 **Black Dog Meet**

**No. 244 Braemar**

**16 – 18 December 2022**

**In Attendance**

Charles Alexander, David Cameron, Wull Clark, Gerry Feeney, Valerie Inglis, Liz Kennedy, Yuka Noro (guest), Alan Sewell, Lorna Smith, Tony Smith, Matthew Spencer, James Yeats and Rachel Yeats

# **Hills Climbed**

**Friday**

Lorna, Tony Mongour (376m)

**Saturday**

All (except 3) Carn na Drochaide (830m)

Matt, Yuka Tom Anthon (635m)

**Weather**

There had been some question about travel for this meet as the week leading up to it had seen snow and ice and the closure of many routes, particularly in the north-east. As it happened it was the road from the south that was the worst affected by snow for travel, but we all got there without incident.

There was a lot of snow in and around Braemar, and the village had been the coldest place in the UK during the previous week with temperatures plummeting to -17°c. It was a balmy -5°c by the time we arrived. It was windy on the hills and really cold, but fabulous winter walking was had and Braemar was beautiful in the snow.

**Notes / Highlights**

This was our first Christmas meet at Braemar since 2019, the year before Covid hit. It was lovely to be back and although we didn’t have a communal Christmas meal, we had fairy lights and decorations and enjoyed mulled wine with a lovely array of Christmas treats baked by Lorna. Yuka also brought some home-made pastries which were added to the already bursting table.

Gerry, Matt and Yuka provided the entertainment with Gerry, on “the final leg of his world tour”, leading the group on guitar, with Matt on the fiddle and Yuka on vocals.

Kate joined us after dinner for some malt tasting and laughs. A good evening was had by all.

**Friday**

Lorna and Tony

We parked just north of the summit of the Slug Road (A957 out of Stonehaven) and walked a good track to the very prominent communication mast. Beyond the extensive associated service complex it was into the woods where the marked track was under deep snow and far from obvious. Eventually we emerged into a clearer gap which took us, following a useful deer trail, to the summit for excellent views out over Banchory on a beautifully fine day.

**Saturday**

With the exception of Matt and Yuka, we all headed off en masse to Carn na Drochaide, a hill on Tony’s hit list, which we all agreed was a good choice and didn’t involve any driving. We walked from the hostel along by the golf course and up onto the hill on a track which was soon hard to follow and more bother than it was worth. We ended up cutting across the heather in often deep snow, taking it in turns to cut the steps. The wind soon picked up and before long we were heads down pushing against the elements with icy spin drift blasting across the hillside and making for a chilly ascent to the summit. The cloud came and went enough to give us some very atmospheric views up to Glenshee and over to Ben Avon and Beinn a’Bhuird. A great wee hill.

Matt and Yuka

Our target, besides increasing stamina in order to be able to rejoin the main team(s), was Tom Anthon (at 635m). A quick peek at the SAIS forecast for Southern Cairngorms noted that, with a "moderate" risk of avalanche on all aspects over 800m, staying a bit lower made good sense. It was also clear from the weather forecast that this was going to be one of those seeming-perfect high-pressure days on offer, combining little cloud on the hills with great visibility, if with somewhat stronger winds perhaps than some sources seemed to predict.

The day started well with fairly easy route-finding from Inverey car park to take the Glen Ey path climbing steadily away from a burn. A hind and its single young moved away up the hill. After a gentle climb, walking some 1000 to 1200m from the car park we then headed due east on a steeper route to reach a less-steep slope leading eventually to the summit with its occasional hillocks, from the edge of which the small summit plateau (though not yet its cairn) first becomes visible.

Crampons stayed in the rucksack, as the snow was soft although at higher elevations it was hard enough to fracture at some distance around the boot when kicking in on the steeper sections. As some of these sections were convex we hastened a little until we reached the final slope, leading to the summit where the winds were suddenly stronger with occasional gusts. We were able, in fine Cairngorm style, to make a lightly held ice axe swing up horizontal to the ground. We pressed on to the summit, its cairn and indeed its all-round views to more distant hills especially in the NW.

On descent we were able to retrace our still highly visible footsteps back down to the edge of the summit slope where they were eventually lost to view further down the steeper mid-section of the hill. Reversing the bearing at this point reconnected us with those prints that were not yet snowed over below us, and we followed them home. We saw nobody all day but had taken some photos of the sun clearing the higher adjacent hill still under 800m and so presumably not so avalanche prone as elsewhere on this excellent day for the winter hills.

Thank you everyone for a lovely weekend. Valerie 😊

**Next Meet**

20-22 January 2023, Logierait. Meet organiser – Richard Marwood