

I realise that this is only the second Newsletter of 2025 with the only other letter being sent out back in March. The main reason for this is that, although some of the usual events have taken place, I was waiting until there had been one or two good hill days over the summer when a Corbett or Munro had been climbed. For various reasons this never happened and despite what folk will look back on as a good summer with little rain there were no Club Day Meets between 11th May and 11th October!

After the last Newsletter outings did actually take place on the Sundays of 16th March to Glen Ogil, the 30th March to the Campsies, 13th April to Abernethy Glen, 27th April to Montrose Beach and on 11th May two members went to Glen Shee and climbed Glas Maol and Creag Leacach. The Glen Ogil and Campsies walk were exactly as listed on the Meet list for the year on routes where hills of between 500 and 600 metres were climbed on reasonably good days. Montrose Beach was chosen due to the forecast indicating that sticking to the East coast looked like being the only way of avoiding continuous rain and the group who ended up in Abernethy Glen on the border between Fife and Perth and Kinross were just wanting a shortish fairly local walk that was not totally familiar to them.

There were no further Day Walks until October but the usual Boat of Garten weekend took place slightly later than usual in May with six of us attending and enjoying a great weekend of wall to wall sunshine. It turned out to be a weekend focussing on the wildlife of the area rather than climbing hills. On the Saturday two of us did a leisurely circuit of Loch an Eilein and Loch Gamna while the others concentrated on the various trails of The Abernethy forest RSPB reserve. The only hill that was climbed was by Irene on the Sunday. She made an ascent of the Corbett, Meall a' Bhuachaille while Les, who had a back problem, stayed low and had a leisurely stroll to Ryvoan Bothy and back. The other four on the Sunday walked from the house looking at birds and butterflies as they followed the East bank of the River Spey.



Irene on Meall a' Bhuachaille summit



Pam by Loch an Eilein

A month later the same group of six gathered at a house on the Ardtornish estate near Lochaline for the Club's annual Summer week and enjoyed mostly good weather but, as had been typical of many recent walks, heights above the 2000ft contour was never reached by any member, with the highest point reached being a hill of just over 500 metres on the Ardtornish estate but it was climbed literally from sea level. Another 3 members joined us for a couple of nights and there was one night with all 9 overlapping and present together.

This was possible as we were based in, Achranish, a lovely spacious traditional house which could sleep up to 10 people. On a number of previous occasions I had taken the ferry from Lochaline to Fishnish on Mull without ever stopping to explore the Morvern area itself and it is certainly worth exploring with a big feature of the landscape being the temperate Atlantic rainforest. There are patches of this on the Ardtornish estate as well as on neighbouring estates in the area. Given its close proximity to Mull which is well known for sea eagles they and golden eagles are apparently seen regularly on Morvern but I think most of us felt we had been told this by local people we met but they always seemed to have been present a few hours earlier or on the previous day! The wildlife highlight for me was of a pine marten running along in front of my car as I drove slowly along a quiet single track road heading WNW beyond Lochaline towards Drimnin. Pam was a passenger in my car and also saw it. There was also a day when I thought about crossing to Mull and attempting one of the Grahams but when I got across on the ferry and headed South and West the hills all seemed to be in cloud so I kept going and ended up spending a few hours on Iona where I enjoyed the unmistakable sound of Corncrakes! We were all impressed with the efforts of the Estate to make maximum use of the high rainfall in producing renewable energy from complex micro Hydro schemes which involved underground pipework leading to a new Loch being formed among the hills of the estate which to me seemed to enhance rather than spoil the landscape and it all ended in a small Power station at the centre of the Estate just beside where we were staying. It was made more efficient by the additional technology of incorporating an Archimedes Screw! The various schemes on the estate apparently could produce 5 X the amount of electricity required to power the whole Morvern area which would presumably have required it to be fed into the National Grid. The photo below shows a power station, which looks more like a boathouse, beside what is a manmade Loch amongst the hills of the estate. We also discovered that Lochaline isn't just the village with a ferry to Mull. This hidden corner of Morvern also has an active high quality Silica mine with a hidden entrance a couple of hundred metres from the ferry pier and it is a significant employer in the area. It produces extra high quality silica (sand) needed for making top quality optical glass such as that used in telescopes and for scientific purposes. It is taken away by boat and the ships can come and go to the entrance of Loch Aline right beside the mine entrance. Some of us stumbled upon it when walking the 2 miles from our house on the estate, along a path by the Loch, to the village of Lochaline which is a very pleasant walk beside a typical Scottish sea loch.

We were also free to come and go and wander around the fine gardens that surround Ardtornish House and were adjacent to the garden of our house. All of the above is just explaining that although this is an area that contains Corbetts and Grahams it is possible to have a very enjoyable week exploring a remote corner of Scotland without climbing the big hills!



man made loch with Power station / boat house



9 FMC members together in Achranich



Ardtornish temperate rainforest



Gleann Dubh NE of Loch Arianas



Loch Aline with Mull is the distance. The silica mine is on the far side of the Loch just right of the centre



Achranich house where we stayed

The months of July, August and September came and went without any of the proposed walks taking place despite weather on some dates not being the issue. By the start of October the trees had started to change colour and Catherine sent out her usual e-mail in the week leading up to the proposed “Autumn Colours” walk on Sunday the 12th. Knowing the forecast was looking good I replied that I couldn’t manage the Sunday but was free on the Saturday if anyone else could manage that day instead. The result was that seven of us decided we were free on the Saturday and would meet at the Broxden Park and Ride with ideas of where to go and a selection of maps. We all turned up, divided ourselves between 2 cars and headed off to the Hamlet of Camserney just beyond Aberfwlwy and Castle Menzies. We parked by the Community Hall and followed tracks for 3 miles up to Loch Farleyer which at 390 metres is just below the steeper rougher ground leading to the Corbetts of Meall Tarneachan and Farragon. We could hear stags roaring above us, there was wall to wall blue sky and with brilliant sunshine and little wind it felt as if it was still summer. The highlight, however, for all of us was a golden eagle which came and circled above us and the loch for long enough for all of us to have a good look at it and Catherine even managed to take a photo! Some returned by the same route while others extended the walk by turning it into a circular route going through the hamlet of Dull.

Of the seven who were out that day on the Loch Farleyer walk two hadn't been part of the group of 9 who had spent at least 2 nights at Ardtornish. Another member was present on some of the day outings in March and April but for various reasons none of the events since. This means that there have been 12 members who have taken part in at least one Club walk amongst the hills this year. This includes 3 whose primary membership is with another Club. In addition my adult grandson always turns up for the New Year coastal walk. A consensus seems to be developing that we should recognise age is catching up on many of us such that we need to be realistic as to what we are physically capable of managing now and that, given that we are nearly all retired, it should be possible to be more flexible as to the days of the week when we head out?



Catherine's eagle photo and the other photo, also taken by Catherine, shows the group en route to Loch Farleyer and the view behind the group is looking West towards the Loch Tay Hills.

I won't produce another newsletter this year but will be in touch regarding events such as the New Year walk and the AGM.

Jean

