back at the car approx. 16:30. After taking a quick snap of the resident red deer at the car park we returned to the Youth Hostel having completed a second fantastic Torridon day.

Alan Routes climbed on Seana Mheallan

Seems the same HVS 5a \*\*

The Deerstalker VS 4c \*\*

Rowantree Crack HVS 5a \*\*

Incognito E1 5b \*\*

Skye and Kyle against Trugs HVS 5a\*

Mechanical Sheep E2 6a\*\*\*

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Bleached Whale E2 5c \*\*

The Knob HVS 5b\*

Cetacean corner HVS 5a\*

John Sgurr Ban 970 m & Sgurr Nan Fhir Duibhe 963m

A rather splendid day on Beinn Eighe, bagging a couple of new Munro tops Sgurr Ban & Sgurr Nan Fhir Duibhe out along the ridge.

**Sunday**

James & Owen Fionn Bheinn 933m

Leaving the deer (three of them) to watch over my car at Achnasheen station carpark (seems to be a feature of the area) we set off on our last hike of this trip to Fionn Bheinn. A relatively short walk compared to the previous day starts off under a grey sky. The path was wet from the start and barely deviated from this condition… thankful that it had been a dry week I set in for the steep slog up the mountain. At 500m we crested on to the terrace and into the cloud.

“Deliberately” leaving the path to seek drier firmer ground we aimed for Creagan nan Laogh at 720m before heading due north towards the main ridge. At round 800m we met a solo hiker through the mists. Her words to us were “the summit is clear and you shall get views.” Hoping that she was both too young to have yet learned the art of sarcasm and too polite to play a cruel trick on two strangers; our hearts quickened as did our pace and for the first moment on this wet and grey trek a wee smile dared grace our faces. Sure enough as we neared the ridge the magic began to happen. Slowly at first and then all of a sudden the views opened up and the sun shone down as we broke through the cloud base to a full cloud inversion.

Fionn Bheinn looking fantastic in full sun with ribbons of snow on her north-easterly crags and cloud floating just below her ridge line. It is hard to find the words to describe this experience; thirty years had passed since I was last fortunate enough to have such and share it with friends. It is almost spiritual, certainly magical and definitely unforgettable. What began as a dreary trudge up a mountain finishes as one of the best days on the hill ever. And what a magical end to a fantastic weekend.

Needless to say (some time later) we successfully navigated our way back to the path and from there to the car passing several other parties who were heading up. Coffee and something to eat at Midge Bite café before the sojourn south.

John Bidean an Eoin Deirg 1045m Sgùrr Chòinnich 999m and Sgùrr a'Chaorachain 1053m

A long walk to get Munro Top Bidean an Eoin Deirg. Came in over Munros Sgùrr Chòinnich and Sgùrr a'Chaorachain from Craig. Cloud was coming in and out, but had some good views at times. The remote Munro Lurg Mhor poked its head out of the cloud, but everything else to the south was buried in cloud.

Liz Carn a Caim 941m

Boring hill, mist from 700m and no views !

**Next Meet**

Place /date: Skye 6th – 8th May

Meet organiser: Alan Sewell